

anno V, n. 1, gen.-giu. 2020

ISSN 2499-1422

# e ikonocity

Storia e Iconografia delle Città e dei Siti Europei - History and Iconography of European Cities and Sites



Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II  
CIRICE - Centro Interdipartimentale  
di Ricerca sull'Iconografia  
della Città Europea  
Associazione Eikonocity

Federico II University Press



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*rivista in open access pubblicata da*

Federico II University Press

*con*

Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca sull'Iconografia della Città Europea (CIRICE)

dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II

Associazione Culturale eikonocity - History and Iconography of European Cities and Sites

Federico II University Press



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Registrazione Cancelleria del Tribunale di Napoli, n. 7416/15 | Autorizzazione n. 2 del 14 gennaio 2016  
ISSN 2499-1422

In copertina: *Vista panoramica del centro storico di Savigliano con la torre civica in piazza Santarosa, oggi.* Foto di Silvia Beltramo.



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# Emerging urban landmarks as vulnerable heritage

## Editoriale

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Valentina Russo

This issue of *Eikonocity* aims at bringing to the attention of scholars themes concerning the history and consequent vulnerability – mainly structural and aesthetic – of the ‘emerging’ elements of the historical buildings, conceived as tangible signs of the urban landscape identity in European historic centres. As recent Italian earthquakes have evidenced (L’Aquila, 2009; Emilia Romagna, 2012; Abruzzo and Umbria, 2016-2017), many historical buildings or parts of them, although having a significant role in the formation and expression of urban image, are highly at risk not only for physical safety but also for the collective memory they preserve. Visual poles as domes and towers, as authentic *topoi* of the city skyline, aggregate social values shared over the centuries and translated into landscape signs from different cultures during the history of local communities: they are important key-elements in the urban formation process intended as a long life collective project in which, as Michel Jacob pointed, citizens continually define their relationship with nature and territory. By the response these symbols of urban history are able to offer to natural or human hazards it largely descends the preservation of urban landscape image in the frame of identity and community cultural values.

Starting from this premise, we publish here six papers presented at the EAUH Congress taken in Rome in 2018, with reference to the Session *Vulnerability and Resilience in the City Landscape: Domes, Bell Towers and ‘Emerging’ Architecture as Visual Poles and Signs of Urban Memory from 15th to 19th Century* chaired by Alfredo Buccaro and me. The studies hereby presented start from two cities that symbolize Western culture, Paris and Moscow, marked by forms of architecture that have shaped and defined the urban landscape in a resilient way over the last two centuries: the Panthéon and the Ivan the Great Bell Tower of Kremlin: forms of architecture that are both the object of contributions that interweave unpublished documentary sources with rich historical iconography.

The attention moves, then, to Italy presenting researches that deepen the genesis and characteristics of the civic towers from the Middle Ages to the early 20th century, between subalpine territories and central Italy, with specific attention to the complex choices that we are called to face following earthquake collapses. The journey through the ‘emerging’ architectures is therefore directed in the far south of Italy with studies dedicated to the phenomenon of Sicilian houses-towers, deepened in two exemplary cases in the urban contexts of Palermo and Comiso.

As this issue of this journal invites us to reflect, interpreting the urban landscape in its multifaceted identity and affording current and cogent issues of reconstruction, partial

reconfiguration or restoration of buildings that have marked collective spaces influencing their perception by communities constitute conceptual and operational actions deeply conjoined: frequent moments and needs of our time – as the final reviews highlight, too – in front of which only a deep historical-critical excavation can find results in cultural and qualitatively appreciable interventions on a ‘special’ built heritage.

Napoli, giugno 2020



# Une statue gigantesque. Visibility and meanings of the dome of the Parisian Panthéon between degradations and urban image

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## Abstract

The Panthéon holds value of memory and its dome is an important element of Paris' urban identity. The study of the archival documentation relating to the third and fourth decade of the nineteenth century ascertains the strong relationship between the continuous restoration interventions and the conscious choice to make the dome of the Pantheon a strong symbolic element in the city skyline and, also, the depositary of the national and collective memory.

## Une statue gigantesque. Visibilità e significati della cupola del Panthéon parigino tra dissesti e immagine urbana

Il Panthéon parigino ha sempre assunto un significativo valore di memoria e la sua cupola rappresenta un importante elemento dell'identità urbana. Lo studio della documentazione archivistica, relativa alla terza e quarta decade del XIX secolo ha appurato la stretta interdipendenza tra gli interventi di restauro che si sono protratti nel tempo e l'intenzionalità di fare della cupola del Panthéon un forte elemento simbolico nello skyline della città, depositaria della memoria collettiva e nazionale.

**Keywords:** Panthéon, domes, restoration, Sainte-Geneviève church, Paris, historic urban landscape.

Pantheon, cupole, restauro, chiesa di Sainte-Geneviève, Parigi, paesaggio storico urbano.

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Received February 19, 2020

The wide media coverage of the recent restorations of the Parisian Panthéon deciphers clearly the meaning that the monument dedicated to the “*grands hommes de France*” has always had in the imaginary and in the representation of political opportunities.

The “*échaufaudage monumental*” realized for the first phase of the interventions carried out at the drum and at the dome has made clear the French government's contemporary intention and commitment to preserve and highlight the Parisian monument. The Panthéon has been defined a “*monument d'exception*”. The wide intervention programme, starting from 2014, directed by the Architecte en Chef Daniel Lefèvre, in relation to the metallic elements, has been stated that «*tant pour la plupart insérés dans les maçonneries et donc invisibles, il est difficile d'en évaluer l'état*». The project has addressed the preliminary treatment of the ‘visible’ elements, the replacing of those which are too corroded and finally the insertion of strengthening components. In any case, the iron of the *pierre armée* continues its corrosion raising conservative issues both as regards the technical matter and other issues relating to the authenticity of the monument.

In the past, as in the present, *le dôme* had a strong concentration of different values: during its life-span the alternation between the religious and the political values helps us to realize the importance given to the *cupole* and to its ‘appearance’ on the scene in the French capital. In addition, as we can gather from the projects of its author, Jacques-Germain Soufflot (*Mémoire sur l'architecture gothique*), the dome represents an incubator of architectural elaboration [Petzet 1961]. In fact, it is an expression of the metabolic process of mediation between the classical figurative values and the French historic tradition; and it was to be the example of lightness and constructive *hardiesse*.

In particular, the story of the Panthéon dome is framed in that historical moment in which the relationships with ancient architecture intertwines with the evolution of science and its application to the vaulted structures. This connection is evident in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique. Architecture* of Quatremère de Quincy where he argues on the *partie historique*, the *théorique* and, afterwards the *didactique*, and the *pratique* of architecture. The art of construction is considered as a whole and all the relationships between the sciences of calculus and the knowledge of antiquity are underlined. It is not by chance that this last part of the Quatremère's *Encyclopédie* was written by Jean-Baptiste Rondelet who consolidated the building after Soufflot's death. Rondelet was at that time «inspecteur de la nouvelle église de Sainte-Genève, connu par ses connoissances pratiques & théoriques dans l'Architecture & la construction, la mécanique & les sciences du calcul, & dont l'académie de Lyon vient de couronner un mémoire sur la théorie des voûtes» [*Architecture. Encyclopédie méthodique, ou par ordre des matières; par une société de gens de lettres, de savans et d'artistes* 1788, viij].

Relating to the Saint-Genève Church, in the intention of the architect from Lyon, the dome had to have the main role in relation to the plan's layout. The dome resolves, in a decisive way, the spatial envelope: its creation had to correspond to «une espèce de croix grecque, composée de quatre nefes qui se réunissent à un dôme placé au centre».

The transformations undertaken in the project for Sainte-Genève's church also express the meanings gradually assumed by the dome. In fact, in a drawing from 1757, Soufflot's section shows, in addition to rectangular windows above the architectural order, a double and hemispherical dome, with figurative affinities to the baroque language. Next, the shape of the inner shell is extended and the previous architectural characteristics are mitigated. However, it is from about 1770 onwards that the triple shell appears.

As far as the exterior is concerned, the dome is configured through a high drum, windowed and with columns articulated according to different intercolumni. The outer shell, instead, namely the *dôme*, works as a cover for the underlying structure as it is invisible from the inside. Subsequently and simultaneously the idea of the triple shell, the curvilinear part on the outside, becomes an important element but it is also autonomous, so that the drum, the vault and the lantern constitute an assembled system of evidently classical references [Marino 2012<sup>a</sup>, 102 and following].

Three vaults, therefore, of which the inner and the intermediate one were made in stone from Conflans, whereas the outer vault was made of Vergelé stone. From the description of Rondelet's *Mémoire historique sur le dôme du Panthéon français* the dynamics of the composition that Soufflot had put in place can be easily perceived: the first shell is opened at the center by a large oculus that leads to the views of the intrados of the second upper shell - frescoed by Gros – which is illuminated by the windows which are open above the colonnade.

But especially the urban dimension plays, we could say, an almost genealogical role in the realization of the new church and, specifically, its dome. The new church of Sainte Geneviève was part, just like other monuments, of that 'monumental net' which had precisely the purpose of providing an image of that absolutism which, a few years afterwards, would collapse after the Revolution.

Sainte-Genève, in other words, together with the statue and the square of Louis XV, the Ecole Militaire, the Madeleine, the Champs-Élysées, had to provide Paris with monumental episodes; and the future Panthéon had to be among the main precious gemstones [Patte 1765].

