



## *The Military Order of the Collar of Saint Agatha of Paternò*

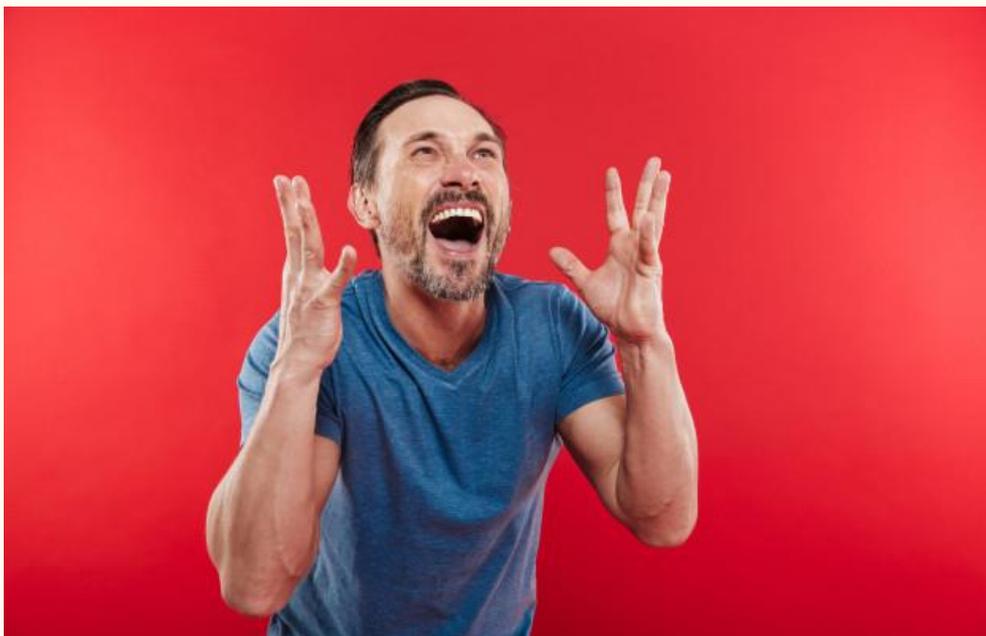
### Grand Chancellor's Bulletin

*June 2021*

#### ***FINALLY, AN EVENT! (...and maybe more than one!)***

After what seems like an interminable wait, the Grand Priory of Terra Nordica believes circumstances are sufficiently propitious – or will be by then – to announce definitely an Investiture and Banquet in Stockholm on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> October. The Booking Form is available on [www.mocinfo.info](http://www.mocinfo.info).

And just like the No.9 bus, you wait ages for one and then suddenly three arrive: October could be frantic as we also hope for an Investiture and Banquet in Sofia on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> October and maybe South Woodbridge on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> October – to be confirmed. Booking Forms for these will appear on [www.mocinfo.info](http://www.mocinfo.info) as soon as available.



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## ***Dante in Friuli***

The lucky ones among us have attended investitures in Venice, but the very luckiest have attended investitures before that in the lovely town of Latisana, where we have a strong presence and where, one of our Knights reminds us, we were not the first illustrious visitors to town!

*For those of us less well-versed in the vernacular of il Bel Paese, a translation is provided below the original text.*

Nel 1300 Dante è a Roma dove Papa Bonifacio XIII ha proclamato l'Anno Santo. La Città Eterna vive in un fermento di cerimonie sacre e di pellegrini, ma c'è anche un gran movimento nelle Segretarie di Stato. Il Papa vede con piacere l'annessione di Firenze allo Stato della Chiesa. I francesi si fingono alleati del Papa e spingono per favorire questa soluzione pensando a Carlo de Valois conte d'Angiò come nuovo Signore di Firenze.

Dante, chi in quei mesi è Priore di Firenze, cerca di salvare la città e la sua indipendenza. Firenze è ricca con banche, imprenditoria, commerci e in città ci sono intellettuali, letterati, filosofi, scultori e pittori. Dante vive questo momento storico ma la politica non favorisce accordi fra Bianchi e Neri, i Cerchi e i Donati, e lo scontro personale di supremazia che a poco da fare con i francesi, il Papa con i guelfi e ghibellini.

