

The Medici Crown: Work of the Delft Goldsmith Jaques Bylivelt

IN December 1569 Cosimo I de' Medici was at last granted the right to use the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany, for which he had long been petitioning both Pope and Emperor. The Papal Bull sanctioning the new title is preserved in the Medici Museum in Florence¹. The Emperor Maximilian II still refused recognition, but nevertheless the coronation by Pope Pius V took place in Rome on March 5, 1570.

In the meantime a crown had hastily been made for the Grand Duke along the lines the Pope had laid down in the Bull, to which a drawing had been specially appended (Fig. 1)². In particular the Pope had stipulated that the design should not follow the contemporary fashion for royal crowns but should be in the form of a rayed crown like those of ancient kings. There was also to be a red fleur-de-lis in front, the lily being the emblem of John the Baptist, patron saint of Florence.

However Cosimo already had in his possession a highly ornate crown, of quite a different design, which has so far escaped the attention of other writers on the subject. A mere ducal crown, or *mazzo-chio*, this is described in detail in an inventory of jewels dating from 1566³. It consisted of a circlet, set with jewels and carrying a row of fleurs-de-lis alternating with large pear-shaped pearls, two of the fleurs-de-lis—those of *Fiorenza e Siena*—being more richly set with stones than the rest. It was closed by a single arch topped with a floral device consisting of a large diamond surrounded by four rubies. A reasonably accurate representation of it can still be seen in *The Apotheosis of Cosimo*, painted by Giorgio Vasari between 1563 and 1565 on the central panel of the Salone dei Cinquecento in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence (Fig. 2).

1. Published in J. F. Hayward, 'An Eighteenth-Century Drawing of the Grand-Ducal Crown of Tuscany', *The Burlington Magazine* 97 (1955), p. 311, Fig. 11; a print of the drawing appended to the Bull was later published by R. Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana sotto il Governo della Casa Medici*, Florence 1781, p. 147 (Fig. 1).

2. It is not certain whether this crown was in fact completely finished by March 1570. As late as April 16, 1570, the German merchant, Hans Ahamhauser, who had been commissioned to sell the jewels belonging to Prince William I of Orange, wrote from Venice: . . . *der hartzogk vonn Florentzs läst ein gewaltige Cron machen, darzu ahnn mich langen ein schonen Rubin, ein diamant, ein Smaragd unnd ein Balloß Jedes stuck von zehen biß uff funffzehnen Taußent Cronen, als baldt hab Ich ein diamant, unnd ein Smaraldt hinuber gesandt. Vom Rubin Ihr. F.G. begerenn gemeeß bißher nit bekommen, Eine Balloß bin Ich gewertig vom Augspurgk . . .* Ahamhauser had also intended to sell the Grand Duke another of the Prince's jewels, a large diamond, but nothing came of this transaction because, so he wrote, Cosimo's atten-

tion was distracted by the impending war against the Turks (Koninklijk Huisarchief, The Hague, Inv. 11 (Willem I) VI No. 12; I am indebted to Dr. S. W. A. Drossaers for this reference).

3. Published by C. Mazzi, 'Le gioie della corte Medicea nel 1566', *Rivista delle biblioteche e degli archivi* 18 (1907), Florence, pp. 134-8. This crown may have been made by the celebrated goldsmith, Domenico Poggini, who, as late as 1576, is recorded as having received a payment from Francesco I for work on the *mazocho* . . . *in tempo della F. M. del Alte^a Ser^a Paterna* (Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Depositeria Medicea 980, No. 178). It was probably melted down in 1570 to furnish materials for the new one. The new crown is mentioned in an inventory of 1570 (A. S. F., Guardaroba Medicea 75, carta 1) and in another made after Cosimo's death in 1574 (A. S. F., Guardaroba Medicea 87, c. 23), its weight being recorded as £ 2.11.16. In the inventory made after the death of Ferdinand I in 1609 (A. S. F., Guardaroba Medicea 289, c. 1) there is a mention of another *mazocho*, made of pure gold with foliate ornament, from which the jewels had been removed.

Nevertheless Cosimo faithfully followed the Pope's instructions; the new design of the *corona radiata* was used at the coronation, and for the next hundred years and more—until 1691—it was the traditional form for the Medici crown⁴. It has even been assumed until now that the actual crown used throughout this period was the one made for Cosimo in 1575. Documents preserved in the Medici archives in the Archivio di Stato in Florence, however, show that only a few years later Cosimo's crown was melted down and replaced.

One of these documents is an account-book kept (in Dutch) by the Delft goldsmith-jeweller Jaques Bylivelt⁶, in which there is a series of entries, for the year 1577 and a number of years thereafter, relating to work on a crown. It was obviously a new crown: not a mere modification but a complete replacement of Cosimo's crown of 1570 which was melted down for the purpose⁷, and in the circumstances this is not really very surprising. In 1576 the Emperor had at last withdrawn his opposition to the title of Grand Duke, and no doubt Cosimo's son, Francesco I de' Medici, saw this as a good opportunity to commission a more permanent and better finished crown to replace the one made in such haste for his father.

Bylivelt notes in his accounts that he started work on this important commission on May 29, 1577⁸. Over the next few years he continued to keep an accurate record of the amount of gold and precious stones he received from the Grand Duke for incorporation in the new crown, until at last in 1583—six years later—it was finished, being registered in the inventory of the Guardaroba on June 30. On registration it was customary to check the amount of material used by weighing the article concerned and recording a description of it. The entry relating to Bylivelt's crown reads as follows:

£ '5.3.23.12 doro lavorato in una corona reale gioilate con n° 24 diamanti nell cerchio che n° 7 grandi n° 2 in triangholo n° 2 in tavola mezzani n° 2 a facietta n° 4 in punta e n° 8 in tavola e n° 56 rubini che n° 3 in tavola e uno in ciotolo e n° 14 mezzani en° 38 rubinetti, smeraldi n° 5 grandi e dua piccoli. Perle n° 40 tonde che ne cerchio n° 11 rubini nell gilio che n° una in tavola lungho n° 2 in tavola mezzani n° 2 in tara di piedi e n° 6 in cotolo con° uno diamante lungo da basso et n° 2 piccoli diamanti n° 18 nelle punte n° 4 in tavola n° 1 a facietta n° 6 in tavola mezzani n° 7 piccoli robini n° 17 che n° 6 grandi n° 7 mezzani n° 4 piccoli smeraldi n° 16 che n° 6 grandi n° 4 mezzani e n° 6 piccoli disse avere auto dette gioie dell grandduca pesato al saggio con uno beretino di raso rosso atachato alla corona'⁹.

