

A Puzzle with Missing Pieces Extracting, Deciphering, and Digitally Rearranging Data in Antonio Maria Graziani Private Archives

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Abstract The Graziani Archives web portal utilises the Omeka S digital platform to digitally reconstruct a substantial portion of the private archives of the apostolic nuncio Antonio Maria Graziani. The Graziani Archives project facilitates the digital rearrangement and analysis of data, addressing the complexities inherent in this private archives. This collection, which also encompasses the correspondence of Graziani's predecessor, Cardinal Giovanni Francesco Commendone, holds historical significance within the context of papal diplomacy during and after the Council of Trent. However, unlike the majority of the letters, the manuscript E105, comprising 1,157 letters authored by both diplomats, presents challenges due to a lack of explicit attribution, information regarding addressees, and dates or locations of composition. To differentiate between the letters authored by both nuncios, the present study employs simulations to extract metadata, resulting in quicker and more precise identification compared to manual examination.

Keywords Metadata collection. Data ingestion. Omeka S. Graziani Archives. Antonio Maria Graziani. Giovanni Francesco Commendone.

The research project, titled *Nuncio's Secret Archives: Papal Diplomacy and European Multi-denominational Societies before the Thirty Years War*, has the primary objective of establishing the Graziani Archives web portal through the utilisation of the Omeka S digital platform. This web portal endeavours to virtually reconstruct a

substantial segment of the private archives of Giovanni Francesco Commendone and Antonio Maria Graziani, both distinguished diplomats from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Their manuscripts were in time scattered across various hosting institutions in both Italy and the USA.¹

The significance of this archives lies in both its completeness and continuity, as well as the importance of the two diplomats within the context of papal diplomacy during and after the Council of Trent. Giovanni Francesco Commendone (1524-1584), a Venetian, became a part of the Roman court under Pope Julius III and undertook crucial diplomatic assignments, such as presenting the bull of convocation of the Council in Trent to Emperor Ferdinand I in 1560. In subsequent years, he was sent to meet with the emperor and the king of Poland to address sensitive issues such as implementing the decrees of the Council, combating heresy, and dealing with the annulment of the marriage between Sigismund II Augustus Jagiellon and Catherine of Habsburg. In 1565, Commendone was appointed cardinal, and in 1566, he served as a legate to the imperial Diet. In 1570-71, he travelled to Vienna and Krakow once more to advocate for a Catholic league against the Turks and address the matter of Poland's throne succession (Caccamo 1982).

Antonio Maria Graziani (1537-1611) served as Commendone's secretary from 1560 until his death and accompanied him on all missions. Graziani also held the role of vice-legate in Poland in 1573, during the delicate phase following the appointment of Henry of Valois as king. After Commendone's demise, Graziani became one of the most trusted advisors of Cardinal Montalto, Alessandro Peretti, and was subsequently appointed as Bishop of Amelia in 1592 and as papal nuncio to Venice in 1596.

Giving the importance of the two nuncios, the design of the platform and its functionalities, particularly its capacity to render archival series preserved in various and distant institutions interoperable, prompt us to consider the challenges posed by a specific portion of the documentation. A notable example is the manuscript E105,² held in the Kenneth Spencer Research Library in Lawrence (Kansas), which contains 1,157 documents, primarily consisting of letters written by both Commendone and Graziani. The manuscript's miscellaneous nature is acknowledged at the beginning of the volume itself: *"Lettere parte per il card[ina]le Commendone e | parte per Ant[oni]o M[ari]a Graziani | dal 1566 sino al 1581"* (Letters from both Cardinal

¹ <https://nsa.unipr.it/>. For the history of the archives, cf. briefly in this volume Raines, *supra*.

² Lawrence, Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library (KSRL), Graziani-Commendone Collection, Letterbooks-Commendone, MS E105.