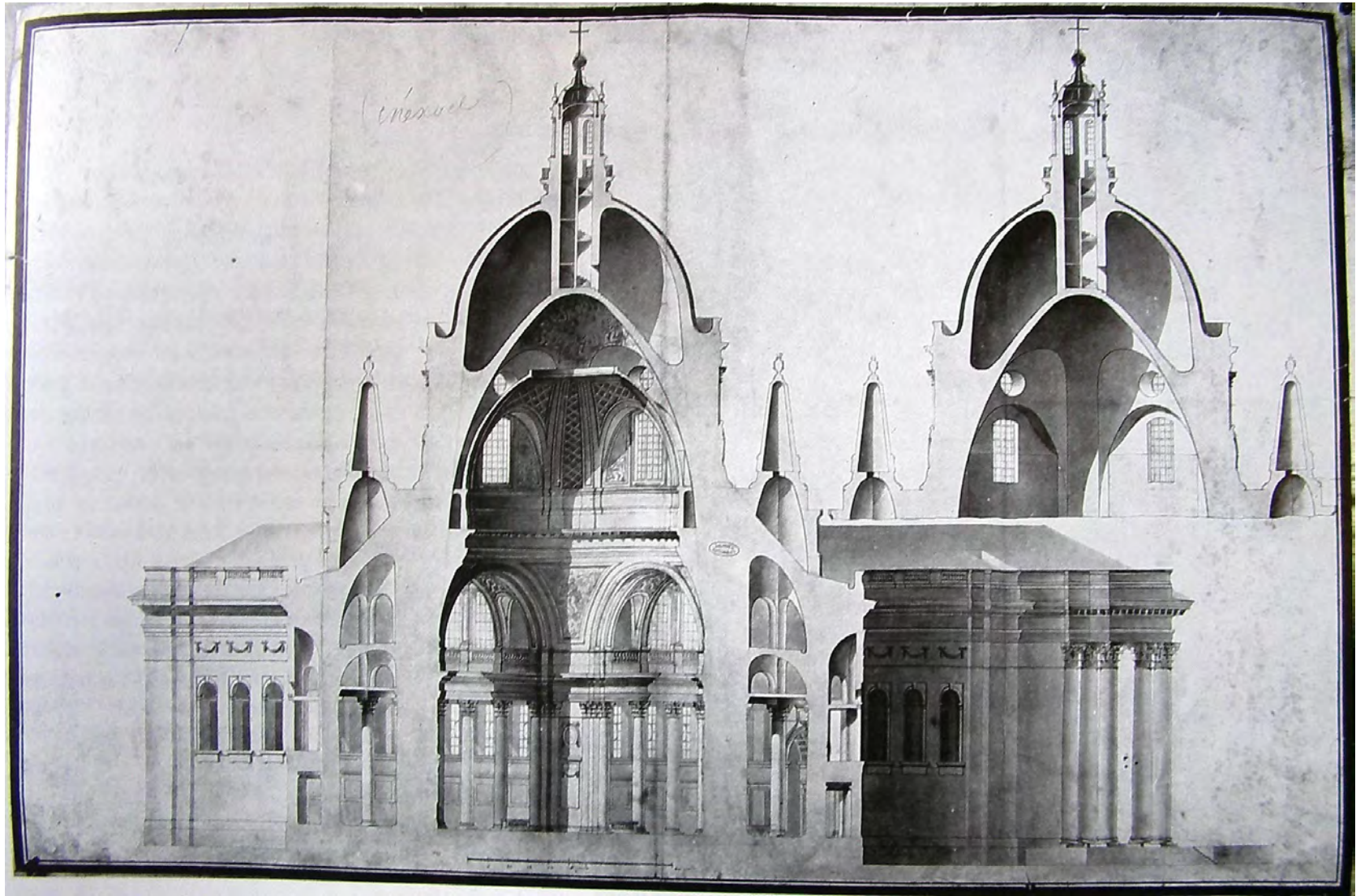


Fig. 1: Soufflot's dome project with two and three shells [Marino 2012].



Fig. 2: Pierre-Antoine de Machy, *Panthéon*, general view with the *statue colossale* designed by Quatremère de Quincy [*Le Panthéon. Symbole des Révolutions. De l'église de la Nation au Temple des grands hommes* 1989].



From the point of view of its urban image, the Panthéon presents itself as a key case to understand the relationship of the ‘dome’ structure and the multidimensional meanings that it develops, also providing particular interpretative and critical parameters that inevitably affect the restoration work.

In the meantime, the story that characterized the life of the church of Soufflot allows us to read several passages and the related values assigned to the dome’s architecture; this is in relation to the urban image and its ability to affect the collective imagination.

In fact, the destination changes – the church became the Panthéon in 1791, only to be again re-consecrated a church in 1821, to again be converted into the Panthéon from 1830 to 1853, and from this year until 1885 it was again destined for religious worship and, finally, it was re-converted into the Panthéon definitively in 1885. This provides a significant key to understanding the ability of the dome structure to become a place of condensation and concentration for cultural tensions and hidden meanings.

During the last decade of the eighteenth century, Antoine Chrisostome Quatremère de Quincy, a key figure in the events that affected the Panthéon, set up a wide intervention program. This, partially carried out and explained in *Extrait du premier rapport présenté au Directoire* [Quatremère de Quincy 1792, 11], had to transform the church which, after the Revolution, was to have to play a lay function. In particular he envisaged a downsizing of the function of the lantern, defined as “petits belvédères que la stérilité de la mode a si inconsidérément multipliés sur toutes les coupoles”. With regard to this, in place of the statue of Saint-Geneviève to whom the church



Fig. 3: Louis-Pierre Baltard, *Projet de croix pour le couronnement de la lanterne de l'église de Sainte-Geneviève*, 1822, and, on the right, Edmond Destouche, *Projet pour l'installation d'une statue colossale de «L'Immortalité» par Cortot sur la lanterne du Panthéon*, 1842 (France Archives Nationales).

was originally dedicated, Quatremère proposed, around 1793, to allocate the symbol for the new religion, this new symbol being more suitable for the temple of the new glory. He designed a colossal statue, namely the *Renommée*. Its role had to be the emblem of an almost mythical story, whose echo can be seen in an article of the *Journal de la Montagne*: «Un Panthéon s'élève au milieu de la commune centrale de la République: ce monument de la renaissance nationale est aperçu de toutes les frontières; qu'on l'aperçu donc aussi du milieu de the Océan» [Deming 1989, 135]. The work was conceived in lead because it was economically unsustainable in bronze and, also, it would be too heavy because of the load, when the questions regarding the instability of the *piliers* and consequently the crisis of the entire dome system came up again, the idea of the colossal statue was abandoned.

As is well known, from 1796 to 1806 the debate on how to restore the *piliers* and therefore the dome was deeply felt [Marino 2012<sup>a</sup>, Marino 2012<sup>b</sup>, Ottoni 2012], so much so that some, among those who intervened in the *querelle*, even proposed to demolish and rebuild it. The demolition was proposed by Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste-Guy de Gisors. In every instance, the debate carried out interesting observations and some of these were based on the recognition of the important relationship between the monument and the urban context [de Gisors 1799].

The urban value and, in the same way, the political-symbolic meaning, lays the basis and finds confirmation through the comparative analysis of the different architects responsible for the monument who came after each other: i.e. Jean-Baptiste Rondelet had remained *Inspecteur du Panthéon* until 1801: later Louis-Pierre Baltard (1813-1832), Louis-Nicolas-Marie Destouche 1832-1850, Simon-Claude Constant Dufeux 1850-1871, Louis-Victor Louvet 1871-1879, Edmond Deschault 1879-1902, Henry-Paul Nénot 1902 avec Luois-François-George Roux.de of the gardens of the ancient convent of Sainte-Geneviève, a precise intention emerges: the building must have the meaning of an urban 'monument'. Both the building and the dome were the subject of continuous works and the transition from Baltard's management to that of Destouche is significant. Baltard, even from 1829, while he was completing the interior of the dome, was discussed intensively for his direction: the *Direction des Travaux de Paris* accused him of «faire passer des intérêts très secondaires, or même contestables» and requested from him quotations for arranging the exterior, specifically the *grille d'enceinte*.

In this period there was one more passage from the religious to the secular destination (August 26th 1830). Guizot, as Minister, expressed his preference for Baltard's project regarding the Panthéon which, with its terracing works, was «important d'entreprendre sur le champ afin de procurer une nouvelle occupation à la classe ouvrière». Meanwhile the growing interest of the government in national gothic architecture, which was evidenced by the politics of which Guizot himself is one of the protagonists, shows how the effects of the French political and economic troubles, affected the Panthéon. Also the demolition of the two towers called «des modernes ruines [...] d'un effet désagréable et forment un disparate choquante avec l'architecture sévère de ce magnifique édifice»<sup>1</sup>, gives a measure of the attention paid to the urban dimension of any intervention concerning Soufflot's church. The same consideration of the urban value is therefore grafted onto the initial premises of completion and the aménagement of the Panthéon's surroundings. This is the context in which Quatremère's idea of a statue is taken up again.

Napoleon's 1807 decree had started the demolition of the ancient medieval abbey dedicated to Sainte-Geneviève with the aim of creating a series of accesses according to the four different cardinal points (rue Soufflot had been enlarged). «Le plus beau de tous les temples de la capital» had to have an impressive context [Bergdoll 1989, 191]. On the other hand, during the Restoration pe-

<sup>1</sup> France Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, *Lettre du Chef de Division*, Panthéon F/13, fasc. 1145.

riod, the program of conversion to religious worship and the realization of a decorative program aiming at the elimination of revolutionary symbols and at «créer, sur le point le plus *éminent* de la capital, the Vatican des Gaules» [Bergdoll 1989, 199] represent an even more explicit reference to the importance of the urban meaning of the building.

