

ALBERTO FORTIS AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF NUMISMATICS IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY

Paolo Visonà

School of Art and Visual Studies,
University of Kentucky
236 Bolivar St.
USA – Lexington 40506
Paolo.Visona@uky.edu

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*Alberto Fortis, a Paduan “naturalist-antiquarian” of the late Enlightenment, played a significant role in the development of numismatics as an evidence-based discipline in the last quarter of the 18th century. Fortis knew about ancient and medieval coins and believed that coin finds were significant historical markers. He noted various coin finds during his travels in Dalmatia. These findings suggested to the readers of his most important book, *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, that Dalmatia had a long and distinguished history of monetary use. Fortis was also one of the first scholars who recorded coins of Issa, Pharos, Scodra, and Corcyra while he was in Dalmatia. His interest in the issues of the Greek and Illyrian mints of the eastern Adriatic region is attested by a series of letters written over a 20-year period beginning in the early*

1770s. These letters reveal that from the early 1780s to the early 1790s Fortis acquired coins from southern Italy on behalf of the Paduan Marquis T. degli Obizzi, and that he also asked his friends J. Bajamonti, R. A. Michieli Vitturi, and M. Sorkočević to send him coins from Dalmatia. Fortis’ direct observations and comments on the coins of Issa, Pharos, Scodra, and Corcyra, which he communicated to F. Neumann, an Austrian numismatist, represent his most salient contribution to the identification and study of these issues.

Key words:

J. Bajamonti, K. Grubišić, F. Neumann, T. degli Obizzi, R.A. Michieli Vitturi, M. Sorkočević, Corcyra, Issa, Pharos, Scodra

The numismatic interests of the Paduan Alberto Fortis (1741 – 1803), Italy’s most flamboyant “naturalist-antiquarian” of the late Enlightenment, have hitherto drawn little attention. Fortis was knowledgeable about ancient coins and understood the evidentiary value of coin finds as markers of human activity. He believed that finds of coins, inscriptions, and other antiquities indicated that a place had been historically relevant. Even though Fortis claimed that he had no expertise as an antiquarian,¹ he mentioned various coin finds in the reports about his travels in Dalmatia, a region of Europe that was relatively unknown to his readers. Fortis became especially fascinated with the issues of the Greek cities on the eastern Adriatic littoral.

This essay, based on some of Fortis’ published works and select personal correspondence, aims to explore his contributions to the growth of numismatic learning, his contacts with prominent numismatists, and his interactions with friends and coin collectors, in a seminal period for the development of numismatics as a scientific discipline.

1. Engaging with coin finds (1765 – 1770)

It is not known when Fortis became interested in ancient coins as archaeological artifacts. In an early article, a description of an outing to Mt. Summano (a mountain in the northwestern Veneto

¹ In a letter to an unknown recipient (possibly Andrea Giuseppe de Bonomo-Stettner, a resident of Trieste) written on May 30, 1777, Fortis declared that he was not pursuing antiquarian studies because he lacked the financial means to do them well, and that he was far from being an antiquarian, even though he loved to contribute to “the description and preservation” of antiquities: “*Io non faccio, com’Ella sa, studj antiquarj, conoscendo che mi mancano i capitali per farli bene.*” [...] “*io sono ben lunge dall’essere antiquario, ancorchè io ami di contribuire alla illustrazione e conservazione delle cose antiche.*” This letter,

which was forwarded to Franz de Paula Neumann (1744 – 1816), an Austrian numismatist, is preserved in the Antikensammlung’s Archiv in Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum, Korrespondenz Neumann 3a, 197–200; I am grateful to Daniela Williams for providing me with a copy of it. Neumann 1779, 174, 179, mentioned de Bonomo-Stettner as his “*amicus Tergestinus*”. For Neumann’s network of contacts see Haarmann 2016; for de Bonomo-Stettner (1723 – 1797) see Gorini 2010, 29, n. 46.

region),² he revealed that he had developed a “friendship” with classical antiquities during an earlier visit to Istria. These antiquities included coins, as one learns from a note in Fortis’ essay on his first travel to Dalmatia in the summer of 1770: in discussing the origins of Pola, he mentioned local finds of Greek and Roman coins, and of medieval coins of Aquileia and Venice.³ Thus, by 1765 Fortis was aware of the evidentiary value of coin finds. Finds of ancient coins indicated that a place had a long history going back to classical antiquity; they made it possible to connect local history to “universal” history.⁴ Yet, it would be odd if he had not been at least curious about ancient coins when he was younger. The father of Antonio Vallisnieri Jr. (1708 – 1777),⁵ a Paduan university professor who frequented Fortis’ mother’s *salon* and helped to steer Fortis towards the study of natural history, owned a collection of ancient and modern coins.⁶ Giovanni Arduino (1714 – 1795), a renowned geologist whose scientific methodology most inspired Fortis as a youth,⁷ believed that, as ancient coins were “markers of time” (a definition introduced by the 17th-century numismatist Charles Patin),⁸ fossils could be described metaphorically as “a new species of coins” that were “far more important than Greek and Roman coins”.⁹

Fortis does not seem to have shared Arduino’s dismissive opinion of numismatic pursuits.¹⁰ A year after his trip to Istria, he may have had opportunities to see ancient coins during a visit to Florence, where he met Raimondo Cocchi (1735 – 1775), the keeper of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany’s coin cabinet,¹¹ and during his stay in Rome, where he studied theology between October 1766 and April 1767. Fortis’ interest in classical antiquity, and his

investigative approach based on empirical observation – a cardinal principle of the Enlightenment – were strengthened by his Roman experience.¹² His subsequent move to Venice, where he lived until 1770, supporting himself as a translator and a journalist,¹³ gave him access to important archaeological collections in a city that was a hub of the antiquities trade.¹⁴ However, gaining archaeological and numismatic expertise was not Fortis’ main goal: it was a means to an end, a prerequisite for investigating the entanglement of human history with the history of the natural world, which the tangible evidence of ancient coins and inscriptions could help to understand.¹⁵ This is why he had hoped both to find archaeological remains and to acquire new botanical and geological knowledge on his trip to Mt. Summano.¹⁶

Fortis’ first important book, his *Saggio d’osservazioni sopra l’isola di Cherso ed Osero*, published in 1771, contains scant information on coin finds. He mentioned finds of Roman coins near Osor, on today’s island of Cres (in the Kvarner Gulf to the south-east of Istria), in addition to the finds of Greek and Roman coins that he had learned about at Pola in 1765.¹⁷ This exemplifies the generic way in which Fortis will report most numismatic finds from now on. Following contemporary practice,¹⁸ he rarely described coin types and legends unless they were unusual, and he did not provide coin weights and measurements. Yet he pointed out in his *Saggio* that he had consulted a work on Greek coins by Hubertus Goltzius (1526 – 1583) and that he had seen four coins of Istros, “struck by different dies”, in Naples’ Capodimonte Museum.¹⁹ Both this reference²⁰ and the numismatic jargon, suggest that by 1771 Fortis had learned to identify ancient coins.

2 According to Fortis 1765, 18, “*Il desiderio d’imparar a conoscere qualche nuova pianta, la buona compagnia, l’amicizia che io ho contratta, stando a Pola, colle Anticaglie, mi determinarono a questa gita*”. Fortis also hoped to find remains of a Roman temple on this mountaintop that was mentioned in Vicenza’s historical records, since he added that “*Le Storie Vicentine fanno menzione di un Tempio Gentile famoso nei tempi andati, fabbricato in vetta del monte. Chi sa, diss’io tra me, che non vi sia qualche resto da mettere all’onore del Mondo?*”. Fortis later referred to this mountain as “the celebrated *Monte Summano*”: see Fortis 1778a, 474, unnumbered note. Ciancio 1995b, 123, and De Giorgi 2018, 4 do not comment on Fortis’ archaeological motivations for this trip.

3 Fortis 1771, 18, n. 23: “*Monete Greche, Romane de’ buoni tempi, e Aquilejesi, e Veneziane de’ tempi di mezzo vi si trovano spesso in argento, in oro, in rame*.” In the same note Fortis also said that “*Jacopo Lombardo, Nobile di Pola*” owned “*parecchie monete antiche d’argento*” (20, n. 23). Fortis was in Istria in April and/or May 1765, according to Muljačić 1978, 272. For previous visitors who had described Istrian antiquities see Ciancio 1995b, 61, 123.

4 See Pomian 1987, 102–103.

5 For the spelling of this surname see Favaretto 1990, 232, n. 299.

6 Toscano 2009, 170, 173. According to Toscano, Vallisnieri Jr. curated and augmented his father’s “antiquarian-naturalistic” collection throughout his life. For his influence on Fortis see Ciancio 1995b, 27–29; 2002, 639.

7 Arduino and Fortis had been on field trips together since 1761, according to Ciancio 1995b, 32; see also Ciancio 1999.

8 Pomian 1987, 99. For Patin’s numismatic methodology see Gorini 2008, 21–22, 24.

9 Cf. Arduino 1765, 370, “*Nelle mie Lettere parlo [...] di nuova specie di Medaglie [...] di Date senza comparazione più antiche, più importanti, e più sicure, che quelle di tutte le Medaglie de’ Greci, e de’ Romani; voglio dire d’antichissimi effetti, e reliquie del Fuoco, e dell’Acqua*”. See also Vaccari 1993, 197, 209, 272. The notion that “fossils could be treated as nature’s “medals” or coins” was suggested by Robert Hooke (1635 – 1703), according to Rudwick 2005, 194, 236–237.

10 Arduino regarded ancient coins as “scattered monuments of transitory histories” that were best left to idle antiquarians: see Pomian 1987, 271.

11 Ciancio 1995b, 62.

12 Ciancio 1995b, 62–68.

13 Ciancio 2002, 641.

14 Cf. Pomian 1987, 100, 273, 279–80; Zorzi 1988, 101–102, 127–54; Favaretto 1990, 163, 200–202, 210–14, 229–30; Ciancio 1995b, 71; Bombardini 2022, 217–218; 2024, 187–188; Candego, Pilutti Namer 2022, 26; Callegari 2022, 329–331. Several Venetian coin collections had already been published by the 1760s: see Gorini 2005, 334; 2015, 233–234.

15 Ciancio 1995b, 73 has pointed out that, according to Fortis, there is “continuity and integration between the history of the earth and the history of nations”.

16 See above, n. 2. Stratigraphic excavations conducted in 2008 have revealed the presence of a cultic site on the mountaintop that was frequented from the late Iron age to the second half of the 5th century CE: see Gamba, Salerno 2009.

17 Fortis 1771, 31.

18 Gorini 2015, 235, n. 32.

19 “*Io ò veduti quattro esemplari di questa moneta medesima, e non tutti d’un conio, nel Regio Museo di Capodimonte a Napoli*”: Fortis 1771, 133. Fortis may have visited this museum while he lived in Rome or in June 1771, when he came to Campania after Mt. Vesuvius had erupted: see Ciancio 1995b, 130; 2002, 642.

20 Goltzius’ catalog was the most sought-after source of information on Greek coins in the 18th century until the publication of J. Eckhel’s *Doctrina numorum veterum* (1792 – 1798): cf. Napolitano 2020, 347–372; Lucchelli 2022.