Dante è a Roma nel 1302 quando un frate di Curia Agostino Kazotic croato lo avverte di nascondersi e fuggire. Il podestà di Firenze lo ha condannato all'esilio per due anni con la confisca dei beni, la casa di abitazione distrutta e i figli maschi dovranno seguirlo nell'esilio. Dante raggiunge Siena, poi Forlì e Verona ed è attratto da terre più tranquille, dove le guerre e le rivalità politiche non sono costanti di insicurezze sociali. Nel suo peregrinare Dante nel 1306 è a Padova dove ritrova l'amico frate Kazotic in attesa di essere nominato vescovo di Zagabria e forse riceve proprio da lui l'invito di raggiungerlo.

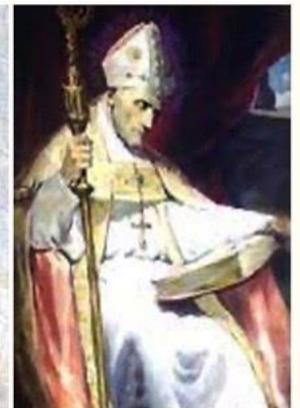
Dante decide così di venire in Friuli e più oltre raggiungere dalla laguna veneta la città di Aquileia. Prese posto in una galera che faceva servizio postale e merci tra l'Arzana di Venezia e Portus Tisane (oggi Latisana) sulla foce del fiume Tilaventum (Tagliamento). Era in quegli anni Portus Tisane un porto molto frequentato. Si commerciava il sale, il legname e scaricava la posta sempre con la presenza e i controlli dei valletti del conte di Gorizia.

Dante toccò terra sul breve pontile del porto e si avvicinò alla chiesa di Santa Croce che si trovava alle fine di un breve viottolo.

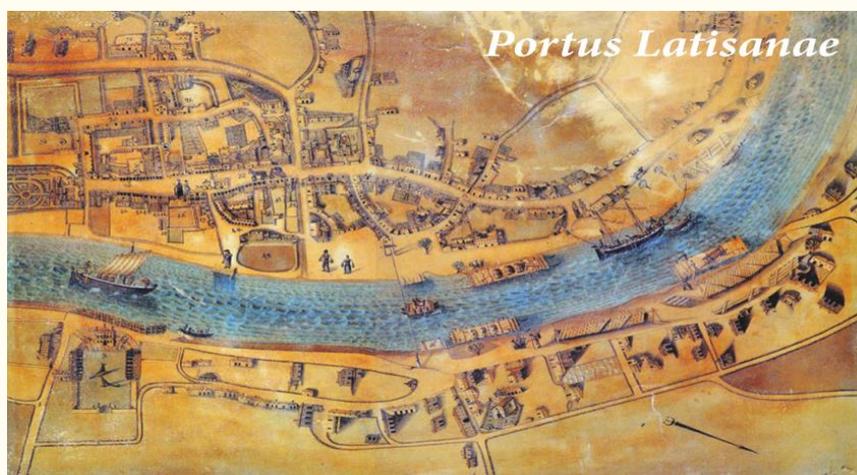
Entrò e si inginocchiò davanti ad una teca che custodiva una spina della corona che aveva cinto il capo di Gesù. La visita fu breve perché i cavalli erano pronti a riprendere il viaggio verso Aquileia. La visita di Dante Alighieri in Friuli era iniziata.



Dante Alighieri



Blessed Agostino Kazotic OP



In 1300 Dante was in Rome where Pope Boniface XIII had declared a Holy Year. The city was in a turmoil of religious ceremonies and crowds of pilgrims, but there was also great activity in the Secretariat of State. The Pope was looking to annexe Florence to the Papal States. The French feigned to be friends of the Pope and pushed for such an eventuality since they saw Charles de Valois Count of Anjou as the new Lord of Florence.

At that time Dante, who held high political office in Florence, tried to save Florence and its independence. Florence was a rich city with banks, industry and commerce and was home to intellectuals, writers, philosophers, sculptors and painters. Despite Dante's best efforts, the circumstances did not facilitate any agreement between the various factions into which the city was riven, not to mention the struggle for supremacy involving the French and the Pope.