A series of projects for Sainte-Geneviève's statue were carried out by Baltard, that, however, had not been accepted. A more explicit symbol was preferred, referring to religion and, in order to escape any kind of ambiguity, the cleric requested a simple cross to be placed on the lantern. The extensive documentation of the Parisian Archives Nationales gives an account of the relevant activity of Baltard as an architectural inspector for the Panthéon. These projects had a remarkable impact on the urban context which, with the advent of the management of Destouche, were somehow taken up in the following years, even though with considerable downsizing, for economic as well as political reasons.

The Panthéon, in any case, with the construction of the Labrouste Library of 1838-1850, with the construction of the facade of the municipal building in the 5th arrondissement by Hirtoff and Guénépin and, finally, with the Ecole de Droit by Soufflot, was surrounded by a context that fully possessed his monumental individuality. During the first anniversary various clashes occurred in 1830, and so the Panthéon became even more the symbol of the Revolution, associated also with the consecration of the Bastille Square as a place of political worship. Both the places were reference points for republican glory and, together, as permanent signs of the urban landscape, were later visually linked to the Haussmannian Boulevard Henry IV [Bergdoll 1989, 204]. The Thirties, however, represent the period where one tries to assign figurative and paradigmatic meaning to the French monument. And beyond the achievements of the decorative elements, of the impediment and of the internal architectural partitions, in those years there was a particular interest in its urban visibility in connection to the historical-political significance for the French nation. The further change of destination and the takeover of Destouche as being responsible for the Panthéon see the launch a series of initiatives. First of all there is the project of the “colossal figures” as evidenced by various *devis*, and also the countless other operations<sup>2</sup> to undertake the new course and the different image of the building.

In 1833 proposals involving different figurative solutions and a structural set for the dome alternate. Following the long report by the Director of *Batiments Civils*, Edmond Blanc, at the *Ministre du Commerce et des Travaux Publics* aesthetic issues are addressed. Just two months later it was proposed to replace the massifs supporting the dome. There was proposed, in other words, the «restauration du Panthéon dans sa première splendeur»<sup>3</sup>. The previous consolidation solving a technical-static problem in the dome had imposed the large section of the *piliers*, and this was considered incompatible with the lightness of the Corinthian columns designed and made by Soufflot. The proposed technique was daring and provided the use of cast iron in the inner part of the columns overlapping modular elements and, externally, the cladding in stone. Simultaneously, in the same month, we find a document dealing with the way to make the cast bronze *Statue Colossale*. The statue was commissioned by Destouche and designed in bronze by Cortot<sup>4</sup>. This involved the *Immortalité* and it had to be placed on the lantern. For its installation the use of the Greek technique to achieve fullsize statues - «du Sphyrélaton, en cuivre, des grecs, c'est-à-dire la moulage au marteau de ce métal» - was proposed. Initially the statue's name was *Immortalité*; later the different name *Renommée*, was requested by the Minister Thiers<sup>5</sup>.

The intention to realize a «figure en bronze doré, sur la boule»<sup>6</sup> also occurs in the following year. The construction site was complex and increasingly intertwined with political tensions and

<sup>2</sup> Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.N., Panthéon F/13, fasc. 1145.

<sup>3</sup> *Restauration du Panthéon dans sa 1ère Splendeur*, par M. Omont, 6 juin 1833, Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.N., Panthéon, F/13, fasc. 1145.

<sup>4</sup> *Observations sur le projet de faire couler en bronze*, Lettre du 27 juin 1833, Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.N., Panthéon F/13, fasc. 1145.

<sup>5</sup> *Visite de M. le Ministre le 27 septembre 1834*, Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.N., Panthéon, F/13, fasc. 1145.

<sup>6</sup> *Statue en bronze doré, sur la boule et les changements au couronnement de la lantern*, Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.N., Panthéon, F/21, fasc. 1606, Indication de travaux, Budget du Panthéon, 1834.



changes, in a period in which the attention of the administration was more focused on arranging the exterior and on keeping the costs down. This is also confirmed by the 1834 documentation, where, in relation to the dome, we can find the mention of the work to repair the *soubassements* of the columns outside the drum. In the following years the construction site was a very animate place: i.e. repairs, changes, the completion of the figurative apparatuses. All of this was in pursuit of what the monument had to represent: i.e. a religious symbol, then a symbol of the revolution and finally, with the effort and politics of Guizot, the synthesis of a moral and religious significance. The examined archival documents return to the chronicle of the construction site and of the intentions of power. In 1836 Destouche argues in favour of new interventions being carried out for the dome, that is: «Le dôme du Panthéon qui domine toute Paris sera surmonté d'une statue dorée; il conviendrait pour accroître l'effet qu'elle doit produire, de dorer les côtes de ce dôme et ajouter quelque décoration».

The iconization of the Panthéon continued during the 1840s with other projects for the installation of the *statue gigantesque*. The evidence of its monumentalization can also be read through an entrepreneur's patent for a machine to install the colossal statue at the top of the dome<sup>12</sup>.

The significance of Soufflot's dome is evidenced even today. It is considered a symbol to mark the capital's landscape and the gilding of the ribs was part of the objectives of the latest restoration works in the case the archival surveys had confirmed the presence of the dome's *dorure*.

<sup>7</sup> *Mémoire descriptif du brevet d'invention du levier Magny*, N.Magny, 22 décembre 1837-11 février 1838, Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.N, Panthéon, F/21 1606.

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# The Kremlin Colossus. The Ivan the Great bell tower in the urban landscape and the public perception (19th-early 20th centuries)

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## Abstract

The Ivan the Great Bell Tower of Kremlin in Moscow in the 19th century was one of the main sights of the city. This paper proposes to address its role in the urban image and public perception in the 19th-early 20th centuries and to use the analysis of texts of guidebooks and travel notes for this purpose. These sources allow to identify a certain synonymy of the names Moscow and Ivan the Great in the public perception. Its height and the location made it the main architectural landmark on the city skyline, a vertical city border and a kind of symbolic unit of measurement.

## Il colosso del Cremlino. Il campanile di Ivan il Grande nel paesaggio urbano e la sua percezione collettiva (XIX sec.-inizi XX sec.)

Nell'Ottocento, il campanile di Ivan il Grande nel complesso del Cremlino fu uno dei principali siti di Mosca. Questo contributo si propone di studiare il suo ruolo nell'immagine della città e la sua percezione collettiva tra il XIX e gli inizi del XX secolo, utilizzando l'analisi dei testi delle guide e degli appunti di viaggio a tale scopo. Queste fonti consentono di identificare una certa sinonimia tra la città di Mosca e il nome di Ivan il Grande nel pensiero comune. La sua altezza e la sua collocazione lo hanno reso il principale punto di riferimento architettonico nel panorama urbano, un limite verticale della città e una sorta di simbolica unità di misura.

**Keywords:** Bell tower, Guidebooks, Urban Landscape.

Campanile, guide, paesaggio urbano.

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Received November 21, 2019; accepted April 13, 2020

## 1 | Introduction

Every big city is willing to have its unique and recognizable symbol. Architectural landmarks often become such symbols. If their dominating position in an urban landscape is accompanied with historical associations, such monuments take roots in the city memory. Vulnerability of such urban landscape symbols is related not only to acts of nature, but also to political events. In the 19th century Moscow, the Ivan the Great Bell Tower of Kremlin, the oldest and the tallest bell tower, was such an urban symbol. Located in the Kremlin, the historic and political centre of the city, on Borovitsky Hill, the Ivan the Great Bell Tower buildings are a harmonious part of the Kremlin ensemble, which has evolved over several centuries.

The Bell Tower was constructed in 1505-1508 by Bon Fryazin, an Italian architect. It was a part of the huge project of Moscow Kremlin reconstruction during the last decades of the 15th and first decades of the 16th century. Italian artists invited by Russian rulers played a significant role in this project and in the development of Russian architecture of that period [Podyapolsky 2006, 261-292]. Bon Fryazin worked in Russia in the early 16th century. Presumably he was originally from Venice or belonged to the family of architects and sculptors Bons from Lombardy, worked in Venice [Lazarev 1978, 291; Podyapolsky 2006, 297, 301]. The nickname Fryazin is the old Russian name for people originally from southern Europe, mainly Italians. The bell tower built by Bon Fryazin in the Kremlin was an octagonal tower – Campanile typical for Italian Renaissance's architecture and has close analogues of composition and decor in the Venetian art [Petrov 2015; Batalov 2016]. The construction of this bell tower was continued in the early 17th century. One more arcade for bells was added, and the tower's height achieved 81

Fig. 1: The Ivan the Great Bell Tower (photo by the author).

