

**Annarita Franza, Johannes Mattes, and Giovanni Pratesi (eds),  
*Collectio Mineralium. The Catalog of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II's Mineralogical Collection* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2022),  
170 pp. ISBN: 978-8855184939**

*Collectio Mineralium* is the critical edition of the manuscript catalog of Archduke Peter Leopold of Habsburg-Lorraine's mineralogical collection, compiled in 1765 shortly after his appointment as Grand Duke of Tuscany. The original manuscript, preserved in the Historical Archive of the Natural History Museum of the University of Florence, is here published for the first time in a scholarly edition.

Written in German, the catalog is presented with both a transcription and an English translation, accompanied by a detailed set of notes and an index of names and places that guide the reader through the late eighteenth-century mineralogical and chemical nomenclature, as well as the geography of the Habsburg Empire. The inclusion of an anastatic reprint of the manuscript allows readers to appreciate its material features – meticulously described in the essay by A. Franza and G. Pratesi (p. 49). The original leather cover, embossed in gold with the Habsburg coat of arms, is also reproduced on the book's cover, emphasizing the unity of historical document and modern edition.

The transcription is preceded by three essays that contextualize the making of the catalog and illuminate its significance for understanding Peter Leopold's scientific and collecting interests, as well as the interplay between mineralogical and chemical knowledge, technological and economic development, bureaucratic practices, and dynastic self-representation.

The opening essay by J. Mattes, *Mining, collecting, knowing: Habsburg state-building, resources and geographies in the context of Archduke Leopold's mineralogical catalog*, situates the catalog within the framework of a journey undertaken by Peter Leopold and his brother Joseph II through the main mining districts of the Habsburg dominions. Mattes explores the “geographies of power and knowledge” (p. 9), tracing the links between mining activity, imperial administration, and the consolidation of political and economic power, while highlighting the function of geo-mineralogical collecting as part of this broader system.

This extensive contextual reconstruction is followed by the contribution of A. Franza and G. Pratesi, *Leopold's II mineralogical catalog between history, science and collecting*, which focuses on Peter Leopold's scientific interests and his role in founding and developing the Imperial and Royal Museum of Physics and Natural History in Florence (today “La Specola”). The authors examine the contents and compilation of the catalog, identifying it as a “museum object” (p. 47) in its own right – both a working instrument and a medium of historical and scientific knowledge. They also connect Peter Leopold's acquisitions for the Florentine Museum with his interest in the artistic use of minerals, which reached extraordinary levels in the production of commessi in pietre dure at the Grand-Ducal Galleria dei Lavori (pp. 61–64).

The third essay, *Beyond Borders: The mineralogical collecting between the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Habsburg territories at the end of the 18th century* (by M. Benvenuti; V. Moggi Cecchi; L. Fantoni, and R. Manca), investigates the relationships between Tuscany and the Habsburg territories as reflected in the catalog. Through a careful analysis of the listed minerals, the authors trace their provenance, the networks of exchange among collectors, and the overlapping geographical and social trajectories of minerals and people across Central Europe.

Together, these essays demonstrate how the catalog offers a privileged observatory for understanding the functions of mineralogical collections in the late Enlightenment – not only as scientific enterprises, during a period of growing interconnection between mineralogy and chemistry, but also as political instruments. The catalog embodied both bureaucratic centralization and the representation of the Habsburgs as enlightened rulers, capable of integrating scientific and practical “useful” knowledge – an adjective frequently recurring in the book and discussed in its late-eighteenth-century connotations.

The volume also situates the history of the catalog within a broader network of scientific and cultural exchange linking Vienna and Florence, as well as the “mining capitals” of Central and Eastern Europe. In doing so, it sharply delineates the historiographical coordinates of the relationships between scientific knowledge, mining practices, political power, and natural-historical collecting.

The three essays rest on a rich and up-to-date bibliography and on an impressive range of archival sources from Florence and across Europe. *Collectio Mineralium* thus stands within the best tradition of critical editions of scientific and historical sources, combining philological rigor with accessibility, and providing an indispensable tool for historians of science, mineralogists, and museum professionals alike.

Finally, the volume’s extensive iconographic apparatus adds further value to the scholarly and editorial design, offering readers not only an unknown primary source but also a vivid material and visual context for its interpretation.

**Maddalena Napolitani**

Museo Galileo, Firenze

[m.napolitani@museogalileo.it](mailto:m.napolitani@museogalileo.it)