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The Vitruvian Lexicon in Sixteenth-Century France¹

One of the most important architectural publications in sixteenth-century France was Jean Martin's 1547 translation of Vitruvius' *De Architectura*.² Previously, Vitruvius had only been available in Latin – the most recent editions were published in Lyon in 1523³ and Strasbourg in 1543,⁴ – and Italian – Cesariano (1521),⁵ Durantino (1524, 1535)⁶ and Caporali (1536).⁷ Vitruvius thus remained the reserve of humanists and men of letters, who, with the exception of a few brilliant figures such as the Lyon-based antique dealer Guillaume du Choul, the scholar Guillaume Budé, who had followed Fra Giocondo's lectures in Paris, and the learned Guillaume Philandrier, initiated into architectural theory by Serlio himself, tended to be rather ignorant about architecture and its terminology. Consequently, the first French translation, explicitly intended for “workers and [other] people who do not understand Latin”, as Jean Martin declares at the end of the lexicon which follows his translation,⁸ was something of an event. Its conspicuousness was accentuated by the fact that Martin was a reputed humanist, secretary to the Cardinal of Lenoncourt, who had already distinguished himself by translating Italian authors such as Caviceo (1528), Sannazaro (*Arcadie*, 1544), Bembo (*Azolains*, 1545) and, very recently, Colonna (1546).⁹ Martin had also recently

¹ All the architectural treatises cited in this article are accessible online on the *Architectura* website of the Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours (<http://architectura.cesr.univ-tours.fr/Traite/index.asp>).

² *Architecture ou art de bien bastir, de Marc Vitruvius Pollion...*, Paris, 1547 (Vitruvius 1547).

³ *M. Vitruvii de architectura libri decem...*, [Lyon], 1523. On this edition, see P. N. Pagliara, “Le *De architectura* de Vitruve édité par les Gabiano, à Lyon en 1523”, in: Deswarte-Rosa, Sylvie (dir.), *Sebastiano Serlio à Lyon, Architecture et imprimerie*, Lyon, Mémoire active, 2004, 359-365.

⁴ *M. Vitruvii... de architectura libri decem... nunc primum in Germania qua potuit diligentia excusi...*, Strasbourg, 1543.

⁵ *Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de architectura libri decem*, Como, 1521 (Cesariano 1521).

⁶ *M. L. Vitruvio Pollione de architectura: traducto di Latino in vulgare...*, Venice, 1524; *M. L. Vitruvio Pollione di architettura... nella volgar lingua tradotto...*, Venice, 1535.

⁷ *Architettura con il suo commento...*, Perugia, 1536.

⁸ Vitruvius 1547, “Declaration des noms propres et motz difficiles contenuz en Vitruve”, D 2v°.

⁹ *Hypnerotomachie ou Discours du Songe de Poliphile... Nouvellement traduit...*, Paris, 1546. In the preface (A 3v°-4), Martin clearly states that he had made use of an earlier (anonymous) translation.

published translations of Serlio's *Books I-II*¹⁰ and had presumably just finished translating *Book V*, since this appeared in 1547,¹¹ the same year as his Vitruvius. In the framework of Martin's works as a whole, his translation of Vitruvius constitutes the second part of an ambitious architectural trilogy, following as it does his translation of Serlio and preceding that of Alberti, which was published in 1553, the year of his death. Martin's Vitruvius, published in folio format, was splendidly illustrated, in part by the sculptor Jean Goujon, then at work on the Louvre.

While the *Architecture ou art de bien bastir* incontestably deserves to be applauded as a linguistic feat which fully attained its popularising objective, it should be pointed out that its success was not wholly dependant on Jean Martin's competence as a Latinist. In tackling Vitruvius, Martin undoubtedly benefited from a certain translational legacy. The Vitruvian adventure in France started in fact a decade earlier with the translation of the Spanish humanist Diego de Sagredo's *Medidas del Romano*,¹² a synthesis of Vitruvius and Alberti, and to a lesser extent, Pliny the Elder and Pacioli, and the first work on architecture to be published outside Italy.¹³ Essentially a manual of carved ornaments, this work, destined for craftsmen (stone-cutters, sculptors, etc.), popularised both the decorative repertory related to columns and the vocabulary of classical architecture.