Commendone and Antonio Maria Graziani, from 1566 to 1581).³ However, the manuscript does not provide a clear distinction between the letters authored by the two diplomats. Consequently, to discern between the letters attributed to the cardinal and those attributed to his secretary, internal criteria must be applied. To historians, this distinction is essential due to the possibility that these letters may address similar topics but present different perspectives or focus on distinct subjects.

Besides the absence of explicit attribution and frequent omission of information on the addressee, many letters in this manuscript also lack a date or place of writing. However, the manuscript's somewhat imperfect chronological order does allow for the determination of at least the year, and sometimes the month, of most of these letters [fig. 1].



Figure 1 Lawrence, Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Graziani-Commendone Collection, MS E105, fol. n.n.

Furthermore, this manuscript presents additional challenges. Firstly, it is primarily written by a single hand, with only minor corrections made by a second hand (possibly that of Antonio Maria Graziani) [figs 2-3].

3 KSRL, MS E105, fol. n.n. [2]v.

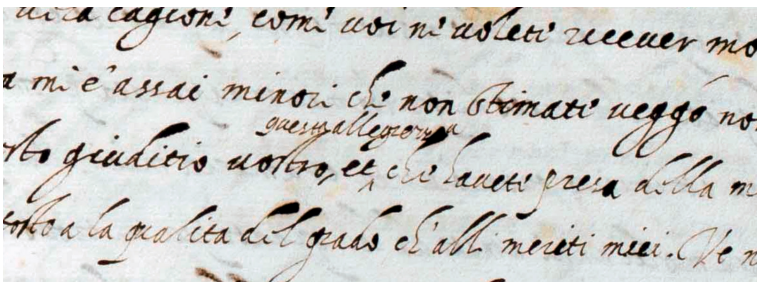


Figure 2 Lawrence, Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Graziani-Commendone Collection, MS E105, fol. 40r

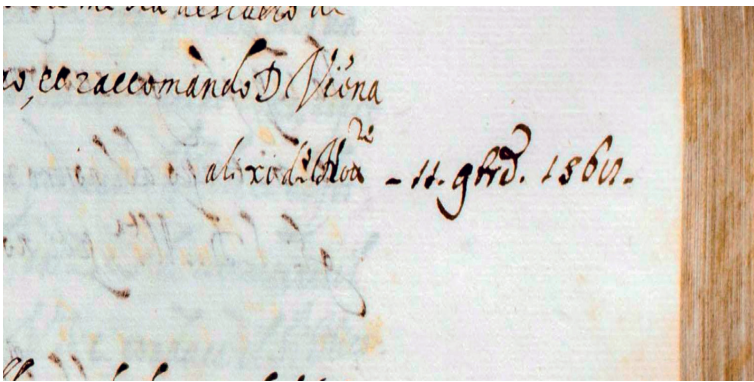


Figure 3 Lawrence, Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Graziani-Commendone Collection, MS E105, fol. 12r

Additionally, there are some notes written by a third hand and, at a later stage, contributions by the Jesuit scholar Girolamo Lagomarsini (1698-1773), who extensively studied the archives in the second half of the eighteenth century and published some of Graziani's works (1745-76) [fig. 4].⁴

⁴ For the life of Lagomarsini, cf. Arato 2004. After the publication of the *De scriptis invita Minerva*, Lagomarsini began an interesting dialogue with Lodovico Antonio Muratori: cf. Muratori 2023.

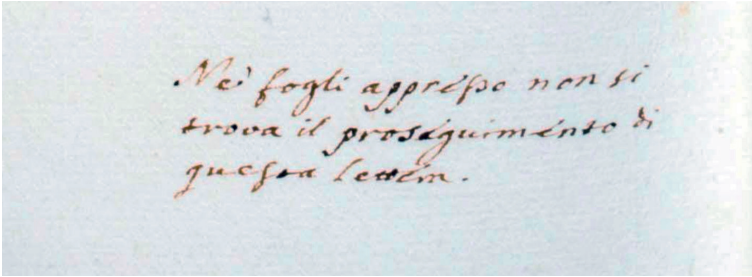


Figure 4 Lawrence, Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Graziani-Commendone Collection, MS E105, fol. 226v