A more detailed description, however, appears in an inventory of jewellery which was compiled in

4. In 1691 Cosimo III was granted *trattamento reale*, i.e. he was thenceforth to be treated as a sovereign prince, with the right to wear an arched crown.

5. C. G. E. Bunt, 'The Medici Crown', *The Connoisseur* 107 (1941), pp. 115-8; J. F. Hayward, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-11; Lord Twining, *European Regalia*, London 1967, pp. 147-8.

6. His name was corrupted in various ways, including Jacomo and Giaches Biliverti; but the numerous letters that have been preserved are signed with the version used here. Earlier literature on Bylivelt is listed in the most recent article: Y. Hackenbroch, 'Jacopo Bilivert and the Rospigliosi cup', *The Connoisseur* 172 (1969), pp. 174-181.

7. Bylivelt's account-book, A. S. F., Guardaroba Medicea No. 88:

June 3 1577: 'ontfangen inde guarderobbe op den 3^{en} Junius in gout de croen om te vermaecken weecht twee pont elf onsen seventhien dinaeren' (which tallies with the recorded weight of Cosimo's crown, see Note 3).

September 29 1578: 'noch ontfangen van den hartoech op den 29^{en} septembre in 22 casten van de oude croen om te versmeltten die weegen ses onse en elf dinaeren'.

I hope shortly to be able to publish this account-book which covers Bylivelt's activities from 1573 to 1587.

8. 'Op de 29^{en} mei a° 1577 begost ick de croen . . .'

9. A. S. F., Guardaroba Medicea 104, c. 121.

1591 for Francesco's brother and successor, Grand Duke Ferdinand I de' Medici, and which explicitly records Jaques Bylivelt as the maker (given here in the appendix).

No Medici crown has survived. But in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London there is an eighteenth-century drawing inscribed *Corona di Casa Medici* (Fig. 3)¹⁰, while another source, besides inventories, from which we may get some idea of the lost crown jewels is the number of portraits of members of the Medici family. Admittedly, the crown depicted beside the reigning Grand Dukes in many of these portraits is rarely an accurate representation, being mostly only an impression of what the painter imagined to be the characteristic features of the Medici crown as specified by the Pope, *i.e.* a rayed crown with a fleur-de-lis in front. This is even true of the Grand-Ducal crown being made by one of the goldsmiths in the foreground of a particularly interesting painting of a goldsmith's workshop, which Alessandro Fei did for Francesco I's Studiolo in the Palazzo Vecchio between 1570 and 1572.

In some cases, however, the situation is quite different. Consider, for example, the official portrait of Cristina di Lorena, painted shortly after her marriage to Ferdinand I in 1590 by Scipio Pulzone called Il Gaetano (Fig. 4)¹¹. Here the crown, lying on the table, is depicted with considerable attention to detail (Fig. 5) and is clearly the same as that shown, though in less detail, in the portrait of Ferdinand I in cardinal's robes, which is attributed to the same artist and must have been painted in the interim between Ferdinand's acceptance of the ducal title in 1587 and his withdrawal from the cardinalate in 1588 (Fig. 6)¹². The same crown occurs again in a later portrait, dating from about 1615, in which Maria Magdalena of Austria, the wife of Ferdinand's son, Cosimo II, appears with her eldest son (Fig. 7)¹³, and also in the large canvas depicting *The Marriage of Francesco I de' Medici and Giovanna of Austria* (Fig. 8)¹⁴. The latter was painted by Jacopo Ligozzi in 1627 as one of a series illustrating the history of the Medici family commissioned by Maria de' Medici for the Palais de Luxembourg and carried out by various artists in Florence. The marriage had in fact taken place in 1565, long before Bylivelt started on his crown, and even before the title of Grand Duke had been granted; but all the same Ligozzi depicted the bride wearing the crown which was in the Guardaroba when he was working on his painting.

If we now compare the crown shown in these four paintings with the one in the drawing in London

10. Inv. No. 7899. 1. This drawing was published by C. G. E. Bunt, *op. cit.*, as the work of Santini, a Florentine goldsmith, but J. F. Hayward, *op. cit.*, pointed out that it dates from the 18th century. In a supplementary note to his article, published as a letter in *The Burlington Magazine* 98 (1956), p. 243, he suggested the possibility that it might in fact be the drawing ordered in 1710 from the Florentine, Giovanni Cassini, by the Englishman, John Talman, for his collection of drawings of 'Crowns, Coronets, Sceptors of all Sovereigns, Princes & States'.

11. Museo Mediceo, Inv. 1890 No. 9161. Pulzone had been specially summoned to Florence by Grand Duke Ferdinand *accioche lo ritrattasse in maestà assieme con Madama gran Duchessa* (G. Baglione, *Le vite de' Pittori, Scultori, et Architetti*, Rome 1642, ed. R. Istituto d'Archeologia e Storia dell' Arte, Rome 1935, p. 53, where Bellori in a marginal note praises Pulzone's powers of imitation as well as his

accuracy). I am grateful to Dr. K. Langedijk for her help in tracing the Medici portraits.

12. Uffizi, Florence, inventory 1890 No. 3198; catalogo *Artisti alla corte Granducale*, Palazzo Pitti Florence, 1969, No. 1.

13. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Inv. No. 6464, originally a three-quarter length portrait (G. Heinz, 'Studien zur Porträtmalerei an den Höfen der Österreichischen Erblande', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 59 (1963), p. 203, No. 111). There is a second example of this portrait, also three-quarter length, in the Museo Mediceo in Florence (information supplied by Dr. Langedijk).

14. Earl of Elgin's Collection, Broomhall, Fife (A. Blunt, 'A series of paintings illustrating the History of the Medici Family executed for Marie de Médicis', *The Burlington Magazine* 109 (1967), pp. 492 ff.). The whole series was bought in Paris between 1803 and 1806 by the 7th Earl of Elgin on his way back to England from Constantinople.

and with the description in the 1591 inventory, there can be no doubt about it being the same in each case, and from these various sources it can be reconstructed in detail. Along the bottom edge of the circlet was a row of pearls alternating with rubies. In front, in the middle, below the large fleur-de-lis, was a large square emerald *di perfetto colore* and below this a triangular diamond. In two niches either side of the emerald were mounted two small figures in gold and enamel, one of them—the one with raised sword—possibly representing Justice, while the other was probably one of the other Virtues (perhaps Prudence), such as would befit a royal ornament. The niches were closed in by a broken pediment with volutes, between which, in the middle above the emerald, was a ram's head in high relief. The circlet itself was embellished with a succession of large stones separated by two smaller stones placed one above the other, and along the upper edge just below the rays ran an inscription commemorating the granting of the Grand-Ducal title by Pius V. (In Pulzone's portrait of Cristina di Lorena this inscription has been replaced by the date and the artist's signature; see Fig. 5). The seventeen rays were each set with three stones—an emerald, a ruby and a diamond—and every other ray was surmounted by a small lily. The large lily in front—the red lily of Florence—glittered with eleven large rubies. Other embellishments, such as moresques, flowers, animals and masks, in red, green and black enamel—on both the inside and the outside of the circlet and rays—are not easy to see in the paintings; but the inside decoration of grotesques can just be made out in Pulzone (Fig. 5), while inside and outside are shown in detail in the drawing in London (Fig. 3), the outside on the right and the inside (two rays) on the left. According to the Guardaroba description⁹ there was a red satin cap that was worn inside the crown, but this does not appear in any of the paintings.

Combining all the various sources in this way, we are thus still able to form a fairly clear picture of what the crown made by Jaques Bylivelt between 1577 and 1583 looked like, and from this it is obvious that the drawing in the Victoria and Albert Museum is not, as Hayward and Blunt assumed, a drawing of the crown made for Cosimo I in 1570.

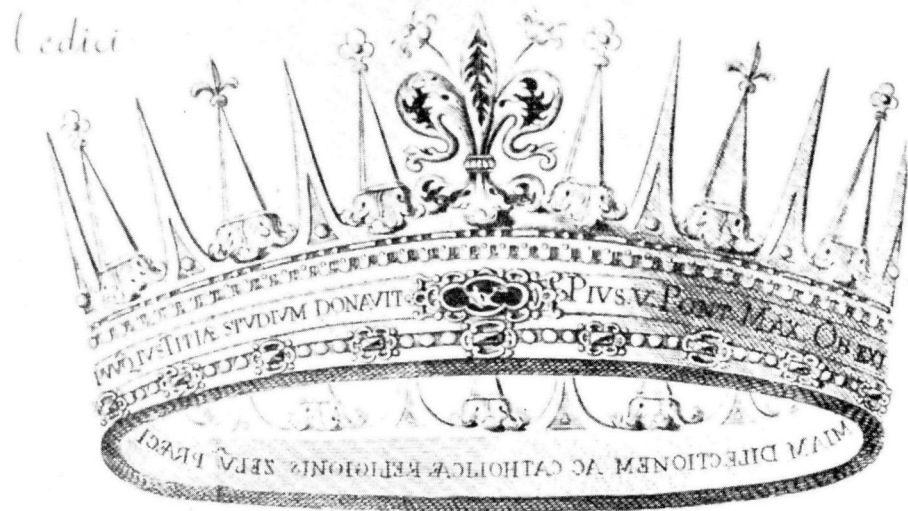
An important work of this nature would not of course have been made by Bylivelt on his own. On the other hand, Hayward's assertion that he employed in his workshop in Florence nine German goldsmiths who had accompanied him to Italy is certainly not true either¹⁵. We only know whom he did employ from the Guardaroba accounts for the six years from 1581–7, and from these it appears that he always had working for him two or three young goldsmiths from Germany or the Low Countries who were apprenticed to him for a few years and then departed again—maybe returning to their home country, maybe not. The only permanent assistant he is known to have had was Gianbattista Elmi from Milan, but his name never figures prominently as a goldsmith at the Florentine court¹⁶. Who else was working for Bylivelt during his first few years in Florence, when he will have been engaged on the crown, is not known. However, it is probably safe to assume that the *orefice fiammingo* Gerardo

15. J. F. Hayward, 'The Aldobrandini Tazzas', *The Burlington Magazine* 112 (1970), p. 673.

16. The names of Bylivelt's *lavoranti* can be found in I. B. Supino, *L'Arte di Benvenuto Cellini*, Florence 1901, p. 43. Gianbattista Elmi worked for him from 1575 to at least 1590, receiving no payment at all

in the first years and lower wages than the other apprentices thereafter. He is discussed, though his importance is somewhat overestimated, in C. G. E. Bunt, *The Goldsmiths of Italy, some accounts of their guilds, statutes and work*, London 1926, p. 69.