The French Sagredo (c. 1536, 1539, 1542)

Some ten years after its original publication in Toledo in 1526, Diego de Sagredo's *Medidas del romano* was translated into French for the Parisian publisher Simon de Colines by an unknown hand (probably in 1536).¹⁴ This anonymous French

¹⁰ *Il primo libro d'architettura... Il secondo libro di perspetti[v]a / Le premier livre d'architecture... Le second livre de perspective...*, Paris, 1545.

¹¹ *Quinto libro d'architettura... traduit en françois par Jan martin...*, Paris, 1547.

¹² *Medidas del Romano: necessarias a los oficiales que quieren seguir las formaciones de las Basas, Columnas, Capiteles y otras pieças de los edificios antiguos*, Toledo, 1526.

¹³ *Raison d'architecture antique, extraicte de Vitruve, et aultres anciens Architecteurs, nouvellement traduit Despaingol en Francoys...*, Paris, s.d. (Sagredo c. 1536).

¹⁴ See Marías, Fernando and Bustamante, Agustín (dir.), *Diego de Sagredo, Medidas del Romano (Toledo, 1549)*, Madrid, Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1986; Marías, Fernando, "El

edition contains certain important additions, amongst which a development on the orders and their intercolumnation (43-48), which also appears in later French editions and in Castilian versions published in both Spain¹⁵ and Portugal.¹⁶ The first French edition was all the more important that it was the first theoretical treatise on architecture in the French language – a treatise which was in fact no longer exactly that composed by Diego de Sagredo, but rather an extended Sagredo, in which the classical terminology, to a large extent alien to French culture and Gothic tradition, had had to be translated or codified, as was the case for example when technical terms were already in use (French medieval sculptors used moulding in profusion), but were only employed on building sites. In all probability, the appropriation of the vocabulary used by stonecutters and sculptors did not pose much of a problem for the anonymous translator as it seems that he himself was a craftsman rather than a scholar: his knowledge of Spanish was weak and he joyously accumulated mistranslations and mistakes,¹⁷ often omitting words, lines and even entire paragraphs. Apparently more sculptor than mason, he may well have journeyed to Spain, as did many sculptors of his time, to acquire a more modern architectural training than could then be found in France. The likelihood of his having had a direct connexion with the Iberian peninsula is notably suggested by the presence of undecorated friezes on the pedestals of the Corinthian and Tuscan (in reality composite) orders,¹⁸ such friezes being extremely rare in Italy, but common in Spain. Whatever the exact circumstances of its production, the French version of *Medidas del Romano*, in providing equivalent terms for both the Italian words and the Spanish ones that Diego de Sagredo had introduced when confronted with the same linguistic problem, made irrefutable headway in popularising classical ornamental vocabulary in sixteenth-century France.

lugar de los *Sagredos* en la tratadística del Renacimiento”, in: Lozano Bartolozzi, María del Mar and Sánchez Lomba, Francisco Manuel (dir.), *Libros con arte, arte con libros*, Junta de Extremadura, Cáceres, 2007, 101-121.

¹⁵ *Medidas del Romano*..., Toledo, 1549; *Medidas del Romano*..., Toledo, 1564.

¹⁶ *Medidas del Romano*..., Lisbon, 1541; *Medidas del Romano*..., Lisbon, 1542 [two issues].

¹⁷ The mistake which most clearly revealed his lack of culture was his invention of a “varonian” canon, in consequence of his having confused the noun “varon” (man) with the name of the Roman author Varron (M. Terentius Varro) (6v^o). Ironically, this canon was subsequently widely diffused thanks to Philandrier who included it in his *Annotaciones* on Vitruvius (III, 1, an. 3) – evidently without citing his source.

¹⁸ Sagredo c. 1536, 45-45v^o.

