

***Padua University Alumni in the Republic of Letters:
the Bartolomeo Gamba Collection (16th-19th centuries)
(The Bartolomeo Gamba Project)***

The first aim of the project is to provide a case study in intellectual history of Padua University alumni in the Republic of Letters, 1550-1840. This will entail the first scholarly analysis of the Bartolomeo Gamba Collection of correspondence of eminent Italians, which is partly kept in the library of the Bassano City Museum and partly in the Austrian National Library in Vienna, Austria.

One means to do it is by ingesting metadata into Early Modern Letters Online, a new Oxford Bodleian Library free online catalogue which is set to becoming the primary research tool for intellectual historians working on the Republic of Letters, <http://emlo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/blog/?catalogue=bartolomeo-gamba>

There are *circa* 4,000 letters which make up the Bartolomeo Gamba collection of correspondence of eminent early modern Italian scholars. They include several letters by Italian women scholars, as Gamba undertook to research female scholarly contributions to the intellectual life of the Republic of Venice in the early modern period. Its relevance to early modern science and the Republic of Letters is huge, since most letters were written by professors or alumni of the University of Padua of whom the majority were physicians. This is due to the request that Count Moriz von Dietrichstein (1775-1864) made to Bartolomeo Gamba (1766-1841) on commissioning such a collection. Dietrichstein knew that most court physicians in Vienna had been educated in Padua. He embarked upon collecting their correspondence for the Imperial Library, of which he was the Prefect. The richness of material about early modern physicians in the Republic of Letters explains the co-operation between the Department of Historical and Geographical Sciences and the Ancient World, University of Padua, with Cultures of Knowledge, Oxford University, the Medical University of Vienna, the Austrian National Library, the Medical Humanities Working Group at the University of Padua, and the Biblioteca/Museo Civico in Bassano del Grappa.

The main aim of the Bartolomeo Gamba Project is to produce scholarly publications which, on the one hand, will analyse the context of formation of the collection in Austrian-ruled Veneto, in the early nineteenth century, its split between Vienna and Bassano, and its afterlife. The main research output of the project will be a monograph about the intellectual, personal, and book trade relations between Padua (within its broader geo-political context) on the one hand, and Paris and London on the other hand. Publications are also being produced about the early modern Republic of Letters which exploit the wealth of material in the Gamba Collection. The language of the letters is almost exclusively Italian throughout the period, between the sixteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries.

While the letters are fundamental sources about 16th-, 17th and 18th-century intellectual history, the history of how the collection was assembled, sold, split, and how now it is being virtually re-united in EMLO is an excellent case study about letters as collectibles, both in the early modern period and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when many museums were stripped of their textual collections, including collections of letters, and turned into new kinds of museums, with national libraries acquiring avalanches of books, manuscripts, and letters. Ultimately the Bartolomeo Gamba Project contributes fresh historiographical perspectives to the rise of the notion of national heritage as well as to the under-researched yet significant contribution of Padua University to early modern European intellectual life.