2. Rediscovering Dalmatia's numismatic heritage (1771 – 1779)

Fortis' later *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, which was published in 1774 and became his most famous work, contains several references to coin finds. In 1771 Fortis had followed earlier models of learned travelogues, such as Jacob Spon's *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grece, et du Levant*.²¹ In contrast, the structure of his new book (which is organized as a series of letters addressed to sponsors and mentors) was modeled after the botanist J. Pitton de Tournefort's *Relation d'un voyage du Levant*.²² Like Spon and de Tournefort, Fortis folded antiquarian information into the account of his travels; but his approach towards antiquities was more nuanced. Even though he said that he was reluctant to deal with ancient remains, knowing that this required long and extensive study, he believed that he had to mention the presence of antiquities at least in passing (*"alla sfuggita"*)²³ since they could not be ignored, especially because of pervasive Venetian misconceptions about Dalmatia.²⁴ Coins and inscriptions were proof that Dalmatia had an illustrious heritage going back to classical antiquity that was worth preserving: they were "cultural commodities" that "could also inspire and sustain the interests of Venetians."²⁵ However, while Fortis advocated for the preservation of Dalmatian antiquities, "so that they would not perish or be carried off elsewhere",²⁶ he was quite willing to acquire ancient inscriptions wherever he could and take them out of Dalmatia.²⁷

Fortis evoked Spon's description of his experience in Zadar in 1676 by mentioning in the first pages of the *Viaggio* that Dr. Antonio Danieli – his "very good friend and host" in Zadar²⁸ – owned a substantial collection of ancient coins, including several well-preserved Greek coins.²⁹ Spon and G. Wheler had inspected the coin collection of Antonio Soderini, a Venetian nobleman who generously hosted them in his palace.³⁰ Most coins in Danieli's collection presumably came from Dalmatian finds,³¹ whereas Soderini's collection was assembled in the Levant.³² Fortis praised Danieli in his book, but revealed privately in 1777 that his collection was not well organized (except for the coins of the Roman Emperors),³³ and he added that, should he have a chance to go to Zadar, he could pick out "all the types of the island coins and of the Illyrian littoral in the Danieli collection that appeared to me to be either new or not obvious." No other coin collection is described in the *Viaggio*, although Fortis had seen coins of Pharos and Scodra owned by Conte Klement Grubišić (1733 – 1773) at Makarska. In a letter written in 1774 to an unknown correspondent (possibly Andrea Giuseppe de Bonomo-Stettner),³⁴ after the *Viaggio* had already been published, he said "I don't know if your Friend (i.e., the numismatist F. Neumann) knows the coins of the Island of Hvar. I've seen one bearing a youthful head without any ornament, [...] badly drawn on the obverse, and a drinking vessel with very large handles [...] reverse, at the base of which one reads ΦΑ in big letters. I don't know that I have seen it published: but not knowing this proves little, as you can see. The late Conte abbot Grubišić of Makarska owned it. He also had other coins

21 Spon 1678. For this analysis of the literary models of Fortis' works see Ciano 1995b, 69–72.

22 de Tournefort 1718.

23 Fortis 1774, 2, 44, said that he was encouraged by de Tournefort's example to make a cursory mention of archaeological remains (*"Io avrei trascurato del tutto i residui antichi, se l'esempio rispettabile del signor de Tournefort non m'avesse dato coraggio di farne menzione alla sfuggita."*). He added that he would turn over any antiquities that he might come upon in his travels to *"il conte abate Girolamo Silvestri di Rovigo"* (1728 – 1788), a most erudite friend: see Ciano 1995b, 71.

24 Fortis 1774, 1, 131: *"Non ò poi creduto di dover omettere affatto i residui d'antichi stabilimenti, quantunque il farne memoria più all'Antiquario, che al Naturalista appartenga; e tanto meno ò voluto trascurarli quanto più deggiono servire a riformare l'idea che si fanno comunemente fra noi in proposito della Dalmazia, dove non si sarebbero piantate tante Colonie Romane, se fosse quell'orrido paese, che vien dipinto."* Fortis also mentioned the presence of antiquities to add variety to his narrative: see Fortis 1774, 2, 45; Ciano 1995a, 636, n. 65; Giurgevich 2006–2007, 88–89.

25 Wolff 2001, 107.

26 Fortis 1774, 1, 127. After describing the epigraphic heritage of Skradin, Fortis said that it was "almost a shame" that only 6 Latin inscriptions were extant, and that many others that must have been unearthed locally had come to a miserable end or had been taken to Italy, "where they lose most of their significance" (*"dove perdono la maggior parte del loro merito"*).

27 See e.g. Muljačić 1996, 71, n. 31, and below, n. 57, 131.

28 Fortis was at Danieli's home in Zadar on June 1, 1772, according to a notebook published by Kubitschek 1890; see also Bankó, Sticotti 1895, 101. Lučin 2018, 177, mentions Danieli's name as "Antun Danielli (or Danieli) Tommasoni".

29 Fortis 1774, 1, 17: *"Presso questo mio ottimo Amico ed Ospite trovasi un'abbondante Collezione di Monete antiche Romane, e un buon numero di Greche egregiamente conservate."* Danieli also "entrusted" Fortis with a manuscript according to Fortis 1778a, 492.

30 Spon 1678, 88. Spon was especially impressed by *"cinq Othons de cuivre indubitavelmente antiques"* in Soderini's collection. For Soderini and Spon and Wheler's visit to Zadar see Zorzi 1988, 96–97; Mirnik 2014.

31 See Cambi 1990, 100. The Danieli collection comprised c. 6000 coins according to Lučin 2018, 177.

32 See above, n. 30. According to Spon, *"Il a vu tout le Levant, & en a rapporté un Cabinet de medailles considerables."*

33 In a letter of May 30, 1777 (see above, n. 1) Fortis wrote that *"Il Dr. Danieli di Zara à veramente una considerabile collezione di monete antiche, ma non è ordinata se non in quanto appartiene agli Augusti. Vi debbono essere delle rare cose confuse, ed io ò il torto di non averne fatto memoria. Questo amico mio trovasi attualmente in Venezia: e credo che presentandosegli una buona occasione si disfarebbe delle sue anticaglie, che egli ama però con passione, e che gli costano assai."* Only bronze coins of the Danieli collection were still in Zadar in the early 1800s according to de Concina 1809 (letter II from Zadar, written on May 25, 1804), 17–18, who described a museum in Zadar *"presso il conte Giuseppe Pellegrini formato da un certo Danieli, di cui egli ne fu l'erede. [...] Vi è un Medagliere degno d'osservazione, ma il poco genio di chi lo gode attualmente ha preferito alla conservazione la vendita delle Medaglie d'oro, e d'argento, di modo che non ve ne sono presentemente, che di rame, ma molto belle e stimate."* For the history of the Pellegrini - Danieli collection see Cambi 1990, 100–101, 103, n. 11; Lučin 2018, 177–178; see also below, n. 105.

34 See Williams 2021, 451, n. 61 and above, n. 1. Other Dalmatian collectors presumably showed their ancient holdings to Fortis in 1771–1773; see Ciano 1995b, 69–70, n. 172.

(that are) certainly unpublished, among which I remember drawing one of Scodra, ΣΚΟΔΡΙΝΩΝ,³⁵ with the intention of having it published. I don't know now where to put my hands to find this drawing in the farraginous mass of my papers scattered in various places, as things (that are) useless nowadays."

("Non so se l'Amico suo conosca la moneta dell'Isola di Lesina. Io ne ò veduta una con un capo giovanile senza verun ornamento, [...] mal disegnato dal dritto, e un calice colle anse molto grandi [...] rovescio, appiè del quale in gran lettere leggesi ΦΑ. Non so d'averla veduta pubblicata: ma ch'io nol sappia prova poco, come ella ben vede. La possedeva il fu Co: abate Grubbisich di Macarska che ne avev'anche dell'altre certamente inedite, fra le quali [mi] risovviene d'averne disegnato una di Scutari, ΣΚΟΔΡΙΝΩΝ, con intenzione di farla pubblicare; ora non so dove metter le mani per trovare questo disegno nella massa farraginoso delle mie carte disperse in varj luoghi, come cose inutili oggimai.")

But Fortis' interest was not limited to the Greek and Roman coins collected by prominent members of society. He also made ethnographic observations about the functions of ancient and contemporary coins among the Morlacchi, a Slavic people who lived in the hinterland of Dalmatia:³⁶

"Another devotion of the Morlacchi (which is not so exclusive to them, that it is also not practiced by our ordinary people) is that of the Late Imperial copper and silver coins, or contemporary Venetian coins, that are known as medals of St. Helen, to which they attribute very great power against epilepsy, and other ailments. The same properties are attributed to those Hungarian coins called *Petizze*, when they bear the image of the Virgin with the baby Jesus supported by the [Virgin's] straight arm on the reverse. The gift of one of these coins is very much appreciated by both the men and the women of Morlacchia."

("Un'altra divozione de' Morlacchi (la quale non è tanto propria loro, che anche fra 'l popolo nostro minuto non abbia luogo) si è quella delle monete di rame, e d'argento del basso-Impero, o Veneziane contemporanee, che passano per medaglie di Sant'Elena,

*alle quali attribuiscono grandissime virtù contro l'Epilessia, ed altri malori. Le medesime perfezioni sono attribuite a quelle monete d'Ungheria chiamate Petizze, quando nel rovescio abbian l'immagine della Vergine col bambino Gesù sostenuto dal braccio dritto. Il dono d'una di queste monete è carissimo sì agli uomini, che alle donne di Morlacchia.")*³⁷

Fortis added parenthetically that the practice of using certain coins as talismans (known as "medals of St. Helen") was also followed by lower-class Venetians ("il popolo nostro minuto").³⁸ Furthermore, in describing the traditional dress of Morlacchi girls, he noted that the most attractive ones wore "several rows of silver coins, often including ancient and valuable coins", as jewelry.³⁹

In addition, Fortis mentioned various coin finds from the environs of Knin, Skradin, the island of Murter, Makarska, and the island of Vis:

"I have not seen ancient monuments of any kind, except for an observable quantity of Roman coins, and especially of the reign of the good Emperor Antoninus [Pius]. Ancient Venetian coins, and coins of other Medieval cities and rulers are also frequently found in those parts."⁴⁰

"Roman coins are found very frequently in the vicinity of Skradin. I have seen some of them, very valuable, in the possession of the most hospitable Prelate Monsignor Trevisani, Bishop [...]"⁴¹

Coins and inscriptions are found not infrequently in the vicinity [of Murter]: but the suspicious nature of the inhabitants of that island makes it very difficult to take advantage of this."⁴²

"I saw at Makarska a beautiful gold coin of [Emperor] Marcus Iulius Philippus."⁴³

"Two coins of the Issaeans are found, one of which has a helmeted head of Athena on the obverse, and an amphora on the reverse; the other bears a goat instead of the amphora."⁴⁴

35 This sentence should perhaps not be taken literally, because Fortis had a draftsman with him in Dalmatia; see e.g. Fortis 1774, 2, 144. Cf. Ciancio 1995a, 633; Muljačić 1996, 70, n. 21, 75, n. 50; Giurgevich 2006–2007, 33, 49; Toscano 2009, 178–179. For ancient Scodra (Shkodër, in northwest Albania) see Lippert, Matzinger 2023, 80; for the most recent work on the coinage of Scodra see Gjonecagj-Vangjeli 2023.

36 Milić-Brett 2014, 35–56.

37 Fortis 1774, 1, 66–67.

38 For this custom in Dalmatia, where St. Helen was also venerated as a patron saint of sailors, see Duplančić 2010, 163.

39 Fortis 1774, 1, 69: "molte file di monete d'argento, fra le quali benespesso ve n'anno d'antiche, e pregevoli."

40 Fortis 1774, 1, 113: "Monumenti antichi di sorte alcuna io non vi ò veduto, trattone un'osservabile quantità di monete Romane, e particolarmente de' tempi del buon Imperatore Antonino. Trovansi anche non di rado per quelle contrade monete antiche Veneziane, e d'altre Città, e Principi dell'età di mezzo." Fortis said in a letter to John Strange that "Coins of the Antonini are, [...] sometimes found about Knin"; see Strange 1775, 345.

41 Fortis 1774, 1, 127: "Si trovano ne' contorni di Scardona molto frequentemente monete Romane, alcune delle quali, assai pregevoli, ò veduto presso l'ospitalissimo Prelato Monsignor Trevisani, Vescovo [...]" Finds of Roman coins near Skradin were also mentioned by Strange 1775, 347, based on information from Fortis.

42 Fortis 1774, 1, 165: "Si trovano non di raro Monete, e Iscrizioni in que' contorni: ma l'indole sospettosa degli abitanti di quell'Isola rende difficilissimo il profittarne."

43 Fortis 1774, 2, 111: "Io ò veduto a Macarska una bellissima medaglia di Marco Giulio Filippo in oro."

44 Fortis 1774, 2, 164–65: "Si trovano due Monete dell'Issei, l'una delle quali à il capo di Pallade armata dal dritto, e un'anfora dal rovescio; l'altra porta in luogo dell'anfora una capra."