Despite its apparently unified origin, the manuscript seems to have been assembled by combining three distinct groups of sheets: the first group (fols 1a-52a) comprises undated letters written in the spring of 1565, shortly after Commendone's elevation to cardinalate; the second group (fols 53a-79a), starting after a few blank pages and introduced by the note "del 1566" (of 1566), contains letters written between November 1566 and March 1567; the third group (which adopts a different numeration: fols 1-379) contains letters written between September 1568 and March 1581. This compositional division is evident in the two series of cartulation: the sheets in the first two sections are numbered from 1a to 79a, while those in the third section are numbered from 1 to 379 [figs 5-6].



Figure 5 Lawrence, Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Graziani-Commendone Collection, MS E105, fol. 79a

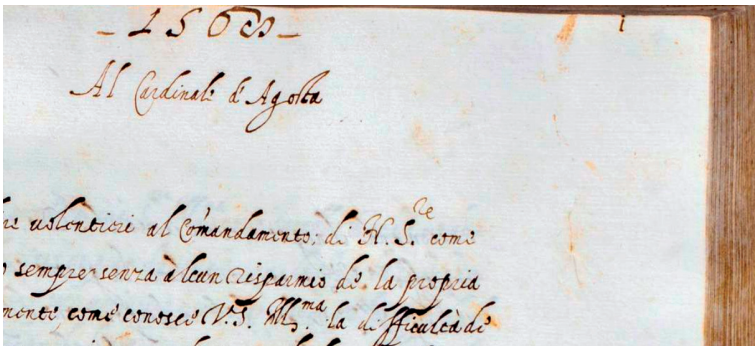


Figure 6 Lawrence, Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Graziani-Commendone Collection, MS E105, fol. 1r

One possible explanation for the unusual structure of the manuscript is that it was assembled from three originally independent sections, which were later bound together, possibly when the third section had already been numbered. The fact that the sheets in the third section have been trimmed suggests that this section may have been created as a separate collection, either before or after being combined with the other two. The copyists of the manuscript were somewhat incompetent or careless, as they committed errors regarding commonplace areas, names, and Latin expressions, which would not be expected from individuals serving an important figure such as Commendone.⁵ Unfortunately, without access to the originals, it is not possible to compare the copy with the correct original to identify the mistakes.

The most significant detail that remains elusive is the purpose behind the compilation of letters from various authors, encompassing diverse arguments and spanning a period of fifteen years, subsequently copied and bound together within the manuscript.⁶ Although the manuscript presents several challenges of a diverse nature, our focus will be on the lack of crucial information in many letters, such as reliable attribution, the addressee, or the date, in an attempt to unravel at least part of its logic. By conducting an in-depth metadata harvesting and virtual reconstruction of the archives through the Graziani Archives web portal (still under construction at the time of writing this essay and online as of April 2024), the hope is to move closer to a solution.

⁵ Cf., for example, the “Foggia/Foglia” oscillation in Letters 825, 826 and 827 and the Latin grammatical errors in Letter 186.

⁶ The fact that some letters contain substantial corrections seems to exclude that we are dealing with a simple letter book, but rather points towards the hypothesis of a selection of letters destined for reworking or maybe publication.

Title: MS E105 / Lettera 1006	
Sotto/Unità archivistica: KU, KSRL, Graziani-Commendone Coll., Letterbooks-Commendone, Ms. E105	
Regesto veloce: Commendone ringrazia il cardinale di Perugia, Fulvio Della Cornia, per il suo impegno nel tentativo di riconciliare la famiglia Ranieri e i nipoti di Girolamo Mannelli, vescovo di Nocera. Commendone è stato informato di un'adunanza di banditi nella zona di Schifanoia, quindi consiglia al cardinale di far concludere la pace alle parti entro il raccolto per evitare ulteriori violenze. Si scusa se non potrà fare visita al cardinale durante il prossimo viaggio verso la Toscana e trasmette i saluti di Gabriele Del Monte, vescovo di Jesi.	
Tipologia: lettera in registro copialettere	
Numero documento: 1006	
Estensione materiale: cc. 316r-v	
Nome Mittente	Qualifica
Commendone, Giovanni Francesco	Cardinale
Nome Destinatario	Qualifica
Della Cornia, Fulvio	Cardinale
Luogo di redazione: Serra de' Conti	
Luogo di ricezione:	
Data di redazione: 22-06-1579	
Edizioni del documento:	
Personaggi citati:	
Nome	Qualifica
Mannelli, Girolamo	Vescovo di Nocera
Del Monte, Gabriele	Vescovo di Jesi
Ranieri, famiglia	
Toponimi rilevanti:	
Schifanoia	
Note libere:	