It was thanks to this work that the French were first instructed in the morphology of that ornamental element par excellence, the column: its major and minor constitutive parts (bases; capitals, etc.), the elements that support it (pedestals or “*contrebases*”), and those that surmount it (epistyle or architrave or “*surcolonne*”; frieze or zophoros; cornice or “*couronne*”); evocative old French words such as “*armille*” and “*tailloir*” (meaning, respectively, arm-band or bracelet and chopping-board and, later, plate) efficiently serving to translate certain of the more technical terms – in this case, “annelet” and “plinth” or “abacus”.

It is also likely that it was from the French Sagredo that Martin borrowed the modern terms “*bozel*” (astragal), “*contrebozel*” (scotia), and “*pedestal*” (pedestal) or its popular doublet “*contrebaze*” (counter-base), which he first used in his translation of Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and re-employed the year after for Vitruvius. And it was again from this source that Goujon borrowed the plate on optical corrections (itself inspired by Cesariano) to include amongst his illustrations for Martin's translation.¹⁹ This use of the French Sagredo helps explain its lasting popularity and capacity to interest other than just stonecutters and sculptors. A success which, while proved by two new editions in 1539 and 1542,²⁰ as well as reprints in 1550,²¹ 1555,²² and 1608,²³ would have otherwise been incomprehensible, since the added presentation of the four orders – “Tuscan” (in reality composite), Doric, Ionic and Corinthian – was largely transcended by Serlio's *Regole generali di architettura* (commonly known to this day as *Book IV*), which appeared in 1537,²⁴ and immediately proved itself a vital means of diffusing across all Europe the new classically inspired language pertaining to the

¹⁹ Vitruvius 1547, 42; *Raison d'architecture antique*..., Paris, 1542, 42v°; Cesariano 1521, 60.

²⁰ *Raison d'architecture antique*..., Paris, 1539; see note 19 supra.

²¹ *Raison d'architecture antique*, Paris, 1550.

²² *Raison d'architecture antique*..., Paris, 1555; Paris, 1555.

²³ *De l'architecture antique*..., Paris, 1608. See Lemerle, Frédérique, “La version française des *Medidas del Romano*”, in: Marías, Fernando and Pereda, Felipe (dir.), *Medidas del Romano, Diego de Sagredo, Toledo. 1526*, Toledo, Pareja, 2000, 2, 93-106 (Marías, Pereda 2000), and ead., “Passer les Pyrénées: la fortune de la traduction anonyme des *Medidas del Romano* de Diego de Sagredo (Tolède, 1526)”, in: Bénévent, Christine, Diu, Isabelle and Lastraioli, Chiara (eds.), *Gens du livre et gens de lettres à la Renaissance*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2014, 145-151. See Pauwels, Yves, “Jean Goujon, de Sagredo à Serlio: la culture architecturale d'un ymaginier-architecteur”, *Bulletin Monumental*, 156-2, 1998, 137-148 (Pauwels 1998).

²⁴ *Regole generali di architettura sopra le cinque maniere degli edifici*..., Venice, 1537.

architectural orders; the French translation, by Pieter Coecke,²⁵ appeared in 1542, the same year as the third edition of the French Sagredo.²⁶

Pieter Coecke's Reigles generales de l'architecture

Pieter Coecke's French translation of Serlio's *Book IV*, published in Antwerp in 1542, incontestably constitutes another major landmark in the mastering of the ornamental lexicon. It was not one devoid of challenge: the vocabulary transmitted by Serlio was far richer and more complex than that used by Sagredo. Coecke had in fact already confronted the translational difficulties engendered by the Latino-Italian lexicon three years before when he translated Serlio's *Book IV* into Dutch and found himself obliged to invent entirely new terms.²⁷ No doubt, this experience hardened his resolution to take a few liberties in the French version with respect to the source text (cutting and developing it, as well as adding several new figures) – changes he fully acknowledged and justified by stressing the difficulties involved in appropriating the new formal repertory and the need to adapt to local customs. As for the vocabulary proper, just as Vitruvius himself had been obliged to Latinise Greek terms and Serlio to Italianise Latin words, Coecke had little choice but to Dutchify, Frenchify and Germanise the Italian terminology (he published the German translation of the work the following year, 1543).²⁸

That being, for the French version at least, Coecke was not entirely dependant on his own contrivances. He manifestly borrowed from the French Sagredo the technical terms “*bozel*” (astragal), “*tailloir*” (plinth) and “*armilles*” (annulet), as well as more learned words such as “*architrave*”, “*frise*”, “*triglyphe*” and “*metope*”. That he had read Sagredo is certain, for he quotes him in his own treatise, *Die inventie der colommen*,

²⁵ *Reigles generales de l'architecture, sur les cinq manieres d'edifices...*, Antwerp, 1542.