Dante was again in Rome in 1302 when Agostino Kazotic, a friar from Croatia working in the Curia, warned him to hide and flee the city for his own safety, for the mayor of Florence had condemned him to exile, the confiscation of his possessions, the destruction of his house and the banishing also of his sons. Dante fled first to Siena, before Forlì and Verona, always seeking quieter places where wars and civil strife were not incessant risks. In the course of his wanderings Dante reached Padua in 1306 where he ran into his friend Kazotic, awaiting his nomination as Bishop of Zagreb, and probably received the invitation to join him. So it was that Dante decided to enter Friuli from where he would proceed to the city of Aquileia on the Venetian Lagoon. He boarded a galley that carried the post as well as merchandise from the Arsenal of Venice to Portus Tisane (today's Latisana) at the mouth of the River Tilaventum (today Tagliamento). In those times Portus Tisana was a very busy port, especially for salt and timber and distribution of the post, with the permanent presence and controls of the men of the Count of Gorizia.



38: Church of the Holy Cross

Dante landed on the quayside of the port and approached the Church of the Holy Cross which was at the end of a short alley. He entered and knelt before a reliquary which contained a relic of the Crown of Thorns. His visit was only brief because the horses were ready to continue the journey to Aquileia. Dante's visit to Friuli had begun.

*Enrico Cottignoli*

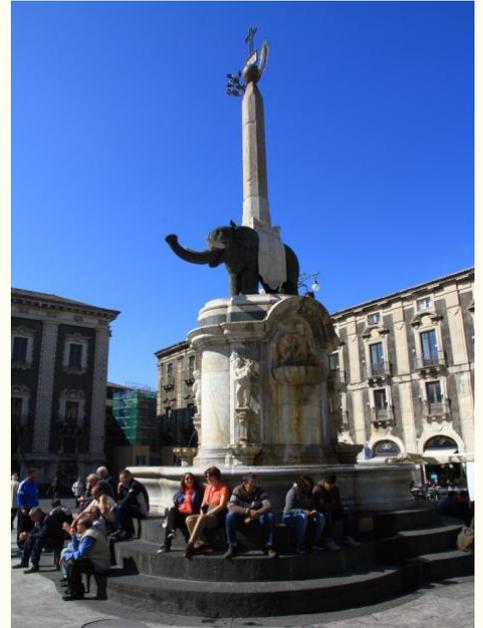


## *U Liotru*

When walking south from the Gioeni roundabout along the 3-kilometer-long Via Etnea, one will arrive at the Piazza del Duomo in the centre of Catania. On its left side stands the beautiful church, *Cattedrale di Sant'Agata*, straight ahead lies *Fontana dell'Amenano* and roughly in the middle of Piazza del Duomo is the *Fontana dell'Elefante*. The fountain is decorated with an Elephant made of lava rock.

Most of you who have visited Catania have seen the Elephant statue. But did you know how important the statue is for the people of Catania?

There are a lot of questions about the statue. Unfortunately, there are no sure answers, only a lot of legends.



The *Fontana dell'Amenano* is a monument in Catania placed in South of Piazza del Duomo. The fountain is made of Carrara marble and was built 1867 by Tito Angelini to represent the river with the same name. It looks like the elephant has walked along the Via Etnea to Piazza del Duomo to drink water from the Fountain dell'Amenano or the river. At that time the river emptied into the sea; the fountain with the statues were not built yet. But before the elephant continues towards the spring, it turns to the cathedral of Sant'Agata to pay its respect to the church, which has been named after the patron saint Holy Agata.

The church has been destroyed and rebuilt several times due to earthquakes and the eruption of the volcano Etna. It was originally built in 1078-1093, on the ruins of the Roman baths, at the command of King Roger I of Sicily, who had conquered the city from the Moors.



A bell tower, designed by Carmelo Sciuto Patti in 1169, was almost completely destroyed by an earthquake. Further damage caused by a fire in 1169. But the 1693 earthquake was the most catastrophic, since the cathedral was again in ruins.

The cathedral's current appearance is the result of Gian Battista Vaccarini's work in 1711, when he designed a new Baroque façade after the 1693 earthquake. The façade is decorated with marble statues; Santa Agata is located over the entrance, Saint Euplius on the right and Saint Birillus on the left. The wooden main entrance doors have 32 carved parts with episodes of life and St. Agata's martyrdom, symbols of the papacy and Christian symbols.