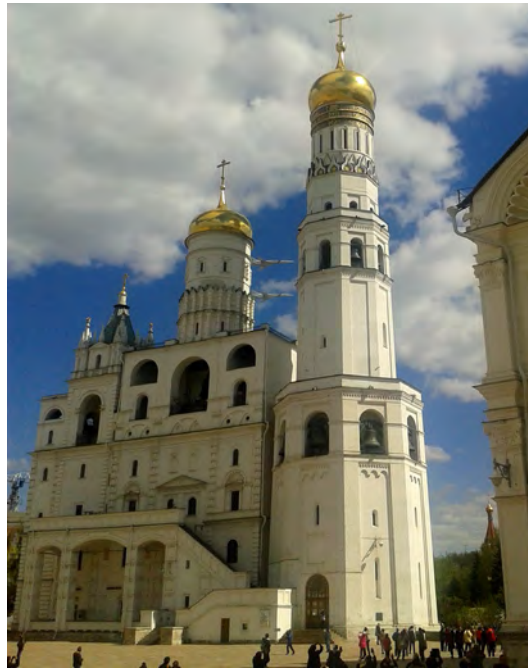


Fig. 2: The Ivan the Great Bell Tower. Photo from the book *Naidenov N.A. Moscv. Sobori, monastiri i tzerkvi*. Vol. 1. Moscow. 1883.



meters. For a long time, it used to be the tallest building in Moscow. The main bell tower is adjoined by belfries. The first was begun in 1532 by Italian architect Petrok Maliy as the Church of the Resurrection of Christ and was completed in 1543-1552 after his departure from Moscow. Petrok or Peter Maly (Small or Young) worked in Russia in the 2nd quarter of the 16th century. Among his most famous buildings are the stone city walls of Kitai Gorod in Moscow [Podypolsky 1983]. The second belfry, the so-called Filaret's Annex, with a tented roof, was constructed in 1624 by Russian architect Bazhen Ogurtsov. In 1812, while retreating from Moscow, the Napoleon's Army blew up the Ivan the Great Bell Tower ensemble. However, the oldest and the tallest part of the bell tower survived. The Belfry and the Filaret's Annex were completely destroyed. They were restored in the original dimensions in 1814-1815.

Several historical and architectural academic studies have investigated the Ivan the Great Bell Tower ensemble. The history of his study is presented in the article by A.L. Batalov [Batalov 2015], in the fundamental publication dedicated to the Ivan the Great Bell Tower and the cathedral belfry, published by the Moscow Kremlin Museums in 2015 [*Svod pamyatnikov* 2015]. This paper proposes to address a previously unexplored topic of its role in the urban image and public perception in the 19th-early 20th centuries and to use the analysis of texts of guidebooks and travel notes for this purpose.

Guide books are an extremely interesting primary source, especially when studied in comparison. The carefully chosen texts of guide books contain summary information about the city, highlighting its main attractions. The study of travel guides is a way to understand the touristic attractiveness of certain places and their role in the city's representation. Guide books form certain images of cities and places and create a stereotype of their perception. The genre features repetitions and compilations, which result in consolidation and distribution of clichés.





Fig. 3: View of the Kremlin with the Ivan the Great bell tower. The frontispiece of the book of Le Cointe de Laveau *Putevoditel po Moskve*. Moscow. 1824.



Fig. 4: View of the Kremlin from the The Zamoskvoretskaya embankment. Photo from the book *Naidenov N.A. Moscvu. Vidi nekotorykh gorodskikh mestnostei*. Ap.1. Moscow. 1884.

The travel notes in the description of the city often repeat the choice of guidebooks and use similar characteristics of the monuments.

The genre of guide books was actively developing during the 19th century. The growing number of travel destinations and the evolving mass tourism led to the growing popularity of guide books. This study has considered books published both in Russia and in Europe, including such major series as Murray's Handbooks, Baedeker and Guide Joanne, as well as non-serial issues. The chronological framework covers the period from the French invasion of Russia in 1812, when the bell tower was menaced by explosion, to the Russian Revolution of 1917, which radically changed the image of Moscow, the attitude to its sights and the way to represent the capital of the new Socialist state.

The city of Moscow and its sights in the 19th century were a center of attraction both for Russian and foreign travelers. For the former, it was a historic first capital city, and for the latter it was a city where the national life and ethnic character was most clearly seen. Unlike St. Petersburg, which had been the empire's capital since Peter the Great's time, Moscow was perceived as a historical and national city. At the same time, thanks to its central location, Moscow was the largest trade and industrial city of the empire. In the second half of the 19th century, Moscow



VUE DU KREMLIN.

## MOSCOU.

**Gares:** Gare de Smolensk (Smolensky Wauxhall): chemin de fer de Moscou—Brest—Varsovie, près de la Tverskaïa.

Gare de Nicolas (Nicolaevsky Wauxhall): chemin de fer de Moscou—St.-Petersbourg, chaussée de Sokolniki.

Gare de Iaroslavl (Iaroslavsky Wauxhall): chemin de fer de Moscou—Iaroslavl, près de la Gare de Nicolas.

Gare de Riazan (Riazansky Wauxhall): chemin de fer de Moscou—Riazan, en face de la Gare de Nicolas.

Gare de Koursk (Koursky Wauxhall): chemin de fer de Moscou—Koursk, près de la Sadovaïa.

Gare de Nijni-Novgorod (Nijégorodsky Wauxhall): chemin de fer de Moscou—Nijni-Novgorod, au delà de la barrière Pokrovskaïa.

Toutes ces gares se trouvent à proximité des lignes de tramways, et les principaux hôtels y envoient des omnibus à tous les trains. Dans chaque gare se trouvent un cabinet de toilette et un buffet.

**Hôtels:** Hôtel „Continental“, au coin de la place du Théâtre et de l'Okhotny Riad. Très confortable et très

also became the center of the Russian railroad network, which was an additional and irresistible reason for tourists and travelers to include it in their routes..

The first Moscow travel guides appeared at the turn of the 19th century. The genre changed considerably over the 19th century. From long descriptions of Moscow's history and landmarks, with minimal practical information for travellers, guide books evolved into brief city guides, with useful information, maps, plans, public transport itineraries etc.

Moscow changed drastically over the 19th – beginning of 20th centuries, and authors of guides and travel notes recorded these changes. From an early-19th-century city, with lots of wooden houses on narrow curved streets, which was often called a 'big village' by the authors, Moscow turned into a developed megacity by the eve of the 20th century, an industrial and financial centre, thanks to the country's economic and social development, which was particularly intensive during Emperor Alexander II's reforms. Moscow's rapid urban development in the early 20th century turned the old capital in an almost two-million city with a growing infrastructure. But for the contemporaries, it was essential that the modern city would preserve its historical identity as the 'gold-domed city', and the new signs of industrial growth would neighbour the signs of the 'good old times', symbols of Moscow's status of the first capital.

The Ivan the Great bell tower was one of the city's monuments symbolizing the historic first capital city, honorary and solemn title of the city of Moscow, which began to be used since the 18th century, after Peter the Great moved the capital of the Russian state from Moscow to St. Petersburg. It was the first among persistent Moscow associations, together with the Kremlin's walls and towers, the domes of churches and monasteries, as well as the sounds of ringing bells. The height of the city buildings in the 19th century provided an opportunity to see the Ivan the Great's golden dome from a long distance. The tower was one of the first landmarks to be seen by travellers as they were approaching Moscow [Shemyakin 1894, 99]. The audial environment in the city streets made its bells audible far away from the Kremlin. Le Cointe de Laveau in his 1824 guide book, translated into Russian by S. Glinka, wrote : 'The Ivan the Great Bell Tower dominates the city. A pious local, as he notices it from afar, takes off his hat and crosses himself' [Le Cointe de Laveau 1824, 39]. And even almost 90 years later, in the early 19th century, despite the city buildings got more storeys, a traveller who was approaching Moscow was looking for the renowned Ivan the Great dome. The landmark was still visible behind the new vertical lines of factory chimneys and the houses that were getting taller and taller. Remembering his journey to Moscow in 1911, priest N. Nikolaev mentioned that the proximity of a huge city was noticeable 50 kilometers away from Moscow: 'Factories and plants with their huge chimneys, roadways, traffic and excitement. [...] I see a huge tower far away: "It's Ivan the Great", my companion explains' [Nikolaev 1914, 571-572].

A vast majority of Moscow guide books, from long to the briefest ones, told their readers about the Kremlin bell tower. Most of the travellers coming to Moscow were willing to take a closer look at this 'Moscow Colossus', which was familiar to many of them since they were children, 'through stories and pictures' [Nikolaev 1914, 571-572]. The interest in the bell tower was largely determined by its location in the Kremlin, the city's historic, cultural, and religious centre. Due to the concentration of the historical landmarks, as well as relics of local and national importance, Kremlin was an inevitable and usually the first place to visit in Moscow. Since the political and administrative centre was located in St. Petersburg, the former residential city of the Russian tsars was associated primarily with history.

Fig. 5: Page of the guidebook of Tastevin *Guide du voyageur en Russie. St. Petersbourg et Moscou.* Moscow. 1891.





Fig. 6: View of the Kremlin with the Ivan the Great bell tower on the cover of the guidebook *Illustririvaniy putevoditel po Moskve*. Moscow. 1911.

The bell tower's descriptions in guidebooks and travel notes included several key conceptual categories, which reflected the key aspects of this landmark's perception by the contemporaries. Let's take a closer look at them.

## 2 | The Ivan the Great bell tower as an architectural landmark

Content analysis of guide books and memoirs has revealed several words that were most often used to describe the bell tower: 'giant', 'colossus', and 'huge'.

The tower's height was believed to be its main attraction, providing it with a status of the 'Russian national pride' [Levitov 1882, 107; *Illustrirovanny putevoditel* 1914, 61-62]. Most of the guide book authors were willing not only to inform their readers on the exact height of the Ivan the Great pillar, but also the size of the dome and the height of the cross, emphasizing the importance of these vertical parts of the Kremlin Colossus.