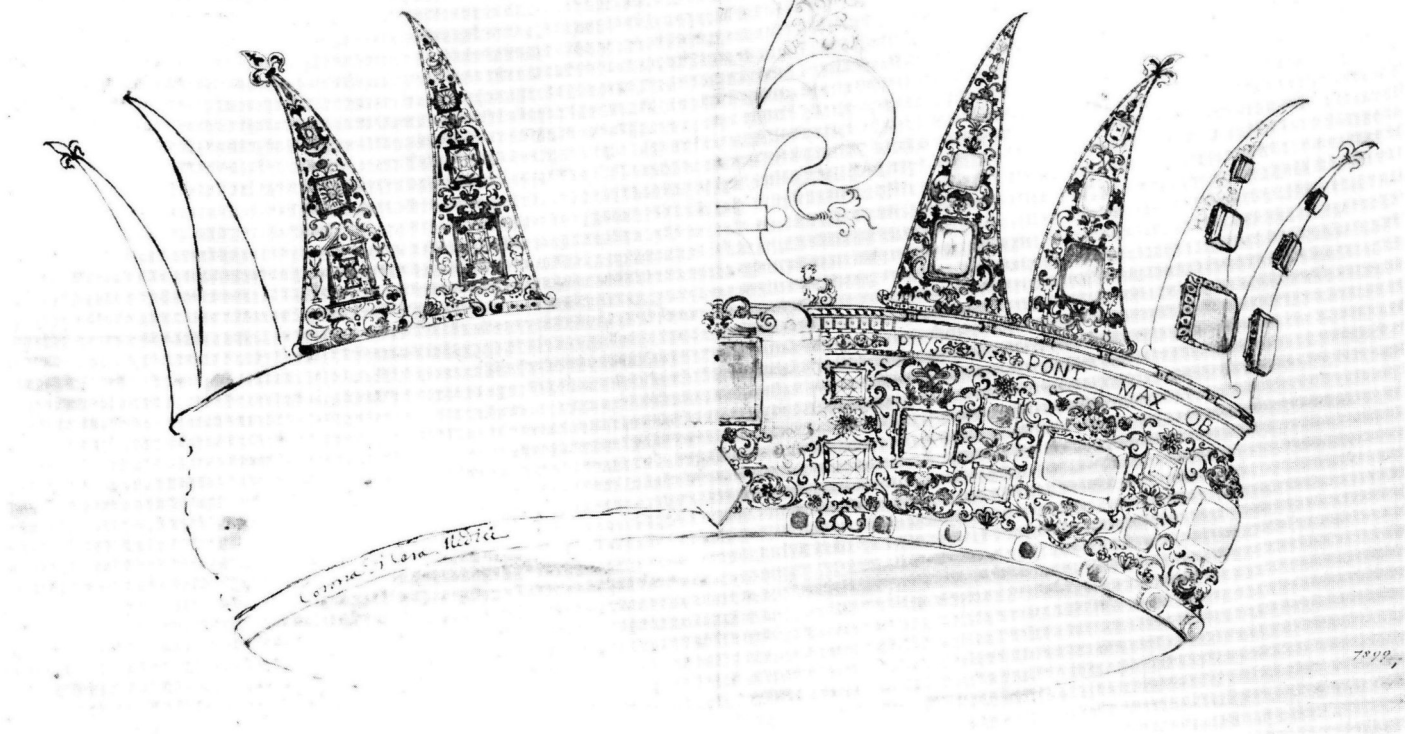
(1). The grand-ducal crown as laid down by the Papal Bull published on December 13, 1569; an engraving from R. Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana*, Florence 1781. –(2). Giorgio Vasari, *The Apotheosis of Cosimo I de' Medici*, painted between 1563 and 1565. *Salone dei Cinquecento, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence*. (Photo Soprintendenza).



(1)



(2)



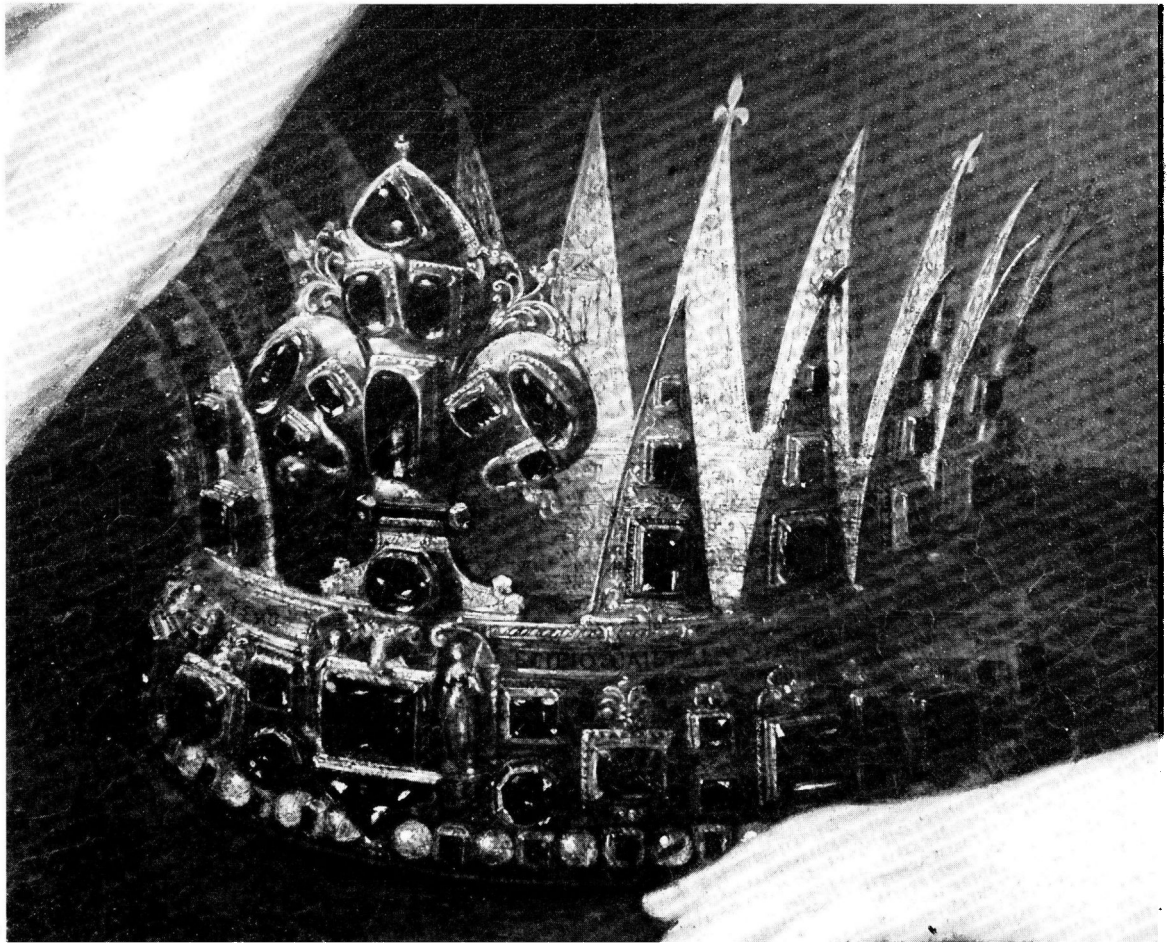
(3)