²⁶ See Pauwels, Yves, “La fortune du Sagredo français en France et en Flandres aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles”, in: Marías, Pereda 2000, 2, 107-116; *L'architecture et le livre en France à la Renaissance: « une magnifique décadence » ?*, Paris, Garnier, 2013, 33-36; 52-54 (Pauwels 2013).

²⁷ *Generalen reglen der architecturen...*, Antwerp, 1539.

²⁸ *Die gemaynen reglen von der architectur...*, Antwerp, 1543.

written in Dutch for Flemish craftsmen and published in Antwerp in 1539. Where the French Sagredo offered no help, Coecke didn't hesitate to simply edit the Italian text, as he had previously done for the Dutch version, suppressing for example impossible to translate doublets, like “*tondino*” or “*cavetto*”. Above all, he resorted to transliteration – “*stanze*” (room) became “*stanties*”, “*sima*” (cyma) “*scime*”, “*cimatio lesbio*” (lesbian cymatium, i.e. with an astragal) “*cimatie lesbie*”; “*hiperthiro*” (frieze) “*hipertire*” –, when indeed he did not simply leave Latino-Italian words as such: “*lacunarii*” (lacunars or sunken panels). On the other hand, he introduced a whole series of new terms which today we take for granted: “*corniche*” (cornice), “*caulicole*” (cauliculus), “*anneaux*” (rings), “*tore*” (torus), “*pilastre*” (pilaster), “*modillon*” (modillion), “*ténie*” (tenia), etc. At times, his literal translations were involuntarily comic: the diverse members of a Doric arch “*coperti di opera rustica*” (1537, 27v°), that is to say, decorated with bossage, was rendered as “*mêlés avec le villageois*” – literally, “mixed with the villager” (24). Finally, when Serlio's text seemed to him too complicated or too long, Coecke simply curtailed it with a succinct “etc.”. Like the French Sagredo, the text met with no uncertain success. It was reprinted in Antwerp in 1545 and 1550²⁹ and even crossed the French border. If today a sole copy of the original 1542 edition is to be found in France (housed in the public library of Moulins),³⁰ the presence of the second edition (1545) in numerous French libraries attests to its success, as indeed does the fact that Serlio's *Book IV* was never translated in France.

Jean Martin's Vitruvius

It goes without saying that Vitruvius' text is again considerably more complete and complex than Serlio's *Book IV* and that, despite the help provided by the translations of Sagredo and Serlio, Jean Martin had to contend with a certain number of

²⁹ *Reigles generales de l'architecture...*, Antwerp, 1545; *Reigles generales d'architecture...*, Reveu & corrige..., Antwerp, 1550.

³⁰ This copy is online of the *Architectura* site – “Les livres d'architecture” of the Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours (<http://architectura.cesr.univ-tours.fr/Traite/Notice/Serlio1542.asp?param=>).

difficulties.³¹ At the time when he set to the task, neither Jean Bullant, nor Philibert De l'Orme, both architects in the service of Henry II, had published their respective treatises;³² the “classical” orders had only just made their apparition; work on the new Louvre, directed by Pierre Lescot, was in its earliest stages and Philibert de l'Orme's efforts for Diane de Poitiers on the Château d'Anet likewise.³³