Particular attention was paid at the cross that topped the tower. According to French writer François Ancelot, it was 'devoutly venerated' in Moscow [Ancelot 2001, 113]. François Ancelot, who came to Russia in 1826 to participate in the celebrations of Nikolai I's coronation, used de Laveau's guide, which was effectively the only Moscow guidebook in French at the moment. De Laveau informed his readers of the cross size - two sazhen and two arshins (Sazhen, an old Russian unit of length. 1 sazhen = 2.13 m. Arshin, an old Russian unit of length. 1 arshin = 0.7 m.), as well as its material (wood covered in gilded copper). Some of the travel guides also mentioned the inscription on the crossbar: 'Tsar of Glory' [Dolgorukov 1872, 122; *Illustrirovanny putevoditel* 1915, 62]. Such authors' attention to Ivan the Great's cross was no accident. After the 1812 war, its image had been mythologized in a certain way. The authors were retelling the story about Napoleon's failed attempt to take Ivan the Great's cross away to France. The details of such anecdotes varied, from the legend that Napoleon believed the cross to be made of pure gold, to ideas that someone had told the French emperor that 'when Russia loses the Ivan's cross, the country's days will be numbered' [*Moskva ili Istorichesky putevoditel* 1827-1831, P. 2, 42; *Illustrirovanny putevoditel* 1915, 62; *Moskva, ee svyatyni*, 102; Levitov 1882, 107]. In fact, Napoleon was really planning to bring the cross to Paris together with the other trophies, and ordered to remove it from the tower, but the cross fell and broke. The popularity of this story across various authors demonstrates Ivan the Great's cross importance as one of the key Moscow symbols.

The Kremlin bell tower dome also evoked a lot of associations. It was visible from a long distance and looked like a 'golden crown' [*Novy putevoditel* 1872, 19]. Ivan the Great's dome topped the multi-level and multi-coloured ensemble of Moscow domes, which was recorded by many memoir writers as one of the most vivid visual impressions from the city. 'I have never thought that such a city existed on Earth: green, red and golden domes and bell towers were everywhere. This gold and azure outshine everything I've dreamt of before' [Hamsun 1906, 12], Knut Hamsun wrote about Moscow. The numerous domes of Moscow churches and bell towers were a vivid illustration of such epithets as 'golden-domed Moscow' and 'first capital city'. Sergey Durylin, in his memoirs about pre-revolutionary Moscow, believed that the abundance of golden colour from its golden domes was what distinguished the city from the other Russian cities: 'The two highest architectural points dominating the city – Ivan the Great Bell Tower and Christ the Saviour Cathedral – were shining as 'golden crowns', joined by the third huge 'crown' in the outskirts – the golden dome of Simonov Monastery, which was even taller than Ivan the Great' [Durylin 2000, 169-170]. Such comparison of the two renowned Moscow bell towers is quite natural. Traditionally, Ivan the Great tower was used to measure building heights, in Moscow as



Колокольня Ивана Великого.

Fig. 7: *The Ivan the Great Bell Tower*. Photo from the guidebook *Vseobshij putevoditel i spravotchnik po Moskve i okrestnostam*. Moscow. 1911.

well as in other cities. The Kremlin bell tower was perceived as a certain height standard, a psychological threshold, and the city's vertical border. And despite the fact this border was increasingly often violated as the city was growing higher and wider, the height of the Ivan the Great bell tower was remaining a symbolic unit of measure.

### 3 | The Ivan the Great bell tower as a historical monument

The Moscow travel guide authors often used research by renowned Russian historians, including N.M. Karamzin, I.M. Snegirev, and I.E. Zabelin. The guidebooks' stories about Moscow landmarks emphasized their historical importance, as well as their connections with important events in the Russian history and historical figures. The Ivan the Great bell tower was associated with two dramatic milestones: the Time of Troubles in the early 17th century, and the 1812 Patriotic War.

19th-century guidebooks associated the history of the bell tower's construction with Boris Godunov, based on an inscription below the top of the tower (only the second floor of the tower was completed during the reign of Boris Godunov). The guides usually emphasized that the bell tower construction was aimed at providing jobs for people flowing in Moscow during the famine and was performed by the public. Such 'public character' [Sivkov 1913, 74] of the construction provided the tower with a status of a true people's monument. Another reminder of the Time of Troubles was a legend about False Dmitry's plans to organize a catholic church 'in the rotunda' between the ground and the first floors of the tower, which was repeatedly cited in the guide books [*Moskva ili Istorichesky putevoditel* Part 2, 43-44; *Moskva i ee okrestnosti* 1882, 163. Dolgorukov 1872].

The guidebooks mentioned the not-so-distant events of the War on Napoleon even more often than the Time of Troubles. 1812 was memorialized everywhere across the Kremlin, but the bell tower remained its most vivid witness. The 1812 events contributed to the growing significance of the Kremlin bell tower. During the retreat, Napoleon attempted to blow up it as the most important monument of city. The blast destroyed the adjoined belfries, but the tower itself was extremely stable and suffered only a few cracks in the upper tier. The guide books told the readers about the retreating French army's attempt to blow up this essential Kremlin landmark, and about how the bell tower 'miraculously survived with all the bells' [*Istoricheskoe izvestie* 1848, 66], while the adjacent belfry and the Filaret's Annex were completely destroyed. The readers learned how fast Moscow was rebuilt and how the Kremlin and its bell tower were restored after the Napoleon's army was expelled. After the reconstruction of the Kremlin and Moscow, the Ivan the Great began to be perceived as a symbol of the revival of the city. The stability of the bell tower became associated with the stability of state power.

The skyward tower reminded of the overcome of the Time of Trouble and the victory in the War on Napoleon, as well as Moscow's restoration after that war. Its image was associated with the revival of the nation and was a visible embodiment of its achievements and victories. The texts we studied interpreted the tower's name in various ways. Following the historians' opinions, the guide books authors suggested different versions, from the Church of Saint John Climacus, which was located on the ground floor of the tower (most of the authors) and the name of architect Ioann Vilie (but even Karamzin was against this version), to the name of Grand Duke Ivan Kalita, who built the first church with such dedication in the 14th century. Compilation publications tried to combine all the three versions in one: for example, an 1891 guide said that Ivan the Great bell tower was built by architect Vilie on the place where Ivan





Fig. 8: *The view of Moscow from the Ivan the Great Bell Tower.* Photo from the book Naidenov N.A. *Moscva. Vidi nekotorykh gorodskikh mestnostei.* Ap.1. Moscow. 1884.

Kalita had built the Church of Saint John Climacus. ‘Hence, the name of the bell tower’ [Vyshnegradsky 1891, 72–73], the author concluded.

Meanwhile, the public associated the name of the tower to its magnificence. ‘My friend, I visited the Ivan the Great, and it is worthy of such a name, it’s truly great! What a height, what a sound!’, wrote priest Gramenitsky to his friend Savva Tikhomirov, a synodic sacristan, ‘What a magnificent view our Mother Moscow is when you look at it from the Ivan the Great bell tower!’ [Savva 1898, 22].

#### 4 | The Ivan the Great Bell Tower as a viewpoint

Indeed, at the turn of the 20th century, the Ivan the Great bell tower was one of the city’s most popular viewpoints, although there were other points with beautiful views (Poklonnaya Gora, Vorobiev Hills, and bell towers of several monasteries, such as Strastnoy and Simonov). Its height and location offered a view of the first capital at the range of 30 kilometers in fine weather, which made the Kremlin bell tower one of Moscow’s favorite tourist attractions [*Putevoditel po Moskve* 1913, 149]. A breathtaking bird’s-eye view offered an opportunity to get to know the city, connect to it emotionally, and remained in the contemporaries’ memory as the most impressive experience of Moscow.

Most of the Moscow travel guides’ authors recommended their readers to climb the Ivan the Great bell tower. They described the panorama with such epithets as ‘wonderful’, ‘magnificent’, ‘captivating’, and ‘splendid’. Many travellers in the 19th-early 20th centuries devoted some enthusiastic lines to it. Among the best-known are the words by the renowned Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov:

‘He who has never been on the top of Ivan the Great, who has never had a chance to take in the whole of our ancient capital at one glance from end to end, who has never admired its majestic panorama, stretching almost beyond the range of vision, he knows absolutely nothing about Moscow. For Moscow is not an ordinary city like thousands of others; Moscow is no silent pile of cold stones arranged symmetrically...not indeed! It has its own soul, its own life’ [*Lermontov* 1891, 435].

As one looked from the Ivan the Great bell tower, all the city’s downsides were unnoticeable, while its size and layout were visible. The radial-concentric plan of the Moscow streets vividly illustrated the old capital’s historical development and growth. The huge size of the historical capital, its ‘extension’ was what impressed the viewers the most. In addition to the city size, its bright and varied colours were impressive, and this distinguished Moscow from the colour range of most European cities, characterized by gray or darker colours.

Both Russian and foreign travellers were willing to get a bird’s-eye view of Moscow. Martha Wilmot from England enjoyed the view of Moscow in 1806 and remembered it as a city with monasteries and domes ‘which strike one as Asiatic beyond measure’ [Wilmot 1873, 1874-1875]. Ancelot, impressed by the view of shining spires and mosaics of multi-coloured roofs, described Moscow as a ‘gigantic amphitheater spreading out in all directions’ [Ancelot 2001, 113].

#### 5 | Bells

As one climbed the bell tower, they could take a closer look at the Kremlin bells. The guidebook authors focused on historical importance, outstanding size and the total number of bells on the tower and belfries. Travel guides published in the first half of the 19th century included detailed descriptions of all bells and inscriptions on them. Later guides usually mentioned only the larg-

est bells on the Belfry and the Filaret's Annex: Bolshoy Uspensky weighing 4,000 poods (an old Russian unit of weight. 1 pood = 16.38 kg), Reut (2,000 poods), Voskresny (1,017 poods), and Budnichny (798 poods). Sometimes, the guides mentioned only the number of bells on various floors: 'There are six bells weighing from 200 to 450 poods on the ground floor of the tower. There are thirteen bells weighing from 40 to 200 poods on the first (middle) floor, including five *perebor* bells compiled by tones (Perebor is a type of ringing when each individual bell is struck once, from the smallest to the largest). There are ten bells weighing from 8 to 50 poods on the second floor. There are 29 bells on three floors. The total number of bells is 33' [Rudolf 1848-49, P. 1, 48], said an 1848 guide. The total number of bells mentioned in various years' guides varies from 30 to 34.