(4)

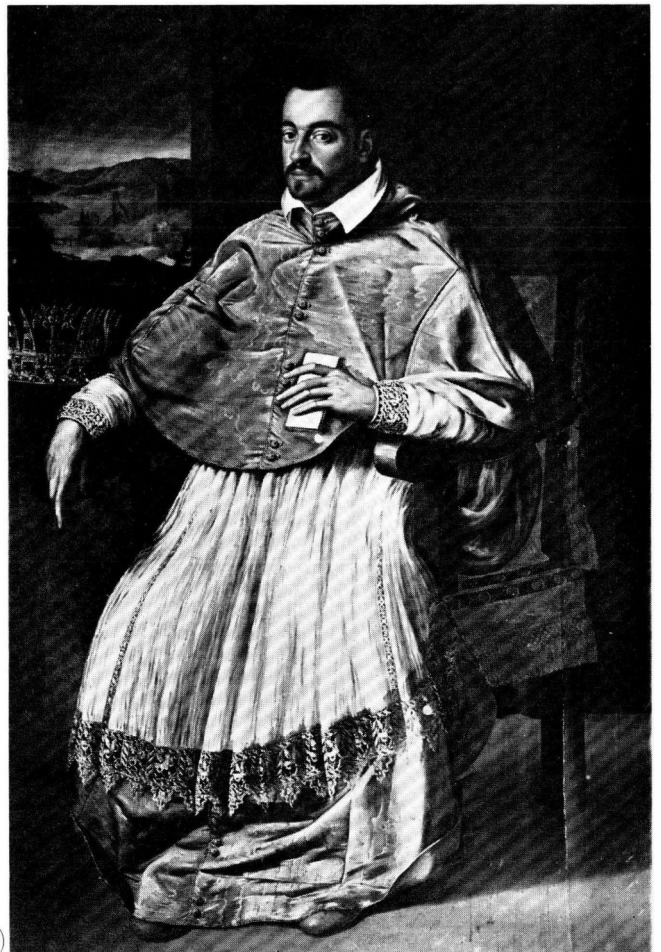
(3). Giovanni Cassini (?), *The Medici Crown*, drawing, first half of the 18th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.—(4). Scipio Pulzone, *Cristina di Lorena*, 1590. Museo Medici, Florence. (Photo Soprintendenza).

(5)



(5). Detail of Fig. 4. (Photo Soprintendenza)—(6). Scipio Pulzone(?), *Ferdinand I de' Medici*, 1587 or 1588. *Uffizi, Florence*. (Photo Soprintendenza).

(6)



(7). Florentine artist, *Maria Magdalena of Austria and her Son*, c. 1615. *Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna*.—(8). Jacopo Ligozzi, *The Marriage of Francesco I de' Medici and Giovanna of Austria*, 1627. *Earl of Elgin's Collection, Broomhall, Fife*. (Photo Scottish Portrait Gallery).

(8)



Braul, who received payments from Bylivelt in 1577 and 1578 for *punte della corona*, was an apprentice in his workshop, although he does not seem to have stayed in Florence very long, as there is no further mention of him in the Medici archives¹⁷.

The jewels, which formed such an important part of the work, were supplied and cut by Venetian craftsmen—all the cutters in Florence came from Venice, which at that time was one of the principal centres in Europe for precious stones. The names of the suppliers were Master Salvatore Pocatena, diamond-cutter, and Juseppe Marchesini, *conciatore di rubini*, who both worked for the Medici court, at the Casino di San Marco¹⁸. The stones were in fact extremely valuable: an inventory compiled sometime after 1631, and now in the British Museum, values them at 275,000 scudi, compared with 3,000 scudi for the gold and the work involved¹⁹. No wonder, therefore, that Agostino del Riccio, in his *Istoria delle Pietre*, should single out the diamonds and other jewels in the *corona fatta dal Gran Duca Francesco* for special praise²⁰.

Nor is it surprising that such a showpiece should have been preserved by the Grand Dukes of Tuscany right to the end, and can thus be traced through all the inventories²¹. Over the years, however, a number of alterations were made. Thus, as was usual in such cases, some of the stones were replaced by others²², which means that not all stones in the eighteenth-century drawing are the original ones as described in the 1591 inventory and depicted in Pulzone's painting. Also, sometime after 1661, the pearls were removed from the lower edge of the circlet, only the rubies being mentioned in later inventories and shown in the drawing.

Exactly when the crown disappeared is not known. The last description of it dates from 1788, so that it was clearly still in existence then²³. But after that it seems to have vanished. The most probable expla-

17. He was paid for two *punte* on December 30, 1577, and on January 30, 1578, he was paid for three more, receiving 10 scudi for each (A. S. F., Depositeria Medicea 985, Nos. 238 and 255). Other payments for rays of the crown were made on May 2, August 13 and October 11, 1578, but Bylivelt omitted to note the name of the recipient (A. S. F., Depositeria Medicea 782, Nos. 53, 60 and 63).