For the terms of Greek origin, Martin tended to stay as close as possible to the Latin translations, often themselves simple transliterations of the Greek ones: *prostyle*, *amphiprostyle*, *périptère*, *aréostyle*, *diastyle*, *eustyle*, *tétrastyle*, *hexastyle*, etc. To facilitate understanding of the text, he did not hesitate to paraphrase and elaborate: when introducing “peripteral temples” (*peripteros autem*, rendered in French as *temples périptériques*), for example, he added “or provided with wings called walkers (*promenoers*) around the nave”.³⁴ Likewise, after “*antes*” (pilasters decorating the façade of temples) he added “that is to say buttresses or squared pilasters placed along the walls, and especially at the corners”.³⁵ These additions were in their turn explained in the preface:

“I have endeavoured to render [the text] in French without adopting [Vitruvius'] manner of expression. I have in fact done everything I could to avoid his obscurity, believing that I should rather not write at all were it just to amuse myself and be misunderstood. This (without doubt) has obliged me to paraphrase the text in several places and to add extra words to render the deduced sense. I point this out so that anyone who may wish to compare the French with the Latin will understand that I have rather tried to render the sentences clearly than translate them word for word”.³⁶

³¹ See Lemerle, Frédérique, “Jean Martin et le vocabulaire d'architecture”, *Un traducteur au temps de François I^{er} et de Henri II*, Cahiers V. L. Saulnier, 16, Paris, PENS, 1999, 113-126.

³² De l'Orme, Philibert, *Le premier tome de l'architecture...*, Paris, 1567; Bullant, Jean, *Reigle generale d'architecture des cinq manieres de colonnes...*, Paris, 1564.

³³ The young Philibert had used the orders rather clumsily in 1536, following his return from Rome, for the hôtel Bullioud in Lyon. See Pauwels 2013, 61-67.

³⁴ “*Ou garniz d'aelles dictes promenoers a l'entour de la Nef*”, Vitruvius 1547, 29v°.

³⁵ “*C'est adire Contrefors ou Pilastres quarrez miz au long des murailles, & specialement sur les coings*”, *ibid.*

³⁶ “*Me suis efforcé de le mettre en Francoys nay voulu suyvre sa facon de parler; ains faict tout mon possible deviter ses tenebres, sachant quil vouldroit mieulx ne point escrire que sy amuser, et nestre entendu. Cela (sans point de doubte) ma contrainct a ParaPhraser (sic) aucunesfois le texte, par plus longue deduction de parolles, dont aussi je vous veul bien adviser afin que si quelquun desiroit conferer le Francoys au Latin quil me treuve avoir expose les sentences, et non suyvie sa diction de mot a mot*”, Vitruvius 1547, “*Advertissement aux lecteurs*”, A 2. On the use of the word “paraphrase”, see Glyn P.

In certain places, Martin adds etymological explanations, specifying for example in the case of the hexastyle façade, “that is to say, with six columns”, or for the systyle monotriglyphic edifice, “that is to say, that of which the intercolumnation equals the width of two [columns], and in which there is but one triglyph”.³⁷ His explanations are not however always illuminating: what could even an educated reader have understood on reading of the pseudodipteral temple: “that is to say, with false wings (*faulses aelles*)”?³⁸

Always the scholar, Martin often transliterated the academic term before giving a common equivalent. In this he may well have been influenced by Colonna, who confronted with the same problems when translating Alberti and Vitruvius, had chosen to first transcribe the terms used by these authors and then give an equivalent term in the vernacular: “*quadrato, ouero Arula, ouero Podio*”; “*Zophori, ouero Phrygii*”; “*plinto* [from Vitruvius] *ouero latastro* [from Alberti] *ouero quadrato supposito*”.³⁹

Clearly, the ornamental terminology remained the most problematic part of the Vitruvian lexicon, since vocabulary already existed for traditional constructions, in particular for the various wooden elements used in the upper parts of buildings: *solives* (joists), *ais* (planks), *chevrons* (rafters), *poutres* (beams), *poitrails* (lintels), *lattes* (laths), etc.⁴⁰ Conscientiously, Martin went himself to consult workers “in order to have their opinion on the appropriateness of using the terms of their art as equivalents for the classical ones”.⁴¹ But it is clear that he also borrowed from the French Sagredo a good number of technical terms which had since passed into current use (*plinthe*, *tailloir*, etc.) or that Sagredo's translator had himself derived from Spanish (*maurezille*, etc.) – occasionally correcting them as he did so: as confirmed by De l’Orme, Martin rightly uses the term “*nacelle*”, to designate the concave moulding called scotia by Vitruvius,

Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanists Antecedents*, Geneva, Droz, 1984, 239.