The history of the bells in 1812, which was a dramatic year for the Kremlin bell tower, was described in most detail. Most authors retold the story of the Bolshoy Uspensky bell, which was recast from the old Uspensky bell that broke during the belfry explosion and commemorated the expulsion of Napoleon's army from Russia. The Reut bell also attracted a lot of interest. It was known for its unusually thick edges, as well as for the fact that it survived after it fell in 1812, with only the bell's 'ears' broken. 'When the ears were repaired, the tone of the bell remained the same' [*Sputnik moskvicha* 1890, 36], said an 1890 guide book.

The historic bells of the Ivan the Great were represented in the guidebooks as one of the Kremlin's most significant attractions. The travellers were keen on looking at them closer and listening to their renowned sounds. Théophile Gautier was impressed by the sizes of the Kremlin bells: 'One of these bells weighs over 60,000 kilos', the writer remembered, 'while the big bell on Notre-Dame de Paris, of which Quasimodo was so proud, would look like a simple handbell as compared to this metal monster' [Gautier 1990, 245].

## 6 | Bell ringing

The bell tower's audial presence was one of the essential components in the life of the city. The visitors were specially coming to the Kremlin to listen to the bells ringing on the Ivan the Great tower. The Kremlin bell tower was perceived as Moscow's main bell tower, setting the pace to all the other bells ringing in the city. For example, the famous 19th-century Easter peals, which were described by many writers, started with the first bell strike on the Ivan the Great, which was eagerly awaited across the city and gave a start to the *blagovest* in all the other Moscow churches (Blagovest, an Russian orthodox bell ringing, using for notified that the divine service is about to begin in the church) [Iosif 1869, 31]. Before the 1917 revolution, there was a tradition to go to listen for Easter bells in the Kremlin: people came to the Cathedral Square from all over Moscow holding lighted candles. In the contemporaries' minds, the Moscow bells revived the image of Moscow as the first capital and historic city. These peals were one of the most impressive audial signs of the city.

The peal on the Ivan the Great bell tower also gave a start to ceremonial peals in Moscow on the days of coronation celebrations and royal visits. They were a traditional audial setting for such ceremonies. Its location in Kremlin, as well as its Moscow's biggest bells determined the Ivan the Great's special role as the city's main bell tower, which 'broadcast' the information on the key events and set the audial pace for celebrations.



Fig. 9: View of the Kremlin. Postcard. Late 19th - early 20th century.



## 7 | Churches in the bell tower and the belfry

The Moscow guidebooks provided a lot of detail on the Kremlin cathedrals and churches, as well as the relics stored there. There were two churches in the Ivan the Great bell tower and the adjacent belfry: the Church of Saint John Climacus on the tower's ground floor, and the Church of Nikolai Gostunsky in the belfry. The latter stored an icon of St. Nicholas, carved on wood and venerated as one of the Kremlin's most important relics. Twice a year, processions were organized from the Uspensky Cathedral to the Nikolai Gostunsky Church [*Putevoditel po Moskve* 1913, 149; Kalugin 1877, 3; Strukov 1850, 17, 220, 225].

The analysis of the texts of guide books and memoirs of the 19th – early 20th centuries revealed that the Ivan the Great bell tower was one of Moscow's key symbols, which brought together expressive architectural forms, a meaningful name, and a lot of historical associations. In the public consciousness of that time, the concepts of 'Moscow' and 'Ivan the Great' were perceived as synonyms in a certain sense.

The changes in the Moscow's appearance that were taking place during the 19th and early 20th centuries didn't affect its main dominant – the Ivan the Great bell tower. While the city was growing higher, its audial environment, its pace and its borders were changing, but the Kremlin bell tower remained the city's main bell tower, *the* bell tower. In the era of evolving and developing tourism, the bell tower was one of the city's main attractions. It combined the functions of a historical monument, a church, and Moscow's most popular viewing point. The combination of Ivan the Great's symbolic importance and its accessibility as a historical landmark made it one of the most popular and most visited historical places in Moscow.

After the Revolution of 1917, new symbols of the socialist atheistic state replaced the Kremlin bell tower. Lots of churches and monasteries were destroyed in the city, including some in the Kremlin. Bell towers were the first to be demolished: their visibility in the urban space made them the most vulnerable. New high-rise buildings with spires, built in the 1940s-1950s, were aimed to replace the lost verticals of the bell towers. Fortunately, the Kremlin bell tower and cathedrals became part of the Kremlin Museum complex, which allowed the museum to insist on preserving not only the buildings, but also the icons stored in them as important art works. This was supported not only by ideology, but also by the fact that for several decades, the Kremlin was closed and effectively inaccessible (through 1955). The Kremlin towers, decorated with ruby stars, symbols of the Soviet state, in the 1930s, became the new symbols of the state power. Nevertheless, even today, as a lot of high-rise buildings have been built in Moscow, including the Europe's tallest skyscraper, the Ivan the Great bell tower is an integral part of some of the most memorable views of Moscow.

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# Civic towers in medieval urban landscape in Northern Italy: architectures as urban identities

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## Abstract

Extensive literature has investigated the institutional tools with which municipal governments between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries modelled the shape of public spaces and buildings. In the face of debated historical knowledge mainly focused on municipal buildings, studying civic towers seems to have been less detailed. The buildings considered here concern the western and eastern subalpine region: Cuneo, Fossano and Cherasco are new towns, Saluzzo and Pinerolo are towns related to the foremost noble dynasties, and Savigliano.

## Torri civiche nel paesaggio urbano medievale del Nord dell'Italia: l'architettura come identità urbana

Una vasta letteratura ha indagato gli strumenti istituzionali con cui i governi municipali tra XII e XIII secolo hanno definito la forma degli spazi e degli edifici pubblici. A fronte di una conoscenza storica principalmente incentrata sui palazzi comunali, lo studio delle torri civiche sembra essere stato meno approfondito. Il campione di edifici qui considerato riguarda la regione subalpina occidentale e orientale: Cuneo, Fossano e Cherasco sono borghi nuovi, Saluzzo e Pinerolo sono borghi il cui sviluppo è strettamente legato alle principali dinastie signorili, e Savigliano.

**Keywords:** Civic Towers, Architectural and Urban History, Urban Iconography, Topography.

Torri civiche, Storia dell'architettura e della città, iconografia urbana, topografia.

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Received Novembre 11, 2019; accepted March 29, 2020

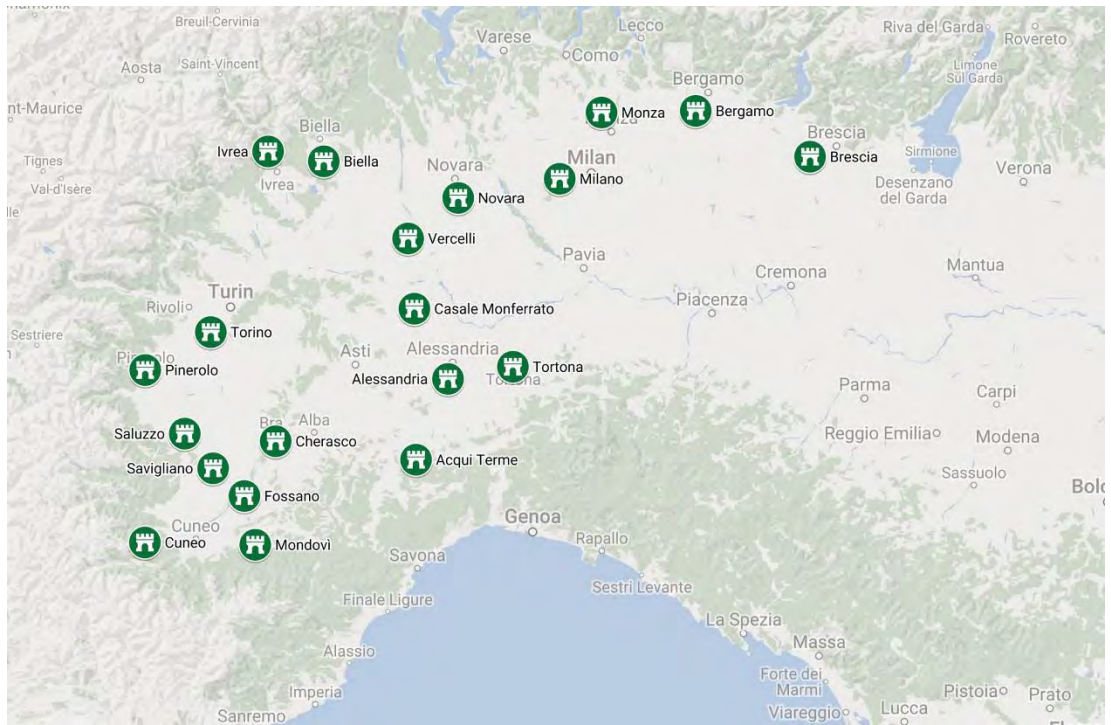
## 1 | Introduction

Extensive literature has investigated the institutional tools with which municipal governments between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries modelled the shape of public spaces and buildings. The design, construction and continuous transformation of the *domus* and municipal *palacia*, especially after the peace of Constance (1183), were decisive moments of ideological construction of power, diversified expressions of the institutional solidity of ordinary citizens. In the face of debated historical knowledge mainly focused on municipal buildings, studying civic towers seems to have been less detailed. Many of the links between the building and the tower slip away. Not always concomitant building sites, towers in many cases are a re-use of pre-existence construction and, in others, are completely detached from the municipal building. Research on municipal towers, starting with the analysis of the original and 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century phases, attested by sporadic documentary sources, cannot overlook the study of the transformations of the buildings. It is also essential to consult iconographic sources and analyse the material consistency of the architectural artefacts.