Catania is called "The City of the Elephant" after this magnificent elephant. The inhabitants of Catania love their elephant. You can always see people relaxing on the steps of the fountain. A common sight is older gentlemen from Catania who gather at the fountain to socialize and change news. Catania's inhabitants are very attached to this cute elephant statue made of lava stone, which they nicknamed Liotru. They are so attached to the statue that they threatened uprisings when in 1862 it was proposed that it be moved from Piazza Duomo to the less central Piazza Palestro.

But where does the elephant come from? There are many question marks and many legends. According to one legend, Liotru symbolizes the resistance that Catania residents showed when conquering people arrived riding on elephants and another says it symbolizes Catania's military victory over the Libyans. According to yet another legend the elephant is a magical statue, built under the ruling Byzantines, to protect Catania from the eruption of Etna.

According to one theory, Liotru is an incorrect version of the name "Eliodoro". Who was Eliodoro? He may have been a Sicilian nobleman who lived in the 9th century, who according to the legend tried to become bishop of the diocese but failed. He fell and turned into a necromancer, made idols and was killed by burning because of it. According to the tradition, Eliodoro was the creator of the black lava stone elephant statue. The statue was later restored by architect Giovanni Battista Vaccarini between 1735 and 1737 and placed it in the centre of the square fountain, adding an obelisk to the elephant's back. The obelisk, decorated in Egyptian style, has some mysteries of its own because it has never been dated with certainty; Vaccarini added a globe and a cross on top of it.

Furthermore, many have wondered about the reasons why the elephant's trunk points towards the Cathedral of Saint Agatha. Some say it is because in the 12th century locals believed it had magical powers and was able to protect the city from Etna's eruption. Would it have been possible to turn the elephants back or side to the cathedral? Maybe not.

One thing we know for certain is that everything that led to the strong connection between Catania and "Liotru" has ancient origins. The statue became an official symbol of the city in 1239, after the people of Catania gathered repeatedly to have it included in the municipality's symbols. Some say its origins go all the way back to a real elephant that fought against dangerous wildlife when the city was founded.

There are a lot of questions and will be. Who built it? And when? Why would a bunch of people go as far as dying just so it would not leave the city? What kind of reward did they expect for their sacrifice? What did the Liotru mean to them? Let's say it really was one of the last symbols of an ancient worship that was lost in the passage of time. Who brought that belief to Catania? What misfortune did its adepts endure? When did they disappear? Who erased the evidence of their existence, and why? It is hard, if not impossible to answer these questions. The fact that everything about the Liotru escapes any attempt at definition make it a real 'monstrum'; something alien, that we can only describe as coming from somewhere else, somewhere completely different. I think this is the core of the matter".

*Susanna Lundell*



## *The History of the MOC (continued)*



Ignazio V Biscari



The Biscari Museum

Cast your minds back a few weeks, if you can. We had the imposing man in the image on the left, Ignazio 5<sup>th</sup> Prince of Biscari, sailing his convoy of ships in truly regal style to the Balearic Islands to see for himself the kingdom of his ancestors. There he learnt of the founding by them on the island of Minorca of an Order of the Collar, an order of knights to work together to resist any attempts by the Moors to reconquer the islands. He duly wrote up his findings in his memoirs of his journey and placed this document in the library attached to the Museum he constructed within his palace in Catania. But there it remained unread.

On his return to Sicily, he had been appointed by the King to be Superintendent of Antiquities for the whole Eastern half of Sicily which responsibility he attacked with a passion. Throughout the length and breadth of his territory he began archaeological excavations, often supervising the works in person and financing them out of his own pocket. There were perks of course, including purloining some of the finest pieces for his own collection such as the famous torso, which along with the rest of his collection was bequeathed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the city of Catania and today can - and should! – be visited in the Castello Ursino, once the royal palace of the Kings of Aragon in Sicily.



Castello Ursino (on the waterfront, before the eruption of Etna)



The Biscari Torso of Jupiter

Across the centuries the Paternò acquired lands and titles and, like the Habsburgs and Rothschilds subsequently, found that the best way to conserve both within the family was to marry cousins. The family tree rapidly came to resemble a bowl of spaghetti and various branches claimed pre-eminence.