These scattered remarks may appear generic, but their overall number is impressive. Despite the incompleteness of Fortis' data, he was the first non-Croatian writer who took notice of Dalmatia's numismatic heritage from classical antiquity to his own time. In contrast, Ivan Lovrić (Giovanni Lovrich), the young Dalmatian writer from Sinj (c. 1754 – 1777) who fiercely criticized Fortis' book, had nothing to say about finds of archaeological materials.⁴⁵ Fortis blazed a trail for subsequent Croatian students of the Greek and Roman coins that circulated in Dalmatia.⁴⁶

His description of two Issaeian coins is the only detailed description of coin types in the *Viaggio*. Fortis was the second scholar who attributed these coins to Issa based on their provenience. Although credit must be given to Antun Matijašević Karamaneo (1658 – 1721), a native of Vis who first identified Issa's coin types, Karamaneo's antiquarian studies remained unpublished until the 19th century and most of his correspondence is still unknown.⁴⁷ Fortis knew about Karamaneo's work, since he called him (p. 165) "*un erudito Uomo [...] che lasciò molte pregevoli schede [i.e., notes] appartenenti specialmente all'illustrazione della sua Patria*", but there is no reason to suspect that he plagiarized him. Since autoptic observation was his guiding principle,⁴⁸ he probably learned from the evidence of the coins themselves. In a letter written in 1774 Fortis made it clear that he obtained ("*ò avuto*") several examples of Issaeian coins when he was on the island of Vis in the Summer of 1771:

"The coin of Issa mentioned by your learned friend [i.e. the numismatist F. Neumann] is in fact one of the two coins that I referred to when I talked about that island in volume 2, page 164 of my *Viaggio in Dalmazia*. The legend on both is ΙΣ rather than IC on any of them, as far as I know. I have had several examples of one and of the other Issaeian coin when I was there, and therefore I do not doubt at all that they belong to another country."⁴⁹

45 Lovrich 1776, 6, accused Fortis of having written about Dalmatian antiquities what others had already said before him: "*I suoi discorsi di Antichità, e Storia Nazionale di sovente non sono altro, che cose già dette dagli altri avanti a lui*." See also Torcellan 1969, 288; Wolff 2001, 237–243.

46 Visonà 2025.

47 Lučin 2018, 173; cf. Paškvan, Visonà 2020–2021, 133. Two copies of a manuscript titled *Notizie di Lissa e di Lesina cavate dagli antichi autori da Dr. A.M.C. Dottor in ambe le leggi eccellente Poeta qui da un suo uditore unite l'anno 1762* are in the library of Split's Arheološki muzej. Based possibly on a third copy, Matijašević Karamaneo's manuscript was published (under the title: *Notizie di Lissa e di Lesina, cavate dagli antichi autori da D. Antonio Mattiassevich Karamaneo, dottor in ambo le leggi, eccellente poeta e soggetto eruditissimo, 1762*) in *Cronaca di Scienze, Lettere, Arti, Economia, Industria* 4, I. Semestre, Milano 1858, disp. 9, 549–554; disp. 10, 617–620; disp. 11, 682–687; II. Semestre, disp. 14, 104–108. I wish to thank an anonymous referee for this information. Wolff 2001, 239, has noted that "there was no effectively established printing press in Dalmatia until 1792".

48 See e.g. Fortis 1774, 1, 131.

49 See above, n. 34. "*La moneta di Lissa, di cui fa menzione il suo dotto amico, è per lo appunto una delle due ch'io ò accennato in parlando di quell'Isola nel t. 2. pag 164. del mio viaggio in Dalmazia. L'epigrafe è in entrambe ΙΣ non IC in alcuna di esse, per quanto io so. Ò avuto parecchi esemplari dell'una e dell'altra moneta Issea, trovandomi sul luogo, e quindi non dubito punto che ad altro paese appartengano*." In 1774 Neumann presumably wanted to know from Fortis whether Issaeian coins bore the legend IC. Eckhel later published an issue with Head of Athena / IC Goat: see Eckhel 1775, 97, Pl. 7: 2. This coin is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum's collection (MK GR 11740; Ø 22 mm; 8.68 g; 6h); its reverse may be overstruck.

Thus Fortis "scooped" J. H. Eckhel, who attributed three coins to Issa in 1775 without mentioning Fortis' "eyewitness report" from Vis.⁵⁰ However, Fortis' description of the coins' iconography in the *Viaggio* is puzzling, because Issa did not strike coins with a head of Athena on the obverse and an amphora on the reverse. This incorrect description remained unchanged in the English and French editions of his book, which were published in 1778.⁵¹ Even F. Neumann, who mentioned it in his *Populorum et regum numi veteres anecdoti*,⁵² did not question its accuracy. In contrast, John Strange (1732 – 1799), one of the main sponsors of Fortis' travels in Dalmatia, published a correct description of an Issaeian coin type, even though he gave it a wrong legend based on information provided by Fortis.⁵³

Fortis does not seem to have been particularly interested in the coinage of Issa after his visit to Vis. In a letter of May 30, 1777, in which he expressed his willingness to help Neumann, he confessed that he might have torn up his drawings of a coin of Scodra and of Issaeian coins because they were "useless". He also surmised that he might have sent them to a renowned antiquarian of Rovigo, (probably Conte Girolamo Silvestri) in which case they could be salvaged.⁵⁴ This suggests that Fortis did not have any coins of Issa in his possession when he wrote that letter. It is not known whether he obtained any of the "several examples" ("*parecchi esemplari*") of Issaeian coins that he had seen when he visited Vis in late July, 1771.⁵⁵ However, he admitted that had he acquired "many Roman and medieval coins" during his trav-

50 Eckhel initially attributed to Issa a bronze coin bearing a laureate head of Zeus on the obverse and a goat standing on the reverse with the legend ΙΣ; he later identified it as a ΔΙ[] issue (Eckhel 1775, 97; cf. 1779, 101; 1794, 159). The same coin was reassigned to Issa by F. Carrara, who examined it in Vienna and illustrated it with a drawing: see Rizzoli 1904 (2, 9), 101; (2, 11), 125; 1905 (3, 4), 43. Although Rizzoli noted that J. Brunšmid "would assign this [...] to Pharos or ΔΙ", Brunšmid did not discuss it in his 1898 essay on the coinages of Greek colonies in Dalmatia. For the ΔΙ[] coins see Bilić 2022, 8 (with the most recent bibliography).

51 Fortis 1778a, 322; 1778b, 224.

52 Neumann 1779, 167–68.

53 "The Abbé also informs me that, although scarce any vestiges of antient (sic) buildings remain in the island, yet coins are often found there, and most commonly such as have the head of Minerva on one side, and on the other a goat, with the name of the country, ΙΣΣΑ." See Strange 1775, 341. Most Issaeian coins bearing these types have a 2-letter legend.

54 See above, n. 1. This letter begins with "*Io incontrerò con piacere l'onore di servire il P. Can.co Neumann [sic], ma non se mi riuscirà di recuperare i disegni del nummo di Scodra [e] degli altri Lissani; io ò un pò di sospetto d'averli stracciati come inutili [...]. Potrebbe essere però che li avessi uniti a molte Iscrizioni, e spediti ad un noto antiquario di Rovigo, nel qual caso li riaveremo*." In a letter written in 1774 Fortis had mentioned a drawing of a coin of Scodra owned by K. Grubišić: see above, n. 34. For Conte G. Silvestri (1728 – 1788) see above, n. 23. According to L. Ciancio, Fortis' letters to Silvestri contain "only epigraphic transcriptions" (e-mail of 2. 17. 2021).

55 See above, n. 49. According to Fortis 1774, 2, 165, "*Io non fui che una sola volta sull'Isola di Lissa in compagnia di Mylord Hervey [...] noi vi sbarcammo per così dire alla ventura, privi d'appoggi, e di chi ci potesse dirigere utilmente. Quindi pochissimo vi potemmo osservare, tormentati anche dall'eccessivo calore della stagione [...]*" For the timing of Fortis' short visit to Vis see Muljačić 1996, 43, 49, 150. Fortis' observations about this island were inaccurate and some of his assertions (e.g., that the ruins of an ancient city named Meo were probably to be found at Komiža, and that the island was mostly made of marble: see Fortis 1774, 2, 164–165) are wrong. Cf. Čargo 2010, 18.

els in Dalmatia.⁵⁶ In addition, he occasionally purchased or was offered Dalmatian antiquities,⁵⁷ and he shipped inscriptions and architectural sculptures to England as early as 1774, as can be inferred from a letter in which Fortis said that an arch, a bas-relief, and inscriptions “had already left for London and would soon be published in the proceedings of that archaeological society” (*i.e.*, The Society of Antiquaries of London).⁵⁸ Since Strange published a Latin inscription “engraved on a stone ornamented with bas-reliefs” that Fortis had seen “Between Knin and the monastery of San Arcangelo, in the desert of Bukovica”,⁵⁹ and gave a detailed description of the largest of “three antient (*sic*) arches united together” that Fortis had found at a site that he named *Suplacerqua*, in the environs of Knin,⁶⁰ he probably was the recipient of this shipment. Therefore, the possibility that Fortis also sent some coins to Strange cannot be ruled out.⁶¹ Guido Ignazio Vio (1723 – 1782), a Camaldolese monk and a naturalist, was hired by Strange to assess the value of the “gifts” (including numismatic items) acquired by Fortis in Dalmatia and elsewhere.⁶²

Fortis first mentioned a coin of Issa in his possession in an essay on the island of Korčula in southern Dalmatia (known to the Greeks as Corcyra Melaina), which he had visited in December 1779.⁶³ After describing an unpublished (presumably bronze) coin of Corcyra with a vessel on the obverse and a grape cluster between leaves on the reverse, which he believed to have been minted on Korčula, he said that its coin types were “exactly similar” to those of an Issaeian coin, also unpublished, that

he owned.⁶⁴ Presumably, the latter was a bronze issue bearing the legend $\text{I}\Sigma$ above a volute krater on the obverse and a grape cluster between leaves on the reverse.⁶⁵ Fortis also said that he would add a plate of drawings of coin types to his essay on Korčula, but it is not known whether he ever did.

Beginning in 1774, Fortis played a critical role in persuading Neumann that certain bronze coins bearing the legend KOP were minted on the island of Korčula. In a letter written in 1774 he said that had fulfilled a “small request” (presumably by Neumann) about the coinage of Korčula: he had had in his hands a “small sack of coins” brought from that island, including “a good number bearing the legend KOP. of both types”. Fortis had consulted Antonio and Girolamo Zanetti, two antiquarian friends, and had been assured by the latter that a gentleman had recently brought many of these coins from Dalmatia. He believed that those struck by Ionian Corcyra (on present-day Corfu) bore the full legend KOPKYPAIQN and had types of superior style.⁶⁶

Mint attribution based on the coins’ provenience and the form of the legend was a subject of intense debate among 18th-century numismatists.⁶⁷ But despite Fortis’ authoritative testimony, which Neumann found compelling, his conclusions were wrong. Unbeknownst to both of them, similar coins bearing the legend KOP were also found on the island of Corfu, as Eckhel learned in 1776 from Giacomo Gradenigo (1721 – 1796), a Venetian nobleman who was *Provveditore di Dalmazia e Albania* from 1774 to

56 In a letter (?) written presumably after 1774 and quoted (without any reference) by Torcellan 1969, 283, Fortis said that he had obtained Greek and Slavonic manuscripts and many Roman and medieval coins from Dalmatia and Morlacchia “Della Dalmazia e della Morlacchia sono restato oltremodo contento. O avuto qualche bel ms. greco, e due slavonici, molte monete romane e dell’età di mezzo [...]” Cf. Muljačić 1996, 149 and below, n. 142.