The buildings considered here concern the western and eastern subalpine region (current Piedmont and Lombardy): three of the localities examined - Cuneo, Fossano and Cherasco - are new towns, founded between the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the first third of the 13<sup>th</sup> century through municipal initiatives and by local aristocrats Savigliano was also a protagonist of significant urban transformation processes during the 13<sup>th</sup> century [*Borghi nuovi* 2015].

Saluzzo and Pinerolo are towns whose development is closely intertwined with the foremost noble dynasties and with the formation of the regional principalities, of which they became in

Fig. 1: Municipal buildings in the western and eastern subalpine region, current Piedmont and Lombardy (by the author).



fact ‘capitals’ (Saluzzo of the eponymous marquisate, Pinerolo of the Savoy-Achaia). The interesting cases of Alessandria and Novara in the eastern area have been considered, where, following recent restoration in the first case, in-depth studies have reconstructed the history and architecture of the municipal building, while Novara preserves the structure of the perfectly interpretable Broletto. In addition, comparisons have been made with Lombard cases in Milan, Bergamo and Brescia [Andenna 1994; Andenna, Bordone, Somaini, Vallerani 1998; Rao 2015].

## 2 | Civic towers between documentary sources and building site

If, as stated, historiography has made important contributions in the study of the municipal building, the theme of the tower has remained less investigated – towers that in most cases still outline the skyline of northern Italian centres with the transformations and elevations of the modern age.

In some cases, the construction of municipal buildings increased at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, while private or religious spaces were used in others; a new pole of political power was affirmed, often re-qualifying an area of the city, placing it at the centre of significant transformations. Examples are in Verona, Vicenza, Pavia, Bergamo, Padova, Parma, Siena, Rome, Urbino, Orvieto and Assisi [Soldi Rondinini 1984; Uberti 1995; Racine 1980; Pistilli 1992, 1994; Gargiulo 2007; Diacciati Tanzini 2014; Tosco 2018; *Il Palazzo della Ragione di Padova*, 2008].

Innovative urban creation differentiates northern and central Italy and part of southern France from the rest of Europe, distinguishing three different areas where, on the Italian territory, community settlement aspects can be interpreted: Italian Po Valley (Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia),

Fig. 2: Bergamo Alta (upper city), Piazza Vecchia with the civic tower between the Palazzo della Ragione and that of the chief magistrate, today (photo by the author).



central Italy (a well-known category of civic buildings), and western Piedmont [Rao 2015]. In the Po Valley the oldest municipal buildings favour a model that provides a large open space with a loggia, freely accessible to citizens, where commercial activities, city assemblies and justice take place. The upper floor above the loggia is used for consul or chief magistrate meetings. If a compact parallelepiped block scheme prevails in the Lombardy area, divided into two or three floors above ground with large multi-mullioned windows, it is certainly not a single solution. This scheme is applied in Piedmont in the oldest phase of the Broletto of Novara and also in the original parts of the *palatium vetus* of Alessandria. The tower supports the complex, and its height symbolizes its dominion over the city [Tosco 2000].

In the case of Bergamo, the ancient stone civic tower is still preserved between the Palazzo della Ragione and that of the chief magistrate. As often happens, it uses a pre-existing tower house owned by the Suardi family in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was enlarged in the 14<sup>th</sup> century; sources remember it as the tower of the *hospicio magno comunis bergami*, where municipal prisons were housed on the lower floor [Buonicontri 2005; Petro 2008]. A rare contemporary description, contained in the *De magnalibus civitatis Mediolani* by Bonvesin de la Riva, is preserved of the *palacium communis* of Milan, built in 1228, representing the entire municipal buildings as a true ten perches wide municipality courtyard, including the civic palace, the chief magistrate edifice with its chapel, and two other structures closing the courtyard. To the south is a loggia, where the sentences of the convicted were read out publicly and «in the same court there is also a tower, with four bells of the municipality» [Bonvesin de la Riva (1288) 1974, 38-39; Romanini 1989; Grimoldi 1983; Grillo 2001].

The first news about the municipal tower of Brescia dates to 1187-1189, when the *liberi homines* decided to build a wooden *domus* flanked by a tall stone tower next to the cathedral of San Pietro





Fig. 3: Milan, the municipal palace, Palazzo della Ragione or Broletto in the Piazza dei mercanti, today (photo by the author).



Fig. 4: Brescia, old town hall Broletto, tower Torre del Pegol, Loggia delle Grida in the piazza del Duomo or Paolo VI, today (photo by the author).

de Dom; during the reconstruction of the new stone building between 1223 and 1227, another tower, the Poncarali, was incorporated into the structure. In 1236, the new *militum* cast bronze bell by Bartolomeo Pisano was positioned on the Torre del Popolo [Volta 1987; Andenna 1994; Coccoli, Scala, Treccani 2009; Rossi 2009; Rapaggi 2012].

In western Piedmont, in Turin, Asti and Alba, municipal buildings were built late and, with a few exceptions, had limited monumental impact as they were included in the urban fabric, while the municipal meetings and the city's governance functions took place for a long time within ecclesiastical areas or in other places. The types adopted for the municipal buildings are not so characteristic and tend to follow private construction on the foundation, often opening mostly on the ground floor. The civic tower that often emerges from a building often becomes the most distinctive sign of the municipal building and still characterizes the outline of cities throughout the modern age. The chronological attestation of the municipal *domus* in the territory of today's Piedmont is concentrated between the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century: in Novara, a *domus consulum* appears early in the documentation from 1178, in Vercelli, a municipal building is testified in 1190, in Ivrea in 1202, in Tortona in 1218, in Alessandria, a *palacium communis* is recorded in documents from 1241 and in Cuneo from 1249 [Tosco 1999]. The choice of model to be adopted for the main communal seat reflects political and cultural dependencies: the western area shows an articulated presence of different solutions, while the eastern sector from Novara to Alessandria is closer to the Lombard Broletto.

### 3 | Ancient municipal houses and towers: a contemporary construction site?

Several examples of ancient civic palaces created with a tower have been attested by documentary sources: in Vercelli the building takes shape on the grounds of houses acquired by the consuls in 1190 [Gullino 1987; Ordano 1988; Rao 2005; Rao 2018; Dell'Aprovitola 2010; Pistan 2018]. From 1203 to 1208, the public authorities resumed work for the settlement of the area, buying a *casamentum* with a tower located in front of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore from various representatives of the Guidalardi family. The presence of the tower is indirectly testified during the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the presence of a *hostiario* assigned to the ringing of the bell is mentioned in the three sections dedicated to the building in the municipal statute (1241) [*Statuti del Comune di Vercelli*, rub. CXV, col.1137; rub. CCCXLV e CCCXLVI, col.1223].

The case of Turin is known for its anomaly: a partially autonomous municipality, placed firstly under the protection of an emperor and a bishop and then of Marquises of Monferrato and Savoy, is hosted by the imperial *palacium* in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. References found in documentary sources state that from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century the place presented elements normally encountered in many of the municipal buildings of the Italian Po Valley: a portico on the ground floor, an upper loggia, and a tower (1199). These architectural structures could have been added to the old building because of adaptations to new municipal functions [Cognasso 1914, 55, 147; Bonardi 1987; Comba 1987; Comba 1993].

In 1335 the Savoy princess Caterina di Vienne granted an expropriated *domus*, placed at the intersection of the main road, subtended by the ancient urban gates. This was, however, brief: the municipality passed it by, using a noble tower, and only in 1375 did it acquire a house a few blocks further east from the merchant of Giovanni da Rivalba, in the urban fabric centre and on the edge of the commercial area, soon to be equipped with a tower, clock, and bell. To modernize and restore the city, which became a university and Savoy administrative centre, the municipality acquired a private palace in the heart of the market in 1472 from which the mod-



Fig. 5: Novara, the municipal palace or Broletto, today (photo by the author).

ern Palazzo di Città was developed. From the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, the municipal tower became the symbol of the municipality, so much so that it was reported on the frontispiece of the *Ordinatio comunali* (minutes of the City Council meetings). The bell tolling marked the rhythms of the community: the clock struck the hours; the study bell announced university lessons; the large bell started the guards' shifts, summoned the councillors to meetings, announced bad weather and concluded the day.

The tower was also a city checkpoint to report fires and riots. At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Ivrea, the consuls and the chief magistrate hold their established offices in the bishop's palace opposite the cathedral church, on the south side of the square where the baptistery of San Giovanni stood, which on special occasions assumed civil functions [Benvenuti 1976; Tosco 1999; *Statuti del Comune di Ivrea* 1968, 27, 81, 97, 146, 149, 334, 335, 352]. From 1202, the civic documents were written within a *domus credentiae*, while in 1221 an autonomous *palatium communis* appeared. In the 1329 statutes, a section was dedicated to the construction of a bell tower. A few ruins of architectural structures remain today, but it is evident the town hall was annexed to the western perimeter wall of the bishop's residence. The building was distinguished by a quadrangular tower at the side of the entrance, which connected the government area of the upper city with the sector of the burgs. These buildings are still visible in the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* image of 1682 [*Theatrum Sabaudiae* 2000, I, tav. 63]; at the top of the tower there is a cornice with corbels, made of bricks placed at the head, while the arch has maintained its functions of entry to the episcopal hall.