18. Salvatore Pocatena, *conciatore di diamanti*, is mentioned in the Medici archives as working in the Casino from 1575 to 1578. Juseppe Marchesini, who was also working for the Medici as early as 1575, remained in the service of the Florentine court at least until 1584.

19. British Museum Add. Manuscripts 16493, p. 268; it was in any case drawn up after the death of Maria Magdalena of Austria.

20. Ag. del Riccio, *Istoria delle Pietre scritto circa l'anno 1597* (Manoscritto nella Biblioteca Nazionale Firenze, Fondo Targioni 54) Caput CVI, c. 122.

21. The *inventario di Gioie* of 1621 (A. S. F., Miscellanea Medicea 31, inserta 17, c. 3-4); two inventories of 1661 (J. F. Hayward, *op. cit.* 1955, p. 310, Note 14); the *inventario delle Gioie della Principessa Elettrice de' Medici* of 1740 (A. Gotti, *Le gallerie e i musei di Firenze*, Florence 1875², p. 387); the inventory of 1766 (J. F. Hayward, *op. cit.* 1955,

p. 309, Note 11), where it is described as *quella donata da S. Pio V a Francesco I de Medici*; and the inventory of 1788 (see note 23).

22. See J. F. Hayward, *op. cit.* 1955, p. 310.

23. 'Una Corona Gran Ducale di Oro smaltato in parte a diciassette raggi, e suo Giglio in mezzo, ed ornata da pertutto di diverse Gioie come appresso: Nella Facciata vi sono tre ordini in giro di castoni di Oro smaltato tramezzati da roselline simili, legatovi trentanove rubinetti quadri, otto rubini maggiori, due Diamanti grossi approntati, quattro simili minori, uno grande a faccetta, e quattordici diamanti piccoli, tra' quali ve ne sono di fondo e mezzo fondo, quattordici grossi smeraldi, che quello sotto il Giglio in mezzo a due figurine di oro smaltato, quattro smeraldi e due zaffiri. Nel Giglio vi sono nove grossi rubini, che otto cogoli e l'altro lavorato, due rubini minori lavorati, un Diamante bislungo a lastra di mezzo fondo, in mezzo a due simile tondi. Nei raggi vi sono quindici rubini di piu grandezze, sedici smeraldi diversi, sette zaffiri grandi e tredici diamanti di piu grandezze, che sei di fondo e sette minori. E nell' interno della fascia, iscrizione in smalto nero, esprimente la memoria del tempo etc. in cui fu donata' (quoted by J. F. Hayward, *op. cit.* 1955, p. 310, Note 15).

nation is that it went the way of so many other gold and silver objects that were melted down during the Napoleonic occupation of Florence²⁴.

When Bylivelt received the commission in 1577 he was still a young man. He had been born in Delft in 1550²⁵, and had arrived in Florence on September 24, 1573, when he was only twenty-two. His journey had taken him via the important European goldsmithing centres of Antwerp and Augsburg, and it is generally assumed (most recently by Y. Hackenbroch) that he served his apprenticeship in Augsburg. But this is hardly likely when one considers that the whole journey from Delft to Italy only took nine months and that he could not therefore have stayed in either centre very long²⁶. He must in fact have been trained in Delft, and although hardly any examples of Delft silver of this period have survived, we know from the register recently acquired for the Delft city archives that the gold- and silversmiths' guild there was already flourishing²⁷.

What made 'Janus' Bylivelt seek his fortune in the south remains a mystery. The general unrest, and in particular the revolt of the Netherlands against Philip II, which had led to a decline in the number of new commissions available in Holland, undoubtedly had something to do with it. He may also have been inspired by tales of another goldsmith from Delft who, under the name of Abel di Delfe, is recorded as working at the Florentine court from 1568–70, where he made a pendant and other jewellery²⁸. Then there is the suggestion, made by Hayward and Hackenbroch, that Bylivelt had an invitation from Florence, but there is no evidence of this in the Florentine archives, although the Grand Duke's rather exceptional gift of 10 scudi, presented to him a month after his arrival in the city *per essere venuto da Augusta aqui per servirla*, may seem to point in this direction²⁹.

He certainly had quite a reputation in Florence right from the start. On September 30, only six days after his arrival, he received 35 scudi in gold to make a pendant for the Duke, and he was already installed *in palazzo*³⁰. From then on commissions poured in, despite the fact that there were already a number of important goldsmiths attached to the Medici court, including northerners like Giovanni (Hans) Domes and Joris Distellof, both of whom were good friends of Bylivelt and witnesses at his

24. In his *Della Solenne Incoronazione del Duca Cosimo Medici*, Florence 1819, p. xxxviii, Domenico Moreni says that the crown had been rediscovered several years previously in the imperial Guardaroba in the Palazzo Vecchio, much to the amazement of the intendants (see J. F. Hayward, *op. cit.* 1955, p. 309).

25. In his account-book Bylivelt gives his date of birth, which was previously unknown, as November 17, 1550.

26. In his account-book he writes that he left Delft a few days before Christmas 1573 (it seems he has made a mistake of a year) and went to Antwerp via Dordrecht and Breda.

27. *Memoriaalboek der Deekens, Keurmeesters, Meesters en Leerjongens van het Goud- en Zilversmedengilde* (Archief Delft, Section 1,

No. 1974). Although Bylivelt cannot be found in the lists of apprentices and new masters given there, this is of no significance as surnames were not usually recorded, and there is a registration entry in 1564 for an apprentice with Bylivelt's patronymic.

28. A. S. F., Depositeria Medicea 774, c. 51 v° and Depositeria 776, c. 53 v°, 55 v°, 58. He is probably the Delft goldsmith Abel Willemszoon, who, after being registered as an apprentice in 1546, joined the Delft guild as a master in 1573 and was several times essayer and warden before his death in Delft in 1597.