57 Fortis bought a funerary inscription at Podgrade (near ancient Asseria) and planned to take it to Italy: see Fortis 1774, 2, 35–36, “Io ò trovato per un raro accidente nella Casa del Morlacco Juréka una Sepolcrale, che ò anche acquistata, con pochi quattrini, e unitamente ad alcune altre porterò in Italia.” According to Tozzi 2017, 367–368, and 439 (L 64), it may be tentatively identified with an inscription of Dalmatian provenience that was owned by Marquis Tommaso degli Obizzi and is now in Vienna. Obizzi’s inscription was first described by John Strange in a letter written on April 20, 1776: its provenience may be Podgrade or Skradin. According to Fortis (quoted by Strange), he saw it “among the many loose stones scattered about this city”, but it is unclear which “city” he referred to. He “bought (it) on the spot and removed it to Padua, to increase the collection of [...] Sig. Marsilli, professor of botany in that university”: see Strange 1779, 171. Fortis also tried to buy inscriptions at Salona in 1772 and at Skradin again in 1791: see Kubitschek 1890, 184; Toscano 2009, 207 (letter of Fortis to Tommaso degli Obizzi of February 9, 1791). At Skradin he was given Roman lamps bearing the potter’s name FORTIS as a gift: see Fortis 1774, 1, 127.

58 See above, n. 34: “L’arco, il bassorilievo, e le iscrizioni sono già partite per Londra, e usciranno tra pochi mesi negli atti di quella società archeologica”.

59 Strange 1775, 346. This inscription is probably the “pezzo di pilastro a quattro faccie adorno di basso-rilievi agli angoli, su di cui si legge in lettere massime, e ben conservate un residuo d’antico Elogio” described in Fortis 1774, 1, 118.

60 Strange 1775, 346–347. *Suplacerqua* may be Fortis’ transliteration of the toponym Suplja crkva or Supljaja. I wish to thank an anonymous referee for this suggestion.

61 See the remarks by Muljačić 1996, 148. Strange had a collection of Greek and Roman coins which was sold at auction by Christie’s after his death; see Toscano 2009, 79, 88–89. There is no mention of Strange or Fortis in Burnett 2020.

62 Muljačić 1990, 130. Fortis was in contact with Vio since 1764; see Ciancio 1995b, 23, 30, n. 24, and 43.

63 Fortis 2011, 242. See Giurgevich 2006–2007, 36.

64 See Fortis 2011, 259–260 (= Muljačić 2004, 31): “Il Padre Froelich ne à pubblicata parecchie; io ne ho trovato una, che non è in quel numero, ed ha d’alluna parte una Diota colle Lettere AX scritte dalla destra alla sinistra all’orientale, dall’altra un grappolo d’uva con fogliami, e pampini disegnati di buon gusto, simboli convenientissimi ad un paese, la di cui principale ricchezza dovreb’essere il vino, ed esattamente simili ad una pur inedita dell’Isola di Lissa, ch’io ò presso di me. [...] Io unirò a questo scritto una Tavola delle varie monete Corzolane.” For the Corcyraean issue described by Fortis cf. SNG München 2007, 656–657. It is uncertain whether the two coins described by Fortis were found on Korčula, as Giurgevich 2006–2007, 42 has asserted.

65 This Issaeian issue, which was entirely overstruck on *litrai* of Hieron II of Syracuse, may be dated to c. 210 – 200 BCE: see Visonà 2017, 207. Neumann 1783, 150, 7, listed it among the coins minted by the “Issians”.

66 For this letter see above, n. 34. Fortis said that he did not deserve any praise (by Neumann): “Se ò qualche vero merito egli è quello del desiderar d’esser utile: ma le forze non sono corrispondenti alla voglia. Nella picciola commissione però riguardante le monete di Curzola io sono riuscito. O cercato d’avere nelle mani un sacchetto di monete portate da quell’Isola, e di fatto ne incorsi [...] un buon numero coll’epigrafe KOP. d’entrambi i tipi. O anche consultato i miei due amici, Ss.ri Antonio e Girolamo Zannetti, dottissimi in sì fatte materie, e l’ultimo mi assicurò, che un Gentiluomo [...] ritornato da quel Governo ne aveva portato di molte. Da Ragusi [sic] non ò peranche avuto risposta. Le monete di Corfù sogliono avere il KOPKYPAIQN tutto disteso, e sono infinitamente meglio disegnate che le KOPzolane.” Parts of this letter were paraphrased by Neumann 1779, 178–79.

67 Williams 2022, 451–453.

1777 and *Provveditore Generale da Mar* from 1778 to 1781, based in Zadar.⁶⁸ Fortis never changed his mind about his attribution.⁶⁹ The controversy over the origin of these issues continued in the 19th century and was settled in 1884 by Friedrich Imhoof Blumer, who first identified and published a Greek bronze coin struck on Corcyra Melaina.⁷⁰ Ironically, this coinage includes issues bearing both the complete legend ΚΟΡΚΥΡΑΙΩΝ and the abbreviated legend ΚΟΡ, which may be interpreted as the ethnic adopted by the Issaeans settlers who established a community on Korčula possibly in the mid-3rd century BCE.⁷¹

Fortis may have helped Neumann to acquire Issaeans coins between 1779 and 1783, when an addition to *Populorum et regum numi veteres anecdoti* was published. In this second part of his work Neumann mentioned that he had 13 examples of Issaeans coins (nine more than those he listed in 1779).⁷² By the early 1780s Fortis had begun to solicit friends in Dalmatia to send him ancient coins and he was also in touch with Neumann. Between 1774 and 1777 he had provided information to Neumann through an intermediary (A.G. de Bonomo-Stettner).⁷³ Fortis had drawn a bronze coin of Scodra, an Illyrian mint (Shkodër, in today's Albania) in the collection of Conte K. Grubišić, and he knew that it was unpublished. But he was unable to find the drawings of this coin in 1774 and in 1777.⁷⁴ Neumann, who was intrigued by the coinage of Scodra, wrote in 1779 that "he had been promised" a coin bearing the legend ΣΚΟΔΡΙΝΩΝ,⁷⁵ but he did not mention that Fortis had made this promise. Fortis himself referred to this promise in a letter to his friend Miho Sorkočević (Michele Sörgo, 1739 – 1796), a resident of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), written from S. Pietro d'Arzignano on February 16, 1781. Fortis reminded Sorkočević of a favor that he had asked for years before:⁷⁶ he should find a merchant who plied his trade in Albanian harbors from Shkodër to Vlorë, who would buy up "as many ancient bronze, silver, and gold coins as possible." He hoped that an issue of Scodra (and possibly other unpublished issues) could be found in a "mass" of coins.

At some point Fortis also began writing directly to Neumann, whom he named as "my correspondent" ("*Il mio corrispondente canonico Neumann di Vienna*") in a "*Memoria*" for Conte Radoš Antun Michieli Vitturi of Split (1752 – c. 1822), written on May 18,

1782.⁷⁷ In this memorandum Fortis asked Michieli Vitturi to look for "ancient silver coins, Roman or Greek, as well as those of Late Antiquity, struck in Dalmatian mints", and especially for coins of Issa ("which bear ΙΣ and must have at least three different types"), Pharos, Scodra, "Corzola", and Daorsi. Fortis said that he wished to examine them, draw their types, and return them to their owners. His description of the reverse type of some of Scodra's autonomous coins as "a half galley" may be the first on record.⁷⁸

Fortis also told Michieli Vitturi that Neumann was working on a project titled *De nummis veteribus insularum Adriatici maris*; this was "an interesting work, but one that needed help". Unfortunately, there is no record of it in the archives of Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum.⁷⁹ Perhaps this Latin phrase was a reference to the forthcoming chapter on Illyricum in Neumann's *Pars altera* of his *Populorum et regum numi veteres anecdoti* (which was published in 1783),⁸⁰ because Neumann wrote to Fortis in Latin and French.⁸¹ This chapter included the drawings of two autonomous coins of Scodra that Fortis had provided, as Neumann duly acknowledged;⁸² they were illustrated in the text, rather than in one of the plates at the end of the book. Presumably, Fortis was able to obtain them after he wrote to Sorkočević and Michieli Vitturi, since neither of them was a drawing of the coin that K. Grubišić had shown him more than ten years earlier. A letter written by Neumann to his "*cher ami*" on January 22, 1785, confirms that Fortis had sent him these drawings.⁸³ Thus the first

76 See Giurgevich 2010, 153 (letter 75): "*Bisogna ch'io vi ripregli d'un favore, di cui mi pare d'avervi scritto e pregato qualche anno fa. Un S.r Neumann di Vienna che diede nel 1779 un bel libro di monete inedite di Re e Popoli antichi, e che in esso libro a non so perchè parlato molto, e bene de' fatti miei senz'aver meco relazione diretta, à messo in piè di pagina senza nominarmi (tratto di finissima creanza) la promessa ch'io gli ò fatto di procurargli la moneta Greca di Scutari colla leggenda ΣΚΟΔΡΙΝΩΝ, moneta da me veduta presso il fu ottimo Ab.e Grubbsich, e ch'io credeva di facile ritrovamento verso codeste contrade. Questa moneta è tuttavia inedita.*"

77 Giurgevich 2010, 212 (letter 102): "*Favorirà ricercare diligentemente a onesto prezzo le monete antiche d'argento, latine e greche, e così quelle dei bassi tempi, battute nelle Zecche Dalmatiche.*" This letter is among 35 letters written by Fortis to Michieli Vitturi between 1777 – 1791: see Muljačić 1990, 128, n. 3. Michieli Vitturi also collected ancient coins according to Ciccarelli 1814, 46, n. 26 (quoted by Duplančić 2006, 381, n. 6).

78 Cf. Anonymous 1891b, 168; Giurgevich 2010, 212 (letter 102): "*Di Scutari che hanno una mezza galea, sotto di cui si legge ΣΚΟΔΡΙΝΩΝ e non sono pubblicate.*" Neither Eckhel, nor Neumann had published a description of Scodra's autonomous coin types by 1779, although Eckhel 1779, 101 published a coin of Genthios minted at Scodra: see Meta 2020, 87. The presence of coins of Scodra in G. Gradenigo's collection was mentioned by Eckhel 1794, 158.

79 See above, n. 64: "*stà lavorando un'opera interessante ma bisognosa di soccorsi [...], e che a qualunque per mio, o per altrui mezzo gli desse lumi, farebbe pubblicamente giustizia.*"

80 Neumann 1783, 148–157; see also 172–174.

81 Haarmann 2016, 77. An undated letter written in Latin by Neumann to "*Amicorum optimo Fortis*" is in Teramo's Archivio di Stato; a copy of it was kindly sent to me by L. Ciancio.

82 Neumann 1783, 157: "*Ejus urbis cum nulli antehac numi prodierint, duos in lucem emitto, quorum ectypa cum plurimis aliis a docto amico Alb. Fortis mihi transmissa sunt.*" For these coins see Brunšmid 1898, 72, 9.2 and 13.2.

83 For Neumann's letter see Pannella, Savorini 1904, 135. According to Neumann, "*Ce sont principalement les médailles de Teanum et de Scodra, dont je me loue le plus. La dernière et une autre semblable sont gravées dans ma seconde partie p. 157 d'après les dessins que vous aviez la bonté de me communiquer. Parmi les incognita il y en a quelqu'un qui sont sûrement unedates quoiqu'encore énigmatiques.*" I am grateful to R. Ricci for sending me a copy of this letter.

68 Williams 2022, 443, n. 17, 453, n. 74.

69 In a letter to Julije (Giulio) Bajamonti (1744 – 1800) written from Naples on August 28, 1787, Fortis asked his friend to look for various Greek bronze coins, including those of Korčula ("Corzole"): see below, n. 125. Bajamonti, a physician born in Split, travelled with Fortis in southern Dalmatia (Fortis 1774, 2, 39, 112–114); Fortis wrote to him from 1772 to 1796. For their correspondence see Milčetić 1912; Duplančić 1996; 1997; Giurgevich 2010, 79–129. Cf. Martin 2010, 189, n. 2.

70 Imhoof-Blumer 1884, 254, 56. Dalmatian antiquarians such as M. Kapor continued to attribute Corcyrean issues to Korčula into the 1840s; see Visonà 2025 (in press).

