

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Jacopo PALMA GIOVANE (Venice 1548 - Venice 1628)

Soldiers Attacking the Defenders of a Walled City

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, over an underdrawing in black chalk.

A made-up strip at the top edge.

375 x 270 mm. (14 3/4 x 10 5/8 in.)

This fine drawing may be related to at least two different paintings of battle scenes by Palma Giovane. A similar grouping of soldiers climbing ladders to attack a walled city is found at the upper left corner of a vast painting of *The Siege of Constantinople* of c.1584-1585 in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, while comparable soldiers also appear in a very large canvas of *The Battle of San Quintino* in the Palazzo Reale in Turin, painted around 1580-1581. The present sheet may also be tentatively connected with a now-lost painting of *The Assault on the Fort of Barbagno*, painted by Palma Giovane in c.1583 for the end wall of the Sala dello Scrutinio in the Palazzo Ducale.

Among stylistically and thematically related pen and ink drawings by Palma Giovane is a *Battle Scene* in the Museo Correr in Venice, which has been related to the *Siege of Constantinople* in the Palazzo Ducale. The Correr sheet is part of an album of drawings by Palma Giovane which once belonged to the 18th century Venetian artist, engraver, art dealer and collector Count Anton Maria Zanetti. A similar arrangement of soldiers is also found in the upper part of a drawing of *An Assault on a Fortress* by Palma Giovane in the Louvre, which has been related to the lost *Assault on the Fort of Barbagno* in the Sala dello Scrutinio in the Palazzo Ducale.

Artist description:

Known as Palma Giovane to distinguish him from his great-uncle, the painter Palma Vecchio, Jacopo Negretti studied in Pesaro and Urbino, where he gained the financial support of Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino. The Duke sent him to complete his studies in Rome, where he spent several years, making copies after the frescoes of Michelangelo and Polidoro da Caravaggio. On his return to Venice in 1573 he may have worked in the studio of Titian, completing the Pietà left unfinished at the master's death in 1576. To the influence of Titian was added that of Tintoretto and Veronese, which Palma combined with his experiences of Roman Mannerism to create what was to be his own distinctive, painterly style.

His first important commission came in 1578, when he provided three paintings for the ceiling of the Sala di Maggior Consiglio in the Palazzo Ducale in Venice. A prolific painter and draughtsman, Palma Giovane enjoyed a long career and received a large number of important commissions in Venice, particularly after the deaths of Tintoretto and Veronese. As well as providing altarpieces and ceiling paintings for numerous Venetian churches, Palma painted a cycle of pictures for the Ospedaletto dei Crociferi between 1583 and 1592 – a rare example in Venice of an entire cycle of paintings entrusted to one artist alone - and continued to contribute to the extensive redecoration of the various rooms of the Palazzo Ducale. He was also a talented portrait painter, although only a handful of examples are known today.

By the beginning of the 17th century Palma Giovane was firmly established as the leading painter in Venice, receiving commissions from patrons throughout Italy and beyond, such as the Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. He had a large and busy workshop, and more than six hundred paintings attributable to him or his studio are known.