29. A. S. F., Depositeria Medicea 778, c. 50.

30. A. S. F., Depositeria Medicea 972, No. 172; Depositeria 576, c. VIII.

marriage in 1576³¹, and the Italians Giovanni Battista Cervi, Matteo Castrucci and Cencio della Nera. His account-book during these first few years records work on pendants, rings, watches, lapislazuli and crystal vases, earrings, and so on: obviously he was much in favour at court, and so it is hardly surprising that, only four years after settling in Florence, he should be given the most important commission anyone could be given—the crown.

Although the actual form of the crown, with seventeen rays and a fleur-de-lis in front, had been laid down by papal decree (Fig. 1), the decoration—the moresques, grotesques, masks, animals' heads and flowers—may be regarded as Bylivelt's own personal contribution, reflecting a style characteristic of the north, such as is found in the prints of artists like Delaune and Collaert and the German ornament engravers. By contrast, in the only other work that can be attributed to Bylivelt with certainty—the large lapislazuli vase in the Museo degli Argenti in Florence, on which he was working between 1581 and 1584³²—this northern element has already almost entirely disappeared.

Comparison with the two other crowns of the period that have survived is also interesting, namely those of Erik XIV of Sweden and of Christian IV of Denmark. The first, which is still preserved in Stockholm, if not entirely in its original form, was made in 1561 by a Flemish goldsmith living in the city, Cornelius ver Weiden; the second was made in 1596 by the north-German goldsmiths Corvinus Sauer and Dirk Fyring, and is still preserved in Rosenborg Castle³³. Both are masterpieces of the late sixteenth century, flaunting a highly complex decoration and an abundance of jewels and symbolic figures under which the surface is almost invisible and the contours disappear. Admittedly, this extravagance may perhaps have reflected a difference in status compared with the Grand Dukes; at the same time, the tauter, more lucid design and the refined simplicity of Bylivelt's crown will also have been a reflection of the classical taste of Italy, where the crown's value lay more in the size and perfection of the few stones used in it.

There is a tendency at present to attribute to Bylivelt everything that was made in the Medici workshops in Francesco I's time. This is of course just as unreasonable as the former over-emphasis on Cellini (as it is hoped to demonstrate in more detail elsewhere); after all, there were at least a dozen goldsmiths and jewellers either wholly in the service of the court or regularly working for it during this period. Nevertheless there is one work that can now with certainty be added to Bylivelt's *oeuvre* the *corona veramente degna e di gran valsuta e bellissima* of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany³⁴.

* TRANSLATED BY PATRICIA WARDLE AND ALLAN GRIFFITHS.

31. Another witness was the Flemish goldsmith Hans Yckens, who is recorded as being at the court from 1575 onwards (Bylivelt's account-book). Bylivelt was married on Easter Monday 1576 to Fiametta, a member of the Mazzafirri family (according to the biography of his son, Giovanni Biliverti, written by Francesco Bianchi and reprinted by G. Ewald in 'Studien zur Florentiner Barockmalerei', *Pantheon* 23 (1965), p. 317). Fiametta was probably related to the well-known goldsmith

and medallist, Michele Mazzafirri (c. 1530–97), who also worked at the Medici court.

32. C. Piacenti-Aschengreen. *Il Museo degli Argenti a Firenze*, Milan 1968, p. 141, No. 259.

33. Lord Twining, *A History of the Crown Jewels of Europe*, London 1960, pp. 632 and 87.

34. Ag. del Riccio, *op. cit.*, Caput CVII, c. 133.

APPENDIX

Inventario di Gioie, et Oro del Ser^{mo} Gran Duca di Toscana Don Ferdinando Medici, cominciato il dì 14 d'Agosto 1591, et prima

La Corona del Gran Duca di Toscana, nel pic della quale è un Cerchio di Rubini et Perle, ciò è

Perle tonde quaranta grosse, et di bella pellatura infilati, et intramezzate di Rubini ciò è

Rubini in Castoni in tavola trentaotto, che tramezzano le dette Perle sopra il detto Cerchio; cominciandosi dal Giglio grande de Rubini, et

Un Diamante grande à triangolo intagliato à faccette legato in castone, sopra del quale è

Uno smeraldo quasi quadro grande à Cogolo orientale di perfetto colore, dal qual smeraldo voltandosi à man dritta, secondo le lettere vi sono

Dua Diamanti grandi, quello di sopra in Tavola, et quello di sotto à faccette in ottangolo, seguita

Un Rubino grandissimo in Tavola netto, et di bellissimo colore legato in un Castone; seguita doppo il detto Rubino

Dua Diamanti mezzani in punta d'una stessa fattione; doppo i quali due Diamanti seguita

Un Diamante grandissimo in tavola in tutta perfettione con filetti molto alti. seguita il detto Diamante

Due Rubini mezzani in Tavola con bonissimo colore; seguita li detti due Rubini

Uno smeraldo grande orientale in Tavola con filetti vivi; seguitando detto smeraldo

Due Rubini in tavola di bel colore simili, seguita detti Rubini

Un Diamante grandissimo un poco scantonato, seguano

Due Diamanti mezzani in Tavola di bell'acqua, segue

Un Rubino grande in Tavola al quanto lunga di lieto colore; seguano

Due Diamanti mezzani in Tavola; segue

Un Diamante grandissimo in Tavola al quanto longo disteso; seguitano

Due Rubini in Tavola mezzani; segue

Uno smeraldo orientale grande in Tavola al quanto lunga, seguano

Uno Rubino di sopra et

Uno smeraldo orientale di sotto in coppia in Tavola. Seguita

Un Diamante in punta grandissimo, che viene à punto al riscontro del Giglio davanti, seguono

Un Rubino di sopra, et

Uno smeraldo orientale di sotto mezzani in Tavola, segue
Uno smeraldo orientale grande quadro colmo à cogolo. seguitano

Due Rubini mezzani in Tavola, seguita

Un Diamante grandissimo in Tavola alto di filetti seguitano

Dua Diamanti grandi in Tavola, seguita

Un Rubino grande in Tavola di giocondo colore, seguano

Dua Diamanti grandi in Tavola, seguita

Un Diamante grandissimo in Tavola con alti filetti, seguitano

Due Rubini mezzani in Tavola, seguita

Uno smeraldo orientale lungo colmo à cogolo assai grande, seguano

Due Rubini mezzani in Tavola, segue

Un Diamante grandissimo in Tavola di altissimi filetti, seguitano

Due Diamanti mezzani in Punta, seguita

Un Rubino grandissimo à cogolo di bel colore, seguitano

Dua diamanti grandi, il di sopra in Tavola in quadro, il di sotto à faccette in forma ottangola, et finisce il Circolo grande del mezzo.

segue il Giglio Grande, et le Punte di sopra.