71 For this coinage see Ilkić 2016, 102; Bilić 2022, 14; Bilić, Doračić 2020–2021; Williams 2022, 453.

72 Neumann 1783, 151, Pl. 5: 7–10.

73 See above, n. 1, 33–34, 49, 54, 66.

74 See above, n. 34 and 54.

75 Neumann 1779, 166, unnumbered note.

two autonomous coins of Scodra were published by Neumann.⁸⁴ One may infer from his letter to Fortis that the illustrations of two Illyrian *numi incogniti* that he published in 1783 - an issue of Pharos with Head of Zeus / Goat I. and an unepigraphic issue of the Ionios series - were also among the “very many” drawings sent by his Paduan friend.⁸⁵

From 1774 to the 1780s Fortis was able to provide Neumann with information about Greek and Illyrian coins from the eastern Adriatic because of his personal experience and his contacts in Dalmatia. Apparently, he did not correspond with Eckhel, even though he knew indirectly of his work.⁸⁶ Since in his 1782 memorandum to Michieli Vitturi Fortis was aware of a dispute between Eckhel and Neumann about a coin of the Daorsi, which he described in detail, but exchanging obverse for reverse (“*Dei Daorsi coll’epigrafe ΔΑΟΡΣΩΝ sopra una nave e una testa nel rovescio*”), he must have learned about its iconography from one of Eckhel’s catalogues, or from someone who owned them. In a letter written in 1777 he had said that he had not seen an issue bearing the legend ΔΑΟΡΣΩΝ “either in nature or in any book”.⁸⁷

Eckhel, for his part, never mentioned Fortis; between 1776 and 1779 he obtained first-hand data on the coinages of Issa, Pharos, and other Greek mints from Giacomo Gradenigo, who had direct knowledge about coin finds in the region as *Provveditore* and was also a distinguished collector.⁸⁸ Gradenigo had assembled a large collection of ancient coins after serving for 36 years in the Levant and Dalmatia. He, too, was familiar with some coin types of Issa and Pharos and was better informed than Fortis about the provenience of these issues, and of other Greek coins from Adriatic and Ionian mints.⁸⁹ Yet Fortis made no mention of Gradenigo or his collection in his *Viaggio* and in his letters.⁹⁰ Neumann continued to correspond with Fortis at least until late 1789,⁹¹ but did not publish any other numismatic book of his own

after the second installment of *Populorum et regum numi veteres anecdoti*, which was a catalogue of coins in his collection.⁹²

3. Searching for ancient coins in southern Italy and Dalmatia (1780 – 1790)

Throughout the 1770s Fortis had developed an interest in the ancient coins found in Dalmatia, especially the Greek and Illyrian issues of which little was then known. He also had begun to collect them, as may be inferred from the comments he made in his essay on Korčula,⁹³ although he did not explicitly admit that he owned a coin collection. When Fortis wrote to Sorkočević in 1781 to remind him of a previous request and to outline his plan to buy ancient coins in bulk, in hopes that they included rare and unpublished issues, he sounded like a seasoned collector. Sorkočević was expected to give instructions to the “Captains who sail to the Levant” about this scheme, and to make sure that they purchased the coins for a fair price.⁹⁴ Fortis recommended the same plan to J. Bajamonti, another Dalmatian friend, in a letter written from Terlizzi on November 30, 1790.⁹⁵ As he had already asked Bajamonti for Greek coins in a letter written from Naples on December 20, 1786,⁹⁶ one should not believe what he said to Michieli Vitturi in a letter of November 1, 1787 from Molfetta: that, since he had some disposable income, he was seized by “the passion for ancient coins, particularly for those in gold and silver”.⁹⁷ Fortis also mentioned his “little antiquarian passion” (“*passioncella antiquaria*”) and “this old fogey’s passion of mine” (“*questa mia passione da vecchio cucco*”) in two letters to Bajamonti written in 1789 and between 1787 and 1790, respectively.⁹⁸ This “passion” had been kindled much earlier by his travels in Istria and Dalmatia, and was very much alive through the 1780s. However, it is doubtful that Fortis had the financial means to assemble a large collection of coins and other antiquities.⁹⁹

84 Gjongecaj-Vangjeli 2023, 130 has incorrectly stated that Eckhel published two coins of Scodra in 1779.

85 See above, n. 83 and cf. Neumann 1783, 172: “*Numi N. 8 & 9 in Illyrico, e cujus visceribus eruti sunt, & quidem in Adriatici maris insulis domestici videntur, faventibus insuper types & artificio.*” These coins were identified by Brunšmid 1898, 42, 57, 61, 64.

86 Fortis said in 1777 that he had not seen Eckhel’s “recent book” (presumably, he was referring to Eckhel 1775): see above, n. 1. No letters from Fortis to Eckhel or from Eckhel to Fortis are known thus far, according to D. Williams (e-mail of 2. 19. 2025). In 1794 Fortis knew of Eckhel’s *Doctrina numorum veterum*: see below, n. 155.

87 Cf. Eckhel 1775, 95–96; 1779, 98. For this letter see above, n. 1. The coinage of the Daorsi has been examined by Dragičević 2016.

88 Wolff 2001, 228–236; Williams 2022, 443–444. According to Wolff 2001, 236, Gradenigo controlled “an elaborately conceived network of informants and information.”

89 For finds of coins of Issa, Pharos, Corcyra, Pale, and Apollonia mentioned by Gradenigo see Williams 2022, 443, n. 13; 446–447, n. 39, 45; 453, n. 74; 454, n. 77; 456, n. 88; Cortoni, Gariboldi 2022, 518.

90 In contrast, Gradenigo probably knew of Fortis’ book and was aware of his ideas about Dalmatia: see Wolff 2001, 228–230, 237, 239. For the history of Gradenigo’s collection, which was sold by his son Pietro to King Carlo Alberto of Savoy and is now in Turin, see Williams 2022, 444–445; Crisafulli 2022, 242–243. Some of the 10 coins of Issa in Turin’s coin collection may have originally belonged to Gradenigo.

91 In a letter to Tommaso degli Obizzi written from Padua on December 18, 1789, Fortis said that he had finally heard from Neumann: “*Neumann finalmente à dato segni di vita*”; see Toscano 2009, 213, n. 34.

92 See Haarmann 2016, 75–76; Woytek 2022, 254. For Neumann as a numismatist and for his relationship with Eckhel see Haarmann 2022, 513–521.

93 See above, n. 64.

94 See above, n. 76: “I would meet even more willingly the expense for this, for I would hope that other unpublished things could also be found in the ensemble. [...] Wishing to make a gesture of friendship towards me, entrust with these purchases (limited to a fair, and not Anglomorph expense) the various Captains who sail to the Levant” (“*Io incontrerei tantoppiù volentieri la spesa di tal fatto quantocchè mi lusingherei che anche altre cose inedite si troverebbero nella massa. [...] Volendo farmi un tratto d’amicizia raccomandate di tali provviste (confinata a spesa discreta, e non Anglomorfa) ai v.ri Capitani che navigano per il Levante.*”).

95 Giurgevich 2010, 88 (letter 38). Fortis asked Bajamonti why he would not “collect for him all the ancient gold and silver (coins) that he could get his hands on by making multiple requests to jewelers and parsons” and said that “he could afford to spend a few dozens of zecchini annually on ancient coins.” Fortis did not totally exclude (buying) bronze coins, “provided that there was a very large ensemble of them, in good condition, and for a low price”, because “it is in the realm of possibility to find some rare bronze coin among a thousand coins, but it is nearly impossible (to find a rare coin) among ten, or twelve coins” (“*Io spendere annualmente qualche dozzina di Zecchini in monete antiche non mi pesa. Non escludo il bronzo totalm. ma egli dee aver tre qualità; essere moltissimo ad un tratto, e ben conservato, e a basso prezzo; poichè infatti è fra i possibili che si trovi qualche medaglia di bronzo rara fra mille: ma è quasi impossibile fra dieci, o dodici.*”).

96 Giurgevich 2010, 79 (letter 32).

97 Giurgevich 2010, 214 (letter 103): “*Avendo qualche doppia moderna, che m’avanza [...] m’è saltata addosso la passione delle monete antiche, ma determinata particolarmente all’oro ed all’argento. – Se mai v’accadesse di potermene acquistare [...], io ve ne sarei infinitamente obbligato.*”

98 Giurgevich 2010, 87 (letter 37), 129 (letter 69).

99 Toscano 2009, 184; cf. above, n. 1.

The 1780s were a pivotal period in Fortis' life and career. Beginning in March 1780, the focus of his research and travels shifted from Dalmatia to southern Italy. Even though Fortis lived intermittently in S. Pietro di Arzignano (north of Vicenza), where he owned a small estate, between late 1780 and 1786,¹⁰⁰ he was in the Kingdom of Naples almost continually from the Fall of 1783 until December 1784, and from December 1786 until January 1791. Between the Spring of 1787, and January 1791, Fortis worked as a mineralogist for the King of Naples to supervise the production of saltpeter in a mine of Puglia that he had discovered.¹⁰¹ Among the new friends and contacts he made in the *Mezzogiorno* were prominent scholars, antiquarians, and coin collectors including Melchiorre Delfico (1744 – 1835), Ciro Saverio Minervino (1734 – 1805), Giuseppe Maria Giovene (1753 – 1837), Giuseppe Capecelatro (1744 – 1836), and Matteo Zarrillo (1729 – 1804).¹⁰² Fortis' numismatic expertise probably benefitted from his interactions with these men. He also acted as an intermediary between Delfico, Zarrillo, and F. Neumann.¹⁰³

Until Fortis left for Naples in 1783, he seems to have depended almost exclusively on his Dalmatian friends for information on ancient coins. In 1782 he was urging Michieli Vitturi to collect materials (including coins) for the *Biblioteca Dalmatica*, an encyclopedic project on Dalmatian history that never came to fruition.¹⁰⁴ In particular, he asked Michieli Vitturi to look for “ancient silver, Latin or Greek coins, and also medieval coins struck by the mints of Dalmatia.” But once Fortis was in southern Italy, he be-

gan to be more personally involved in the acquisition of Greek and Roman coins. In the Veneto he had developed a close friendship with the Paduan Marquis Tommaso degli Obizzi (1751 – 1803), who aimed to increase his vast collection of antiquities housed in the magnificent villa of Catajo (near Battaglia Terme, to the southwest of Padua).¹⁰⁵ From 1784 onwards (and even long after his stint in the Kingdom of Naples), Fortis acted as a purveyor of coins and other antiquities on behalf of Obizzi, who provided him with funding for these purchases.¹⁰⁶

Several letters written to his wealthy friend between 1784 and 1790 show that Fortis knew about the types of ancient coins that were sold in southern Italy and was savvy about the dynamics of the coin trade.¹⁰⁷ In his quest for rare Greek silver coins, which Obizzi especially craved, he mentioned issues of Neapolis, Nola, Nuceria Alfaterna, Velia, Tarentum, Heraclea, Thurium, Terina, Caulonia, Leontini, and Syracuse, generally without describing them in detail.¹⁰⁸ A group of c. 300 Greek silver coins that he saw in 1790 may have been a hoard of didrachms (?) of Neapolis, Velia, Thurium, Terina, and Nola.¹⁰⁹ In order to find certain issues for the Marquis, Fortis pressed some of his friends (most notably Delfico) into service: his network of contacts extended from Abruzzo to Sicily.¹¹⁰ But he was unable to buy a Syracusan coin that he called a “*novidracmo*” and an “*octodracmo*” (possibly a decadrachm of Kimon or Euainetos, datable to c. 405 – 400 and c. 400 – 370 BCE, respectively),¹¹¹ and it took him six months to acquire a nomos of Tarentum with Dolphin rider / Wheel with four

100 Motterle 1975, 124.

101 Ciancio 1995b, 204–213.

102 Delfico, a brilliant jurist and economist, became a close friend of Fortis: see Ciancio 1995b, 208. He owned “the best and most select collection of Greek coins” in Naples, according to a letter written by Fortis on July 6, 1790, from Naples: see Toscano 2009, 196; Nizzo 2010, 445, n. 44; cf. Delfico 1824, 63. For Minervino, Giovene, and Capecelatro's collections see Toscano 2007, 2009, 247–257, 271–277, 294–295; Nizzo 2010, 461, n. 87, 466–467, n. 92. For the Abbot Zarrillo, who was described as “*Garde des médailles de la Cour de Naples*” by Barthélemy 1801, 288, see Nizzo 2010, 442, 452, 454, n. 62.