Figure 7 Nuncio's Secret Archives Project: Letter template

The simulations conducted on templates that served as a preliminary step to data ingestion in Omeka S, incorporating collected metadata, yielded results more rapidly than manual examination of the manuscripts [fig. 7]. However, they were found to be less precise. Although these simulations required more time compared to the corresponding operations performed through Omeka S, the advantages of using a relational database extend beyond mere speed of information retrieval. The database's utility lies in its capacity to address the complexity and depth of the investigation, particularly regarding qualitative data.

As an example, Letter 166 from the E105 manuscript, an important communication to Diego de Àvila regarding the challenging relationship between Commendone and Cardinal Zaccaria Dolfin, lacks topical and chronic date information. Conducting research to gather complete information from the corpus of letters, including the names of the addressee and mentioned persons (in this case, Pope Pius IV and Cardinals Carlo Borromeo, Zaccaria Dolfin, and Stanisław Hozjusz), yields an immediate response. Letter 155 from the MssCol 603 of the New York Public Library is indeed another copy of the same letter that contains the missing information. It reveals that the letter was written on 16 July 1565, in Heilsberg.⁷

Naturally this example provides us with date and place of the letter, an information that can become useful in understanding the whole mechanism of selecting the letters for the manuscript. Some inquiries though are more intricate. On 16 January 1572, an unidentified person (Commendone or Graziani) writes to a member of the Puccini family ("*signor Puccini*") explaining that due to uncertainties in the mission to Poland, the author cannot guarantee the safe return of the addressee's son to Italy. The Graziani archives include several letters sent to brothers Giovanni Battista and Agostino Puccini. By searching for Giovanni Battista OR⁸ Agostino Puccini in the 'Addressee' field and combining it with the date in the 'Date' field, another copy of the same letter is found in the E97 manuscript of the Kenneth Spencer Research Library. This additional copy attributes the E105 letter to Commendone and confirms Giovanni Battista Puccini as the addressee.⁹ Using Giovanni Battista Puccini's son name, Marcantonio, two other letters, this time found in the 62A archival

⁷ New York Public Library, Manuscript and Archive Division, MssCol 603, *Giovanni Francesco Commendone, Diplomatic Correspondence, 1563-65*, sixth Register, Letter 155, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/3959>.

⁸ From now on, I will use the words 'OR' and 'AND' in capital letters to refer to the logical operators.

⁹ KSRL MS E105, fol. 227r-v, Letter 773, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/5759>; KSRL, MS E97, fol. 124v, Letter 131, <https://graziani-archives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/6801>.

container, reveal that already on 30 November 1571 Puccini asked Antonio Maria Graziani to help him accompany his son, at that time novice at the Jesuit College in Bamberg, to Italy together with Vincenzo Sirti, member of Commendone's household. The second letter from Puccini to Graziani is dated 13 March 1572, where the former asked to conduct his son, at that time in Warsaw under the care of a merchant, Sebastiano Montelupi, back to Italy.¹⁰ The structured and relational data in the Graziani Archives database helps in this case not only to discover the addressee of the letter, but to get acquainted with further details, included in other letters, through the relationships created between persons and letters.