In 19th century a mania for Gothic revival swept across Europe - including Sicily. Thus, Queen Victoria had her home at Windsor completely reworked to look like a castle once more, every new building had to be in Gothic style, balls were held in mediaeval dress, jousts and tournaments were held in full armour. At this very time the Paternò family produced an extraordinary intellectual in the person of Francesco 7th Duke of Carcaci. He was a conspicuous writer of academic papers which he would deliver to various academies of which he was a member. In the course of his research in the library of the Biscari Museum he stumbled on the mouldering documents narrating his ancestor's travels to the Balearics. He could barely contain his excitement when he read of the parchments in the Franciscan convent of Fornells (known as the Knights' Convent) which told of this Order of the Collar dedicated to Saint Agatha, the undoubted patrimony of the family, and which it seems the Prince of Biscari had intended to revive, if only his archaeological responsibilities had not intervened. The Duke had no such distractions and sought to do what Biscari had failed to do, namely to revive the Order. Yet who amongst his many relatives should be the Grand Master of which the other competing relatives would approve? So he got to work on his genealogical tables and then convened a family conclave on the 14th June 1853 in the palace in Palermo of the Paternò Marquesses of Spedalotto, attended by representatives of all the various branches of the family.



Francesco 7 Carcaci

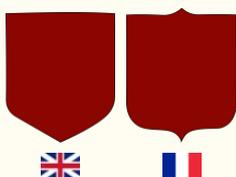
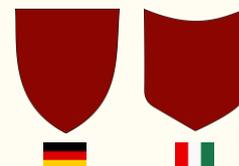


Palazzo Spedalotto

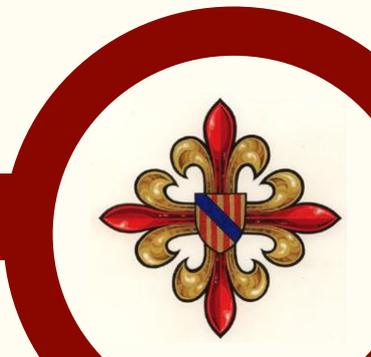
**More about heraldry: shields!**

This time I would like to discuss how the shield in a coat of arms has changed. If you search the internet you will find lots of different shapes for the shield. I will here present some shapes from different countries and different centuries. From the beginning the shield looked more like a “fighting shield” (more long and slim) and later different countries developed different traditions. In Sweden it is possible to read old blazons for coat of arms where it is stated that the shield should be an English or a French shield. In a more modern time most shields are presented in a more strict and standardized way.

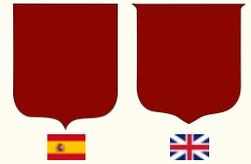
Let us start with the XIIth century where the German shield is shown on the left and an Italian shield is shown on the right →



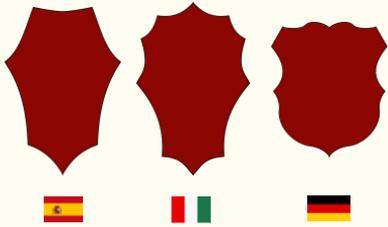
← In the XIVth century it is possible to find an English shield (on the left) and a French shield (right).



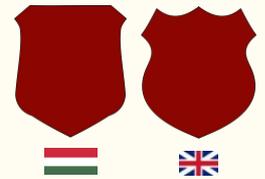
During the XVth century Spain used a shape (left) that is the one that I prefer for many reasons: it is more square so it is easier to quarter and it is also easier to place components in a way that ensures they do not need to be “twisted” to fit into the shield. England used a similar shield (right) at this time →



← XVth century Spain used a more elaborate shield (left) and so did Italy (centre) . The German shield (right) during this century was also very “fancy”.

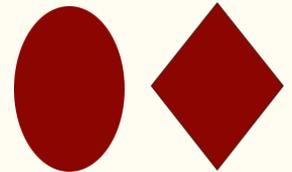


During the XVIIth century Hungary used the shape of shield shown on the left, and England used an even more elaborate shield (right) →



← England used another shape during the XVIIIth century.

Please note that this is just one of many ways to present the shapes and that there are many more varieties. These are the shields normally used by men. For women most often other shapes – less obviously warlike - are used such as an oval (left) or a lozenge (right) →



← As an example of a woman’s coat of arms I here present the coat of arms for Baroness (Margaret) Thatcher.

*Anders Bager*

Stay well – and get vaccinated when you can! Otherwise, we shall never meet up. It is our only hope.

*Stephen*