103 Thanks in part to Fortis, Neumann received Roman Provincial coins of Hispania from Zarrillo and drawings of Greek coins from Delfico as he told Fortis in a letter of January 22, 1785 (above, n. 83), 135–136. In another letter to Fortis written on November 30, 1785, Neumann said that he was interested in obtaining duplicates of coins in Delfico's collection, especially of the issues of Hatria that Fortis had told him about. I am grateful to L. Ciancio for providing me with a copy of this letter, which is kept in in Teramo's Archivio di Stato. Delfico published various essays on the coinage of Hatria; see e.g. Delfico 1824, 33–63.

104 In a memorandum attached to a letter of May 18, 1782, Fortis instructed Michieli Vitturi to acquire as many Greek coins as possible to be illustrated in the *Biblioteca Dalmatica*: “*Quindi il signor Conte potrebbe raccogliere quanto maggior numero gli fosse possibile di monete greche de' buoni tempi (non del basso Impero) ad oggetto di promuovere l'illustrazione di questa parte di antichità nazionale.*” See above, n. 77.

105 See Tormen 2017, 56–64; Coppola 2017b, 84–86, 89–90. According to Coppola 2017b, 94, in 1787 Obizzi was given the opportunity to buy the antiquities of the “widow of the late Antonio Danielli” (possibly the physician who hosted Fortis in Zadar in 1772).

106 See Ciancio 1995b, 213–214; Toscano 2009, 181–214.

107 I wish to thank L. Ciancio for providing me with a copy of 60 letters from Fortis to Obizzi, which are preserved in the Nuovi Musei Civici di Padova agli Eremitani, (Fasc. 577a, 577b). Many of them have been partially edited and discussed by Toscano 2009, 182–208.

108 See Toscano 2009, 183 (letter of March 30, 1784, from Naples), 187 (letter of April 29, 1788, from Naples), 189 (letter of December 13, 1789, from Padua), 190–191 (letter of March 2, 1790, from Naples), 194–198 (letters from Naples of June 29, 1790; July 6, 1790; August 24, 1790). Among the Greek coins mentioned in these letters only didrachms of Nola and Nuceria Alfaterna, a nomos of Tarentum, and a spread-flan incuse stater of Caulonia can be tentatively identified: cf. *HN Italy*, 603–605, 608, 833, 2035.

109 In a postscript to the letter written on June 29, 1790, Fortis said that he seen a group of 300+ coins, “almost all” of Neapolis, but also including “many” of Velia, Thurium, and Terina, and one of Nola in poor condition: (“*O veduto la partita delle 300. Sono quasi tutte Napoletane di varj segni però e di buona conservazione [...] V'anno anche di molte Veliat, Turine, Trinesi (sic) [...], una Nolana sconservatissima, una Terina grande etc.*”). But in his letter of August 24, 1790, he gave a somewhat different account of the hoard's contents: see Toscano 2009, 194, 198.

110 Toscano 2009, 190, 193–199, 206.

111 Toscano 2009, 187, 196–198. Fortis even asked G. L. Castelli di Torremuzza (1727 – 1794), a leading Sicilian numismatist, for information about these coins (see his letter to Obizzi of July 27, 1790, from Naples). He also tried to buy examples of “the largest silver denominations” for the Marquis: “[...] *ò scritto in Sicilia per l'ottidracmo di Siracusa, e in generale per qualunque pezzo d'argento di massimo modulo*” (letter of August 3, 1790, from Naples). For Torremuzza see Gorini 2015, 236–237; for the decadrachms see Fischer-Bossert 2017, 20, 97.

spokes (c. 480 – 470 BCE), which he finally obtained in December, 1790, after a grueling 36-mile round trip.¹¹²

Fortis also purchased numerous Roman coins for Obizzi, who expected him to look for Republican and Imperial issues that were missing from his collection. Obizzi's numismatic *desiderata* included more than 60 different types of Republican denarii (even though he was not particularly interested in Roman Republican coinage, according to Fortis), and Imperial issues of Plotina and Matidia, Gordian I–II, Didius Julianus, and Pertinax.¹¹³ Very few Roman coins described in his letters can be partially identified, however - e.g., a quadrans of M. Fabrinus (132 BCE) that Fortis saw at Montefusco near Avellino,¹¹⁴ an Antoninianus, denarius, or quinarius of Sabina Tranquillina, the wife of Gordian III (241 – 244 CE),¹¹⁵ and a bronze of Q. Herennius Etruscus as Caesar (250 – 251 CE).¹¹⁶ In addition, starting in 1788 Fortis bought Roman coins - including an assemblage of Roman Republican denarii from Abruzzo, (presumably a hoard, or a portion of a hoard) - for Girolamo Ascanio Molin (1738 – 1814), one of the most prominent Venetian collectors.¹¹⁷ His circle of correspondents included Angelo Bottari (1735 – 1811), an abbot, collector, and coin merchant from Chioggia who was a mutual friend of Fortis, Obizzi, and Molin. Bottari was also a major supplier of ancient coins to both Obizzi and Molin.¹¹⁸

It may seem surprising that Fortis did not write anything about the types of coins that he saw during the years he spent working and travelling in southern Italy. Although he had gained much experience dealing with various Greek, Roman, and even medi-

eval and modern coins,¹¹⁹ and he knew about ancient forgeries,¹²⁰ he did not investigate coin finds or the issues of specific mints (unlike his friends Delfico and Minervino). As an “antiquarian” pursuit, numismatic research was inconsistent with his work as a naturalist. In a letter to Count Alessandro Carli published in 1785, while he was back in the Veneto, Fortis mentioned finds of Roman Imperial coins to support his identification of a quarry of the stone used for the construction of Verona's amphitheater. He asserted that they were evidence of the presence of Roman masons rather than farmers, because the site did not have any arable land: ancient coins thus provided information that helped to corroborate his petrological observations.¹²¹ However, in a subsequent essay on his visit to a paleontological site in the hinterland of Verona, Fortis admitted that he occasionally devoted a small amount of time (“*qualche momento*”) to coins or inscriptions.¹²²

The reality was more complex. A series of letters sent to J. Bajamonti in the late 1780s show that Fortis had an abiding interest in ancient and medieval coins found in Dalmatia. In a letter written from Naples on December 20, 1786, he reminded his friend to gather “coins of Issa, Pharos, Scodra, Corcyra Melaina, (Ionian) Corcyra, etc. etc. [...]” because “he was crazy about them.”¹²³ But he never explained why he was attracted to these coins.

Bajamonti did not have a coin collection; a “small bag of old coins” that he owned was lost in a house fire in 1787.¹²⁴ In another letter written from Naples on August 28, 1787, Fortis urged Bajamonti - who worked on the island of Hvar as a doctor from 1785

112 See Toscano 196, 204, 206 (letter of December 24, 1790, from Terlizzi): “At Altamura I could finally get the small medallion of Tarentum bearing the wheel (i.e., on the reverse), lone reward in 18 miles of going and 18 miles of coming back on horrible roads, because I really did not find anything else, neither good nor bad.” (“*Ad Altamura è finalmente potuto avere il medaglione di Taranto colla ruota, solo compenso a 18 miglia d'andata, e 18 di tornata per orribili strade, poiché veramente null'altro è ritrovato nè di buono nè di cattivo.*”).

113 Toscano 2009, 197 (letter of August 24, 1790, from Naples): “One would like (coins of) Trajan's female (relatives), the two African Gordians, Didius Julianus, and Pertinax!” This sentence is underlined in the letter. (“*Si vorrebbero le Donne di Trajano, i due Gordiani Affricani, Didio Giuliano, e Pertinace!*”).

114 Toscano 2009, 201 (letter of October 17, 1790, from Ariano); cf. *RRC* 251, 1/4.

115 Toscano 2009, 199–200 (letters of September 7 and October 4, 1790, from Naples); cf. *RIC* 4/3, 41–42, 249–250, 252–253.

116 Toscano 2009, 183 (letter of March 30, 1784, from Naples); cf. *RIC* 4/3, 115, 143, 170–173.

117 See Toscano 2009, 185–186, 193–200, 203–204, 206. In a letter of June 29, 1790, from Naples Fortis wrote that he had bought these coins in bulk and found that they consisted entirely of Roman Republican coins; therefore he sent them to Molin at once: “ò [...] comprato di lontano e fatto venire una partita di 384 monete d'argento, che mi viene assicurato per vergine, dall'Apruzzo [...] le trovai tutte di famiglia, e quindi credetti bene di spedirle subito all'Eccellentissimo Molin.” For Molin and his collection see Candeago, Pilutti Namer 2022 (who have not listed Fortis among Molin's correspondents on page 27).

118 Fantelli, Fantelli 1982, 106–107; Doria 1990, 162–169; Tormen 2017, 62–64; Candeago, Pilutti Namer 2022, 28–29; Tormen 2022, 334–336. Neumann took a dim view of Bottari as a coin trader in his letter to Fortis of November 30, 1785 (see above, n. 103).

119 In his correspondence with Obizzi in 1790 Fortis mentioned a silver coin of the princes of Correggio, a “*Grimoaldo in oro*” (possibly a tremissis of Grimoaldus III and Charlemagne minted at Beneventum in 788–792 CE), a Hungarian gold coin of John Zápolya minted in 1527, and another coin of an unidentified Hungarian king (“*Ladislau*”): see Toscano 2009, 193, 201, 204, 206 (letters of June 6, from Naples; of October 17, from Ariano; of November 22, from Terlizzi; of December 18, from Terlizzi). In 1791 Fortis mentioned an augustalis of Frederick II minted in 1231 – 1250 (Grierson, Travaini 1998, 514–515) that he presented to Obizzi: for this coin see Toscano 2009, 207 (letters of March 14 from Padua, and of April 26 from an unknown location).

120 In a letter to Obizzi of December 12, 1790 from Naples, Fortis described plated Roman Republican coins as “*vestite o, per parlare co' termini dell'arte bracteatae*”: see Toscano 2009, 205. Cf. below, n. 142.

121 See Fortis 1785, 14 (offprint): “[...] presso alla Chiusa molto frequentemente, per quanto dagli abitanti del luogo ci fu detto, medaglie Imperatorie rivengonsi, le quali non certamente da Coloni (poiché non v'è terra da coltivare), ma da gente stabilita a quartiere e a lavoro debbono esservi state seminate.” In the same article he berated the gullible “*Lovers of Antiquity*” who mistook Cavino's medals (“*le medaglie de' Cavini*”) for genuine coins.

122 Fortis 1786, 5–6: “*Entrava nel mio piano di villeggiatura il progetto di visitare il capo d'onde venivano anticaglie ben più degne dell'attenzione de' pensatori che le monete, o le lapide, alle quali pur occasionalmente dono qualche momento, se m'avvegno in esse.*” Fortis also noted (page 81) that some Roman antiquities, including inscriptions, figurines, and coins, were still extant in Val Pantena: “*Monumenti Romani di piccola mole, come a dire Lapide Idoletti monete esistono tuttora sparsi per la Val Pantena.*”

123 See above, n. 96: “*Addio intanto, e se potete raccogliermi medaglie non-Romane, ma Lissane, Phariensi, Scodrine, Corzolane, Corfiote, etc. etc. e d'altri luoghi autonomi sia di codesta parte sia d'altra abbiate presente ch'io ne vo pazzo.*”

124 Bajamonti mentioned his lost “*sacchettino di vecchie monete*” in a poem quoted by Duplančić 2006, 381, n. 8.

to 1790 - to take advantage of his profession and “gather for me indiscriminately all ancient Greek, or Roman, or barbarian gold and silver (coins)”, provided that they were in good condition and that he did not have to pay for much more than the intrinsic value of the metal. Bajamonti was also instructed to acquire bronze coins only of Greek cities, particularly of Issa, Pharos, Corcyra Melaina, Dyrrhachium, Apollonia, Corcyra, and Scodra.¹²⁵ In a humorous letter written on October 20, 1787, from Molfetta, in which Fortis said that his greed for antiquities (“*anticaglie*”) “exceeded that of a cat for cooked fish”, Bajamonti was asked to look above all for ancient gold coins, including Venetian *zecchini* minted until the rule of Doge Michelo Steno (1400 – 1413), as well as for silver coins struck until Late Antiquity, Venetian Matapans, Russian silver coins, and silver issues of “free Italian cities”. He was encouraged to buy without hesitation “any assemblage of ancient silver coins partly well partly poorly preserved” (i.e., a hoard), if the price was reasonable, and also to let his friends know what Fortis was looking for.¹²⁶ Fortis asked again for coins in 1788 and reminded Bajamonti of his “antiquarian and, in particular, numismatic gluttony” (“*ghiottoneria nummaria*”) until the mid-1790s. Bajamonti obliged, but little is known about the coins that he sent to Fortis.¹²⁷

On November 1, 1787, Fortis also wrote rather more formally to Michieli Vitturi (who knew Bajamonti) to let him know about his “little antiquarian passion” and to enlist his assistance as he had done with M. Sorkočević since 1781.¹²⁸ Fortis even suggested that the Conte could send him coins using a cover story, and Michieli Vitturi went along with the ruse.¹²⁹ Fortis effectively asked his closest Dalmatian friends to become suppliers of ancient coins.