Nel Giglio nel Piede sono

Un Rubino in forma tondo ciottolo colmo sopra del quale è

Un Diamante stretto, et longo in tavola con

Due piccioli Diamanti à faccette uno per ciascuna testa, sopra del Diamante lungo sopra detto è

Un Rubino in Tavola di forma lungo, sopra detto è

Un Rubino in Tavola di forma lunga grandissimo di bel colore

Nel Corpo del Giglio à man destra del qual Rubino è

Un'altro Rubino in Tavola alquanto lungo, di colore allegro, à man destra del quale è

Un Rubino ciottolo grandissimo lungo molto rilevato, et stretto, sotto il quale è

Un Rubinetto in Tavola lungo di buon colore

Dalla mano sinistra di esso Giglio à canto al predetto Rubino in Tavola grande vi è

Un Rubino in Tavola al quanto lungo, con filetti alti di bonissimo colore à canto del quale è

Un Rubino Ciottolo lungo rilevato molto, et bonissimo colore à pie del quale è

Un'altro Rubino in Tavola lungo di buon colore

In cima del Giglio sopra del Gran Rubino in Tavola, che stà nel mezo sopra detto vi sono

Duoi Rubini ciottoli colmi in forma quasi ovata di lieto colore, in cima del Giglio è

Un Rubino ciottolo in forma triangolate alto di bonissimo colore, et è finito il Giglio.

Seguita li Razzi della Corona à mano dritta conforme al corso delle altre.

Nel primo Razzo à piede vi è

Un Diamante in Tavola lungo di bell'acqua assai grande sopra del quale è

Uno smeraldo in Tavola orientale, et sopra di esso è

Un piccolo Rubino in Tavola

Nel secondo Razzo in Piede è

Uno smeraldo in Tavola alquanto lungo, et colmo orientale di buon colore sopra del quale è

Un Rubino in Tavola lunghetto di lieto colore, et in cima

Un picciolo Diamante quadro in Tavola

Nel terzo Razzo à piede è

Un Rubino in Tavola assai grande al quanto lunga, scantonato di belliss^o colore sopra del quale è

Un Diamante in Tavola quadro

Nel quarto Razzo à piede è

Uno smeraldo orientale in Tavola con filetti in forma quasi quadra sopra del quale è

Un Rubinetto quadro in Tavola, et in cima

Un Diamantino in Tavola quadro

Nel quinto Razzo a piede è un Diamante in Tavola quasi quadro sopra del quale è

Uno smeraldo in Tavola orientale, et in cima

Un Rubinetto in Tavola

Nel sesto Razzo à piede è

Un Rubino in Tavola al quanto lungo di bello, et lieto colore, sopra di esso

Un Diamante in Tavola quanto lungo, et in cima

Uno smeraldino in tavola orientale

Nel settimo Razzo à piede Uno smeraldo in Tavola colmo orientale, di sopra

Un Rubinetto in Tavola lungo, in cima

Un picciolo Diamantino

Nell'ottavo Razzo à piede

Uno Rubino in Tavola lungo di grandissimo colore, sopra del quale è

Un Diamante in Tavola quadro, et in cima

Un picciolo smeraldo in Tavola

Nel nono Razzo, che è scontro al Giglio à piede vi è

Un Diamante à forma di Mandorla à faccette sopra del quale è

Un Rubino in Tavola lungo assai grande di lieto colore, et di sopra in cima

Un Diamantino in Tavola

Nel Decimo Razzo à piede vi è

Un Rubino in Tavola lunga assai grande di colore acerbetto sopra 'l quale è

Un Diamantetto in Tavola quadro, in cima

Uno smeraldino in Tavola

Nell'undecimo Razzo à piede vi è

Uno smeraldo orientale lungo in Tavola colma, sopra del quale è

Un Rubinetto in Tavola quadro, et in cima

Un picciolo Diamantino in Tavola

Nel duodecimo Razzo vi è à piede

Un Rubino in Tavola al quanto lungo scantonato di colore allegro, sopra del quale vi è

Un Diamantetto in Tavola, et in cima

Uno smeraldino in Tavola

Nel decimo terzo Razzo à piè vi è

Un Diamante in Tavola quadro, sopra del quale è

Uno smeraldetto in tavola quadro, et in cima

Un piccolo Rubinetto

Nel Decimo quarto Razzo à piè vi è

Uno smeraldo orientale in Tavola quasi quadro, colmo scantonato, sopra del quale è

Un Rubinetto in tavola quadro et in cima

Un Diamantino in tavola

Nel Decimo quinto Razzo à piè vi è

Un Rubino in Tavola lungo, scantonato di allegro colore, sopra del quale è

Un Diamantetto in Tavola lungo, et in cima

Uno smeraldino in tavola orientale

Nel Decimo sesto Razzo in piede

Uno smeraldo orientale in Tavola quadro di buon colore, sopra del quale è

Un Rubinetto in tavola lungo di allegro colore, et in cima

Un Diamantino in Tavola

Nel settimo decimo Razzo, et ultimo à canto al Giglio à piè vi è un Diamante in tavola orientale, et in cima

Un piccolo Rubinetto in tavola quadro, et così è finita tutta la Corona fatta per mano di Giaches Bilivelt

(A.S.F., *Miscellanea Medicea* 29, inserta 3)