

Born in the Age of Enlightenment – The case of the Targioni-Tozzetti naturalistic collection

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The collection of Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti (1712-1783), “Father and Master of Italian Naturalists” as defined by Fortis, constitutes a precious historical and scientific document. Giovanni purchased the important naturalistic collection of his master Pier Antonio Micheli (1679-1737) after his death, creating the initial nucleus of his own collection. The collection was expanded during his journey through Tuscany aimed at the naturalistic exploration of this region, with particular regard to the study of rocks. His son Ottaviano (1755-1829) inherited and partially expanded the collection, revising it according with the progress made by science over time (Cipriani & Scarpellini, 2007). The Targioni Tozzetti collection (TTC) was bought by the Natural History Museum of the University of Florence. The TTC in many respects represents one magnificent example of the transition from the old conception of the Wunderkammern towards a “modern” scientific collection (Scarpellini, 2012).

The project aims to study and fully classify the TTC of minerals and rocks and finally create a detailed digital catalogue. The collection, albeit in a fairly good state of conservation, has never been fully catalogued or studied in detail in recent times. The cataloguing studies, carried out in the past, examined the original handwritten analytical catalogue in 12 volumes, but the correspondence between the catalogue entries and the specimens has never been verified.

As a first step, therefore, 150 representative samples have been selected and inventoried by extracting the related information from the TTC catalogues. The original labels report either the name of the element obtained from the mineral (e.g., *Ferrum* for the iron minerals), or the practical use of a raw material (e.g., *Ceramica* for the clay samples). In other cases the terms are ambiguous (e.g., *Magnes*).

The determination of modern mineral and rock species of the specimens has been carried out along with the characterization of other types of materials belonging to TTC (e.g., anthropological artefacts, small statues, pendants, etc.).

This study, although at a preliminary stage, may hopefully spread light on how the first naturalists collected, organized and classified those samples which allowed them to conduct their pioneering studies.

Cipriani C. & Scarpellini A. (2007) - Un contributo alla mineralogia settecentesca: la collezione di Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti. L.S. Olschki, Firenze.

Scarpellini A. (2012) - An 18th Century Litho-mineralogical Collection, in The Museum of Natural History of the University of Florence: the Mineralogical and Lithological Collections. Vol. IV, Firenze University Press.