It seems unlikely that all these requests originated from Fortis’ desire to build his own coin collection, however. While he was pleading for assistance from his Dalmatian friends, he was busy

scouring southern Italy for Greek and Roman coins on behalf of Tommaso degli Obizzi. His interest in obtaining ancient currency, especially in gold and silver, is in keeping with the contents of his letters to Obizzi, and his willingness to buy quantities of precious metal coins may have been based on the Marquis’ funding rather than his own income. A list of uncommon Roman Imperial coins sought by Obizzi in 1790 recalls a list of Roman Imperial sestertii that Fortis was hoping to get from Bajamonti in a letter written on March 30, 1788, from Naples.¹³⁰ But it is not known whether Fortis told Bajamonti and his other Dalmatian correspondents about his connection with Obizzi.

4. Soliciting coins from the Veneto (1791 – 1796)

Fortis continued to collaborate with Obizzi and Molin after ending his work in the Kingdom of Naples in January 1791. By then the Marquis was planning to organize his archaeological holdings into a *Museo Antiquario*. In a letter to Obizzi of February 9, 1791, written to recommend a young surgeon from Brescia, who had worked in Dalmatia and was married to a woman of Skradin, Fortis said that this doctor had promised to help him acquire two Latin inscriptions that he had tried in vain to purchase years earlier,¹³¹ and that the man’s contacts across Dalmatia could lead to other purchases (of inscriptions), possibly on an annual basis.

Fortis also kept his ties to the Neapolitan coin trade after returning to the Veneto, because he mentioned in a letter of June 3, 1792, that he had obtained from Naples a small lot of ancient silver coins, to which he added “some small coins” in better condition (or: more interesting) that he had received from Dalmatia, so that Molin would find it more attractive. He revealed in the same letter that he had a friend in Dalmatia who “collected good and bad material (i.e., coins) without understanding any of it”. Fortis said that he compensated him scrupulously for any

125 Giurgevich 2010, 80 (letter 33): “[...] *raccoglietemi tutto indistintam.^e l'oro e l'argento antico Greco o Romano o barbaro che sia, quando non dobbiate pagarlo molto oltre all'intrinseco valore, e sia di buona conservazione. Di bronzo non mi raccogliete sennonchè monete di Città Greche, e in particolare Isse, Farie, Corzole, Durazzi, Apollonie, Corfúi, Scutari, etc., etc.*”

126 Giurgevich 2010, 84 (letter 34): “*Trovami [...] tutto l'oro antico che può capitarti alle mani, senza eccettuare i Zecchini sino a Michele Steno [...] Così di dell'argento della buona e della trista antichità; matapani Veneti, e di Russia, monete di Città Libere Italiane [...]. Se poi trovassi qualche ammasso di monete antiche d'argento parte bene parte male conservate, quando il prezzo sia ragionevole, piglia a occhi chiusi.*”

127 Cf. Giurgevich 2010, 85 (letter 35). In a letter written from Naples on March 22, 1788, Fortis asked his friend whether he could rely on his “goodness” to satisfy his numismatic cravings: “*Posso io contare su la vostra bontà nel provvedere alla mia ghottoneria antiquaria e particolar.^e nummaria?*” and 111 (letter 56). For two other letters requesting coins in 1788 see Milčetić 1912, 211 and 236, 33. For the coins received by Fortis from Bajamonti in 1787–1790 see Giurgevich 2010, 86 (letter 36): “*cinque monete*”; 87 (letter 37): “*medaglie*”; 129 (letter 69): “*7 medaglie d'argento*”. Cf. below, n. 132, 135–137.

128 See above, n. 76 and 97.

129 Despite Fortis’ precautions, his scheme was not always successful: in a letter written to Michieli Vitturi from Padua on August 5, 1789, Fortis complained that he had been cheated by the monk used by his friend as a go-between. See Giurgevich 2010, 215 (letter 104).

130 See above, n. 113; cf. Giurgevich 2010, 86 (letter 36), 86. “I would like to have some Roman coins such as those of Didia Clara, Manlia Scantilla, Aquilia Severa, Herennia Etruscilla, Plotina, etc., a sestertius of Macrinus, a sestertius of Hadrian with one of the Roman provinces on the reverse [...] and of the Antonines with the Roman provinces [...]. I would like sestertii of Pupienus, but never (those) with a Victory holding a wreath on the reverse.” In this letter Fortis also warned Bajamonti to beware of forgeries of these coins, which were common in Dalmatia, and to look for coins of Issa, Corcyra, Pharos and any other “well-legible” Greek coins he came upon: “*Per le Urbiche anche di Bronzo, siavi a cuore Issa, Corcira, Faria; e quanto altro di Greco, e ben leggibile vi capitasse tutto sarebbe buono.*”

131 Toscano 2009, 207 (letter of February 9, 1791, from an unknown location): “*Io ò indicato a questo buono e pulito giovane due superbe lapide esistenti in Scardona, a casa di un prete a cui indarno ò cercato di comprarle anni sono [...] mi à promesso di agire con efficacia per avere e le due indicate lapide e altre amene.*” These are presumably the “*due belle Iscrizioni*” found in the environs of Skradin and kept “*nella Casa del Reverendissimo Canonico Mercati*” according to Fortis 1774, 1, 127. Fortis did not say in his book that Mercati had refused to sell him the inscriptions. Ironically (or perhaps sarcastically, in light of this letter), he added that Skradin’s “few educated people” should take action so that “*le onorevoli Memorie dell'antica, ed illustre loro Patria*” would not perish or be carried off elsewhere.”

expense he incurred and for the prices that he set, but that he continued to employ this person only to please Molin.¹³² This undiscerning *amico* cannot have been Bajamonti, or Sorkočević, or Michieli Vitturi, who were highly educated and close friends of Fortis: perhaps he had some other supplier of antiquities in Dalmatia. The list of Roman Imperial coins that Fortis sent to Bajamonti in 1788 suggests that his friend could identify specific coin types and legends. Bajamonti also managed to fulfill particular requests even if it took him a long time, since he sent a *zecchino* of Michele Steno to Fortis in December 1791, nearly four years after being asked to look for Venetian gold coins minted no later than this Doge's rule.¹³³

Fortis kept asking Bajamonti for ancient coins in a series of letters written from 1791 to 1795. Yet these letters are generally less informative than those sent to Obizzi between 1784 and 1792. One learns from them mainly about the kinds of coins that Fortis wanted, rather than the coins that he had received and their provenience. For instance, in a letter written from Terlizzi on January 1, 1791, Fortis told his friend that his concern was with "all the silver and gold (coins) of any century and people when they are well-preserved, and with well-preserved bronze coins of Greek cities and Roman bronze coins of large module."¹³⁴ A similar request was sent to Conte Michieli Vitturi on February 2, 1791.¹³⁵ A month later, in a letter from Padua of March 2, 1791, Fortis acknowledged receiving from Bajamonti 7 tiny coins ("*monetine*"), one of which was "a very good thing."¹³⁶ In a subsequent letter from Padua of March 18, 1791, he wrote that he was hoping to receive from Bajamonti bronze coins of large module, or Greek coins of the classical and Hellenistic periods, rather than Late Roman Imperial bronzes. But he added that "if a large quantity of bronze coins became available all of a sudden, and for a decent

price, it should be bought."¹³⁷ In another letter written to Bajamonti from Venice on October 10, 1792, he acknowledged receiving and paying for some "small coins" ("*medagliuzze*").¹³⁸

In 1793 Fortis, referring to himself as an "Archaeonummophile" ("*Archeonummo filo*"), even asked Bajamonti to recommend him to the Venetian authorities of Knin and Imotski, so that they, too, could look for ancient gold and silver coins on his behalf: he asserted that it was easy to obtain ancient silver ("*argento antico*") at Knin.¹³⁹ But on March 5, 1794 he jokingly scolded Bajamonti for being unable either to come and visit him in the Veneto, or to procure ancient gold and silver "*in quantitate magna*."¹⁴⁰ In a subsequent letter written from Padua on August 13, 1794, Fortis renewed his request for ancient coins (which he began to call "*babusche*"),¹⁴¹ and especially for Roman Imperial (silver) issues, "because one rarely finds anything worth more than its intrinsic value among Roman Republican coins, and often their copper core makes them less valuable". "Thin medieval silver" and gold coins were also dear to him, and he suggested wistfully that "it would be good to have some shopkeeper at Sinj or Knin as a correspondent" who would provide information about such coins. He remembered that he had found coins in the environs of Knin during his travels through Dalmatia, and he had "fished with success in the grimy little bowls" (i.e., the collections of small change in local shops).¹⁴²

The final recipient of some of Bajamonti's coins may have been Tommaso degli Obizzi. After the late 1780s, Fortis apparently stopped asking for coins of specific Greek mints from the eastern Adriatic. Since there are no indications that he was collecting examples of certain coinages for study, his incessant requests to get as many ancient and medieval gold and silver coins (and

132 Toscano 2009, 208 (letter to Obizzi of June 3, 1792, from Padua: "Da Napoli io ò avuto tempo fa una partitella di argento antico della qual fui mediocremente contento e a cui aggiunti qualche miglior medagliuzzo venutomi da Dalmazia, perchè riuscisse meno indegna d'essere rinunziata all'Eccellentissimo Molino. Quel paese non lascia sperare molto a chi è lontano; io mi raccomando al caso, poichè ò un amico che raccoglie buono e cattivo, senza capirne nulla e col quale vado scrupolosamente esatto nel compensargli lo speso, o il prezzo ch'egli fissa. E veramente io continuo ad impiegarlo per far cosa grata all'Eccellentissimo Molin, senza di che lo lascierei.")

133 Giurgevich 2010, 98 (letter 46): in a letter to Bajamonti written from Padua on December 10, 1791, Fortis said that he had "received promptly the *zecchino* of Michele Steno, and the small Roman coins" ("*Ò ricevuto puntualm.^e lo Zecchino di Michele Steno, e le piccole monete Romane.*"). Cf. above, n. 126.

134 Giurgevich 2010, 89 (letter 39): "Ma Voi non mi abbandonate le medaglie. Tutto l'argento e l'oro di qualunque secolo e qualunque popolo quando sia ben conservato, e il bronzo Greco Urbico, e il gran bronzo Romano ben conservati sono il fatto mio."

135 Giurgevich 2010, 217 (letter 105): "Do not forget the oft-repeated entreaties to collect for me as much ancient gold and silver as you can assemble. And if some nice inscription comes out, at least let me know about it, but after it has been diligently transcribed." ("*Non vi dimenticate delle tante volte replicatevi preghiere di raccogliermi quanto oro e argento antico potete raccapezzarmi: e se qualche bella iscrizione scappa fuori comunicatemela almeno, ma diligentemente trascritta.*") In another letter written to Michieli Vitturi on April 3, 1791 from Padua, Fortis urged his friend to unearth "inscriptions, temples, cities, manuscripts, coins, carnelian stones"; see Giurgevich 2010, 219 (letter 106).