³⁷ “*c’estadire dont l’entrecolonne emporte la grosseur de deux, & en laquelle n’a qu’un (sic) Triglyphe*”, Vitruvius 1547, 58v°.

³⁸ According to Vitruvius, pseudodipteral temples count eight columns on both their façades and back walls, fifteen on each of their side walls, including the corner columns, and the walls of the cella are aligned with the four central columns (III, 2, 6).

³⁹ *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*..., Venice, 1499, B 4v°, A 7v°, B 2.

⁴⁰ Vitruvius 1547, 52.

while the Spanish term “*nacella*”, translated as “*nacelle*” in the French Sagredo, designates a half scotia.

Incontestably, Jean Martin's competences and culture stood him in particularly good stead to accomplish a successful translation of Vitruvius, the principal merit of which lies in its codification of the classical architectural lexicon and its having made available to French craftsmen the theoretical basis they were lacking. In this Martin was undoubtedly indebted to both the French Sagredo and Coecke's translation of Serlio's *Book IV* – even though he does not mention either in the dedication, where he does however mention the Vitruvian works of Giocondo, Cesariano and Philandrier, as well as his own translation of Alberti's treatise on which he was already at work. The success of the *Architecture ou art de bien bastir* (republished in 1572)⁴² also lay – rather paradoxically – in the quality of its illustrations. Goujon's plates are in fact less straightforward illustrations than veritable graphic glosses of Vitruvius' text. In one fold-out (34v°-35) for example, he combines the presentation of the five modern orders described by Serlio in 1537 with the description of the outline of the Ionic volute given by Philandrier in his *Annotationes* on Vitruvius.⁴³ Goujon's own comments on his plates, presented in an afterword,⁴⁴ also read as an independent and offbeat discourse with respect to Martin's translation.⁴⁵ The paradox of the success ensured by Goujon's plates is that, inspired by them, craftsmen unwittingly adopted and diffused Serlian rather than Vitruvian forms.⁴⁶ Similarly, the abridged edition of Vitruvius (explicitly intended for masons and thus condensed to its most technical content),⁴⁷ published by Jean Gardet and Dominique Bertin in Toulouse in the late 1550s, included as a matter of course Goujon's composite capital, thus guaranteeing this model an incredible longevity. It is

⁴¹ “*Afin den avoir leur jugement avec la propriété des termes de leurs ars correspondans aux antiques*”, Vitruvius 1547, “*Advertissement aux Lecteurs*”, A 2.

⁴² *Architecture ou art de bien bastir... mis de Latin en francoys, par Jan Martin...*, Paris, 1572.

⁴³ Vitruvius 1547, 38.

⁴⁴ “Jean Goujon studieux d’architecture aux lecteurs, salut.”, D 2.

⁴⁵ See Pauwels 1998, 137-148.

⁴⁶ See Pauwels, Yves, *L’architecture au temps de la Pléiade*, Paris, Monfort, 2002, 35-39.

in fact partly by the yardstick of the numerous editions of this abridged work that the success of Jean Martin's *Virtuvius* should be measured.⁴⁸ The *Architecture ou art de bien bastir* was again published in 1618 and 1628 by Jean III de Tournes in Geneva, accompanied by the first French translations of Philandrier's *Vita Vitruvii* and his celebrated *Digression* on the five architectural orders.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Epitome ou extrait abrege des dix livres d'architecture de Marc Vitruvius Pollion...*, Toulouse, 1556/1559.

⁴⁸ The *Epitome* was printed several times in Paris (1565, 1567, 1568, 1597).

⁴⁹ *Architecture, ou art de bien bastir, de Marc Vitruvius Pollion, mis de Latin en François, par Jean Martin...* [*Vie de Vitruve et Digression de Philandrier*], [Geneva], 1618; [Geneva], 1628.