The presence of multiple copies of the same letters in different collections raises further research questions: why were these copies created? How does their presence in different selections affect their significance for research and their role in the study? What connections and interactions should be established between them using Omeka S tools?

Unfortunately, many letters do not have a second copy, so filling in information gaps relies on replies or on similar/related letters, such as those exchanged with the same person in a nearby date. For instance, in Letter 758 of the E105 manuscript,¹¹ Graziani reports to Francesco Tranquillo Andreis that an "office" requested by him was performed by Commendone, with no further explanation. By searching for Andreis' name AND the month of October 1571, a letter from Andreis to Graziani in the Graziani archives in Vada clarifies the nature of the request: Andreis, who holds an ecclesiastic benefit in Ternavia, needs a letter of recommendation addressed to "Telegdino", the parish priest Miklós Telegdi, who is hostile to him for personal reasons.¹²

Another example can be found in Letter 682,¹³ dated 13 June (the year is not expressed), where the sender writes to Giovanni Giacomo Diedo about various topics and mentions a seal he asked Diedo to procure. By searching for Giovanni Giacomo Diedo in the Graziani Archives database, a group of letters sent by Diedo to Graziani in

¹⁰ Archivio Graziani di Vada, Fondo Antonio Maria Graziani, b. 62A, Letter 46 dated 13 March 1572, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/4230>; Letter 164, dated 30 November 1571, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/4374>.

¹¹ KSRL MS E105, fol. 220v, Letter 758, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/5744>.

¹² Archivio Graziani di Vada, Fondo Antonio Maria Graziani (Fondo AMG), b. 62A, Letter 105, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/4304>.

¹³ KSRL MS E105, fol. 191r-v, Letter 682, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/5661>.

June 1571 is found in the Graziani archives in Vada, which mentions the same topics and specifically refers to the seal.¹⁴

The letter numbered 742 is a complex case. The sender, unspecified, writes to the governor of Todi mentioning a letter he had recently written to Cardinal Girolamo Rusticucci regarding a license requested by the recipient. The date, 20 June of an unspecified year (likely 1571), is corrected by a different hand to July. By searching for Ludovico Cattaneo OR Evangelista Sbroiavacca in the 'Addressee' field AND for Girolamo Rusticucci in the 'People mentioned' field, a letter dated 17 July 1571, in the manuscript E97 of the Kenneth Spencer Research Library is found, where Commendone asks Cardinal Rusticucci for a license for Ludovico Cattaneo. This provides confirmation of the sender, recipient, and date of Letter 742.¹⁵

Various other operations can be performed with Omeka S on the Graziani Archives' documents to help understand single letters or groups. For instance, creating a direct link from a letter to its copy or reply, or to another related document, aggregating all items (letters, persons, places) referring to a particular subject matter (e.g., 'Commendone's family') or event (e.g., 'Commendone's mission to the Emperor, October 1568–April 1569'), and creating trans-archival chronological series of documents.

Furthermore, the possibility of continuously editing and increasing the data, inserting new information, and creating new relationships between items allows for modifying variables and aggregations, opening new study paths within the documentation, and hopefully filling in the gaps.

However, the quest for completeness does not overlook the role of uncertainty in constructing this (or any) digital archives. All questions, in the absence of an answer beyond a reasonable doubt, must be acknowledged in the digitisation process to provide users with a faithful representation of a varied and complex documentation.¹⁶

¹⁴ Fondo AMG, b. 62A, Letter 41, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/4225>; b. 62A, Letter 70, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/4261>; b. 62B, Letter 86, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/6341>; b. 62B, Letter 93, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/6349>.

¹⁵ KSRL, MS E97, fols 233v-234r, Letter 161, <https://grazianiarchives.eu/s/graziani-archives/item/6838>.

¹⁶ On the vast topic of uncertainty in digital humanities, cf., among others, Martin-Rodilla, Gonzalez-Perez 2018; Therón Sánchez et al. 2019; cf. also the growing collection dedicated to the topic by "Informatics": https://www.mdpi.com/journal/informatics/topical_collections/UDH.

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