136 Giurgevich 2010, 93 (letter 42). An undated letter to Bajamonti, in which Fortis said that he had received 7 silver coins from Lesina, may or may not refer to the same coins: "Voi, lesinando, m'avete mandato 7 medaglie d'argento [...]". Cf. Giurgevich 2010, 129 (letter 69).

137 Giurgevich 2010, 94 (letter 43): "Il bronzo, se non è medaglia di p.^a grandezza, o moneta Greca di buoni tempi, cioè non del Basso Impero, poco dà da sperare; a ogni modo, potendone aver molto a un tratto, e a prezzo non alto, va preso." In a postscript, Fortis added that he had received a small group of coins that included a common coin of large module ("*una medaglia di prima grandezza, ovvia bensi*").

138 Giurgevich 2010, 101 (letter 47).

139 Giurgevich 2010, 102 (letter 49, written from Galzignano on June 3, 1793): "Quanto bene potreste fare al vostro Amico Archeonummo filo se lo raccomandaste caldamente al Provv.^e di Knin, dove tanto è facile il procurar argento antico." See also Giurgevich 2010, 103–104 (letters 50–51, written on June 14 and August 13, 1793).

140 Giurgevich 2010, 106 (letter 52).

141 This may have been both a pun and a code word, in case Fortis' letter fell into the wrong hands. By 1794 Fortis was under investigation by the Venetian authorities for his political views: see Motterle 1975, 134–135. He also used this noun in a letter to Bajamonti written from Padua on April 29, 1794: see Giurgevich 2010, 107 (letter 53): "Se manderete *babusche*, tanto meglio; ma per lo Dio vero ed eterno perchè non venite voi a portarle?"

142 Giurgevich 2010, 108 (letter 54, written from Padua on August 13, 1794): "Procuratemi delle *babusche*; ma, se potete, preferitemi le teste di Donne o d'uomini appartenenti alla serie Imperiale, poichè fra le consolari di raro v'è cosa che vaglia oltre l'intrinseco, e spesso l'anima di rame fa che vaglian meno. Anche l'argento sottile de' bassi tempi mi è caro, e l'oro che si sa. Il buono sarebbe l'aver qualche bottegajo corrisp.^e a Scign [sic] o a Knin per tali oggetti. Io mi ricordo d'aver colà pescato utilmente negli scudelletti bisunti." For the coins seen by Fortis in the environs of Knin see above, n. 40; for his visit to Sinj see Strange 1775, 343–345.

select bronze coins) as his friend could lay hands on could be explained by his association with the Marquis, which continued at least through early November 1794. However, the possibility that Fortis also supplied coins from Dalmatia to other collectors in the Veneto (e.g., Bottari and Molin) as late as 1795 cannot be excluded. A presumed falling out with Obizzi (particularly after an altercation between the two men in early November 1794),¹⁴³ did not prevent him from soliciting Bajamonti for gold and silver coins again in a letter written from Venice on January 10, 1795.¹⁴⁴

Unfortunately, Obizzi's coin collection was never fully catalogued.¹⁴⁵ After being bequeathed to the Duke Ercole III of Este in 1803, it was moved abroad and returned to Modena from Vienna in 1822 by the Duke Francis IV of Habsburg-Este with the assistance of his younger brother Maximilian Joseph.¹⁴⁶ On June 28, 1803 Obizzi's coin collection contained c. 12800 coins, according to an inventory published by P. and P. L. Fantelli.¹⁴⁷ Since one entry in this inventory mentions a group of 14 Greek bronze coins of Pharos ("14 Medaglie di bronzo urbiche greche, Faro isola Illirica"), one may presume that Obizzi's collection included coins of the Greek cities of Dalmatia.¹⁴⁸ In 1842, when Celestino Cavedoni described the antiquities in Modena's "Reale Museo Estense del Catajo", he noted that Obizzi had collected "a good number of Greek and Roman coins" from various places, including Dalmatia, and that Obizzi's entire numismatic collection amounted to approximately 12000 ancient, medieval and modern coins. Although Cavedoni did not make a catalogue of the Museo Estense's numismatic holdings, he pointed out that the Greek coins had been organized in an historical-geographic sequence by the initiative of the Archduke Maximilian.¹⁴⁹ He added that some glass ash urns "from Adria and from Dalmatia" in the Museo Estense contained bronze Roman Imperial coins "di secondo bronzo" (possibly asses), ranging in date from Augustus to Hadrian.¹⁵⁰

More than a century later Franco Panvini Rosati, after conducting a thorough examination of the Medagliere Estense in 1949 and 1956, reported that it contained c. 22867 Greek, Roman, Byzantine, medieval and modern coins, including 4830 Greek coins

of which 155 bronze issues had been identified.¹⁵¹ But it is not known how many of them came from Obizzi's collection. At least 11 coins of Issa, 4 of Pharos, 1 or 2 coins of Herakleia, and 4 coins of Ballaios were identified by this writer during an inspection of the Medagliere Estense in 1982 – 1983.¹⁵² It is tempting to surmise that some of them may have belonged to Obizzi and originated from Fortis' contacts with his friends in Dalmatia, as this is one of the largest groups of issues from eastern Adriatic mints in an Italian museum collection outside the Veneto.

Fortis' numismatic interests between 1790 – 1795 were not limited to the acquisition of coins, though. The various excerpts ("estratti") and reviews that he published in this period show that he also kept abreast of numismatic news.¹⁵³ For instance, in two review articles for the journal *Il Genio letterario d'Europa* in July and October 1794, Fortis mentioned a Roman coin found in a funerary urn and important coin collections in Spain.¹⁵⁴ He reported subsequently that J. H. Eckhel's had undertaken the publication of his 8-volume *Doctrina numorum veterum*, and that Eckhel (who was 57 at this time) was "hale and hearty, and one could expect additional labors from his activity."¹⁵⁵ Some unsigned reviews that include comments about different coin finds may also have written by Fortis.¹⁵⁶ More archival research is needed to determine whether he sought coins from Dalmatia up until he left for Paris in September 1796, and whether he continued to engage with numismatic topics in the last years of his life.

Fortis played an influential role in the transformation of numismatics from *scientia numismatica*, or generic knowledge about coins, into what Eckhel called *ars critica numaria*, a discipline based on material evidence,¹⁵⁷ even though he did not publish any major work on ancient coins. His travels in Dalmatia gave him the opportunity to see and possibly acquire Greek, Roman, and medieval coins found locally. The coin finds that he mentioned in his books suggested to his readers that Dalmatia had a distinguished monetary history that deserved investigation. Fortis was one of the first scholars who recorded issues of Issa, Pharos, and Scodra in the field; his early observations about these

143 Motterle 1975, 135; 148, n. 74; 150, n. 120; Fantelli, Fantelli 1982, 115, n. 67. According to Toscano, 2009, 210, 214, n. 94, the relationship between Fortis and Obizzi "seems to have remained cordial" to the end of their lives.

144 See Giurgevich 2010, 111 (letter 56): "If you happen to get ancient gold or silver coins, always keep me in mind, even if I were in *culibus mundi*; I will always be able both to receive and to have (them) paid for by way of Dubrovnik" ("Se vi capitano monete antiche d'oro o d'argento ricordatevi sempre di me, anche se fossi in *culibus mundi*; per la via di Ragusa potrò sempre e ricevere e far pagare").

145 Cf. Fantelli, Fantelli 1982, 106–107; Coppola 2017b, 72.

146 Fantelli, Fantelli 1982, 115; cf. Tormen 2017, 68; Pavini Rosati 1956, 192; Zaccariotto 2018, 164–165.

147 Fantelli, Fantelli 1982, 107, 121–156.

148 Fantelli, Fantelli 1982, 144.

149 Cavedoni 1842, 5–6, n. 4: "Le Medaglie antiche Romane e Greche da lui raccolte insieme con alquante de' tempi di mezzo e recenti, per quanto mi si dice, ascendeva [sic] alla somma di 12,000 all'incirca. [...] Le Greche Autonome per saggio divisamento della lodata dell'A.R. dell'Arciduca Massimiliano [...] vi sono disposte per modo, che l'ordine di esse risponda, per quanto è possibile, a quello col quale le varie parti e regioni della terra furono successivamente abitate dalle diverse antiche nazioni [...]."

150 Cavedoni 1842, 103.

151 Panvini Rosati 1956, 192–193.

152 I am grateful to Elena Corradini for allowing me to examine these coins. A coin of Issa's Ionios series in Modena was listed by Brunšmid 1898, 60, 3.6.

153 For a list of journals which published Fortis' works see Ciano 1995, 301.

154 Fortis 1794a, 28; 1794b, 122–123. For G. Andres, whose works were reviewed by Fortis, see Toscano 2009, 208. A letter to Fortis published in *Il Genio letterario d'Europa* mentions finds of Roman coins at sites to the southeast of Milan; see C. A. 1794, 99, 105.

155 See Fortis 1794c, 36: "È tuttavia vegeto e robusto, e dalla di lui attività si debbono aspettare ulteriori fatiche." In this review article Fortis also described F. Neumann as "a very fine and courteous" person ("di maniere delicatissime, e cortesi"). Marquis Obizzi owned a copy of Eckhel's *Doctrina numorum veterum*, according to the inventory published by Fantelli, Fantelli 1982, 157.

156 Cf. e.g. Anonymous 1793a, 105–106; Anonymous 1793b, 27.

157 See Eckhel 1775, 99, and the perceptive remarks by Burnett 2022, 419–423.

coins, and his curiosity about the coins of Greek and Illyrian mints in the eastern Adriatic region are especially noteworthy. He probably owned some ancient coins of Dalmatian origin (including at least an Issaeon bronze) by the late 1770s, and he was keen to acquire more of them throughout the 1780s. From the early 1780s to the early 1790s Fortis was also a purveyor of coins for wealthy collectors, and he orchestrated the transfer of coins found in southern Italy and Dalmatia to the Veneto to help Marquis Obizzi create his museum of antiquities; this caused their dispersal and loss. However, through his findings and his contacts with F. Neumann he helped to bring the coins of the Greek cities of Dalmatia to the attention of numismatists, thus setting in motion the process that led to their study by later scholars prior to Josip Brunšmid.

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SAŽETAK

ALBERTO FORTIS I NAPREDAK NUMIZMATIKE U KASNOM 18. STOLJEĆU

Tijekom posljednje četvrtine 18. stoljeća, Alberto Fortis – padovanski „prirodoslovac-antikvar“ iz razdoblja kasnog prosvjetiteljstva, odigrao je značajnu ulogu u oblikovanju numizmatike kao discipline koja se temelji na dokazima. Fortis je bio poznavatelj antičkog i srednjovjekovnog novca te je vjerovao da su nalazi kovanica važni povijesni pokazatelji. Tijekom svojih putovanja po Dalmaciji zabilježio je različite nalaze kovanica, čime je čitateljima svog najvažnijeg djela „Put po Dalmaciji“ (*Viaggio in Dalmazia*), sugerirao da je taj prostor imao dugu i značajnu monetarnu povijest. Također, Fortis je bio jedan od prvih znanstvenika koji su dokumentirali kovanice Ise, Farosa, Skodre i Korkire tijekom svog boravka u Dalmaciji. Njegovo zanimanje

za grčke i ilirske kovnice s istočne obale Jadrana potvrđeno je nizom pisama nastalih tijekom dvadesetogodišnjeg razdoblja, počevši od ranih 1770-ih godina. Iz njih je očito da je Fortis od ranih 1780-ih do početka 1790-ih godina nabavljao kovanice iz južne Italije za padovanskog markiza T. degli Obizzija, a također je molio svoje prijatelje J. Bajamontija, R. A. Michielija Vitturija i M. Sorkočevića da mu šalju kovanice iz Dalmacije. Fortisova izravna zapažanja i komentari o kovanicama Ise, Farosa, Skodre i Korkire, koje je prenio austrijskom numizmatičaru F. Neumannu, predstavljaju njegov najvažniji doprinos identifikaciji i proučavanju tih numizmatičkih izdanja.

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