In Casale Monferrato the first consular seat does not seem to assume characters of obvious monumentality. From the first appearance of the municipal bodies, here again the custom diffuses in different cities of the Po valley: the most important church of the city, the parish church of Sant'Evasio, has a seat for the people's assembly in front of the façade. The civil functions of the building were recalled by Aldo A. Settia [Settia 1978]: the bell tower constituted a valid sighting point for the civic guards, while the separation line between the Brignano and Vaccaro districts corresponded with the longitudinal axis of the basilica. Only from the 13<sup>th</sup> century did the *platea communis* appear in documents. It was located to the west of the cathedral, in correspondence with the church of Santa Maria, where there was a larger area for the people's assemblies, directly connected with the new seat of civil power. The civic seat is spread throughout differentiated buildings, always near the *platea communis*, which still maintains its functions in the statutes drawn up in the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The civic tower is located next to the church of Santo Stefano and, thanks to its 60 metres of height, dominates the whole Piedmontese town. Dating back to the medieval period (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century?) and built for other functions, it has a brick wall and a square plan with small single-lan- cnet windows. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the tower was raised by the Marquises of Monferrato, with a new loggia-shaped crowning, a square plan, surrounded by four mullioned windows, surmounted by an octagonal loggia and ending with a colonnade covered with a small dome decorated with dolphins.

In the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Piedmont, the *broletti* were subjected to different events relating to the political life of the municipalities that hosted them. In the first quarter of the century the buildings of Vercelli, Novara, Tortona, and Ivrea were built with the aim of replacing the first, modest government seat. The Broletto of Novara, entirely preserved and ascribable to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is an important reference point for research in the sub-alpine area. The new seat of municipal power was born without any continuity with the old one, the already testified *palacium*

*de civitate* in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The first testimony of a *domus consulum* or *domus credentiae* was found in 1178, referring to a building facing the northern entrance hall of the cathedral, then demolished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Novara, documentation allows us to establish the chronology of the new municipal building, active since September 1208, when a sentence of the consuls «sub palacio communis Novariae» was issued. It was built at the northern end of a market square, which skirted the perimeter portico of the cathedral, delimiting the empty area in front and enclosed by a fence wall. An external staircase accessing the upper floor and attached to the southern side is still preserved today (with additions in the 1929-1930 restoration) and was cited in 1225 [*Il complesso del Broletto di Novara* 2011; Donato 2011].

The civic or clock tower is now part of the Palazzo Natta, not far from the Broletto. Mentioned from 1268, it still maintains a distinct structure with brick masonry denoting its medieval construction phase. It is of probable private origin, as it is what remains of the so-called district of the long towers, the ancient noble district of the city.

The recently discovered Broletto of Alessandria in front of the cathedral shows an articulated and complex history; the restoration has revealed a large building with a portico on the ground floor and a large hall on the upper floor that seems to correspond to the *palatium communis* structures documented from 1242, including the functions previously carried out inside the San Pietro Cathedral, understood as a civic temple [Perin, Livraghi 2016; Tosco 2016].

A few years after the first attestation of a *palatium novum*, which appears from 1260 and then in subsequent documents, the building of the palace is attested on the southern side of the square where the town hall currently stands. The material structures seem to be in keeping with the architectural type of the buildings of the municipality built in northern Italy between the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which had a portico on the ground floor and a large room on the upper floor accessible by one or more external staircases. The wall-enclosed area, the so-called *broletum communis*, was dominated by the bulk of the tower building on which the bells were placed. The presence of a tower is attested since 1270, when the inhabitants of the city raised the banner of King Charles of Anjou.

The Statute of Alessandria makes clear references to the public space of the Broletto in relation also to the municipal building: the fenced area was accessible during the day through doors opened in the morning and closed at sunset by the *bicocchiere* (in charge of the tower, or *bichoca*), who controlled the *portas brolieti* and the entrance to the portico and doors of the stairs and building. The municipal building of Alessandria had a portico on the ground floor and access stairs to the upper floor that rested on the fenced courtyard area. Another element found in the statutes is the presence of the *bivocca*, then a tower, in a space next to the building. The 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries sources recall the permanence of the 15<sup>th</sup> century loggia overlooking the square and the tower, called the governor's tower or *torrazzo* (1580, 1607-1608, 1625). It remains to be understood whether it is the same tower mentioned in the 13<sup>th</sup> century that seemed to be pertinent to the new building, or, as it seems to emerge from these documents, from a structure relevant to the *palacium vetus*, not found in the restoration site.

#### 4 | The communal seats of new towns and in the contexts of urban renewal

The *platee* – and, in the case of Cherasco, Cuneo and Fossano, the *vie-platee* – in a central position in the medieval town were the areas along which public buildings for exercising communal government were erected, and along which the residences of the families in power were built. In numerous towns in south-western Piedmont (Fossano, Savigliano, and Cuneo), the first early ci-





Fig. 6: Panoramic view of the historical centre of Savigliano with the civic tower in the piazza Santarosa, today (photo by the author).

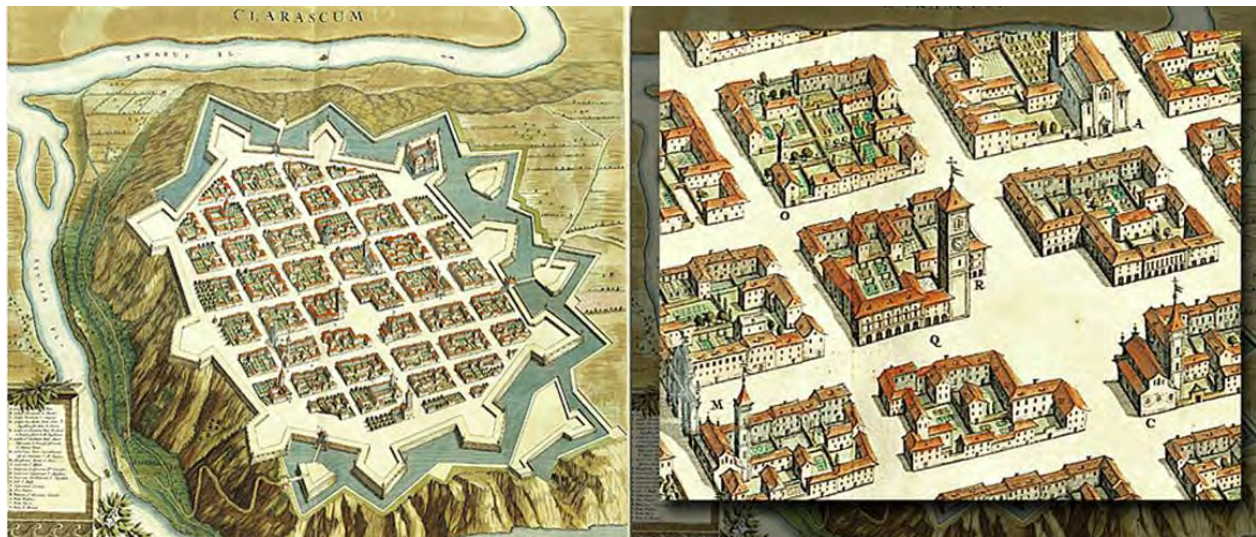


Fig. 7: Cherasco. Iconographies from the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* 1682 [*Theatrum Sabaudiae* 2000, II, tav. 32].



Fig. 8: Cherasco, civic tower, today (photo by the author).





Fig. 9: Saluzzo. Iconographies from the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* 1682 [*Theatrum Sabaudiae* 2000, I, tav. 66].



Fig. 10-11: Saluzzo, civic tower with municipal palace in Salita al castello, today (photo by the author).

tations of a communal house were followed by documentations of real palaces (*palacium comunis*) in the final quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and these seem to suggest a plan for the expansion of the seats of communal power [Longhi 2010; Longhi 2011; Bonardi 2003].

Following are two case studies, of Savigliano and Cherasco, which still conserve their civic towers. The *domus comunis* of Savigliano has the oldest documentary attestation in south-western Piedmont, since 1224. Only in 1319 did the term *palacium curie* appear, currently used to indicate the seat of civic power. During the Angevin dominion, the palace remained the main place of civil power [Garzino, Olmo 1987]. The building is on the road intersection that joins the *platea* – central market area of the city – with the Sant’Andrea parish, ecclesiastical pole of the settlement expansion of the communal age. In the first two decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the *platea* was already established as a reference point for the municipality, which had convened its meetings in the church of Sant’Andrea (1205) and in the market (1217). The area in front of the town hall required a larger opening towards the *platea*, progressively saturated by the expansions of the housing complex of the Galatari family.

The current municipality tower on the north-eastern side of piazza Santarosa, emerges through its dimensions on the urban landscape, and probably built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (attested from 1411), must be identified with the private *della Casana*. The tower would seem the same as the one indicated in 1447-1448 as the *Torre dell’Orologio*, in which the community clock had long been housed. The community, thanks to a donation, received the porticoed shopping area below the tower, destined for the municipal massaro activities in 1448. The municipality investment in the civic tower as the new fulcrum of the municipal area -compared to the ancient *domus*, more central than the square and next to the residence of the prince – strengthened starting from 1462; the plastered cell was rebuilt in 1644.

After Cherasco’s foundation in 1243, the municipal deeds were stipulated inside different religious buildings for a while: both the parish churches of San Pietro (1259) and San Gregorio (1277), as well as the monastery of Santa Maria *fratrum de Sachis* (probably the preachers’ monastery at the entrance to the village). The first attestation of a *domus comunis* took place during the second Angevin dominion in 1309: the building was permanently used as the seat of civil power and was named in the books of the *palacium comunis* accounts (1328). The building is in the southwest corner of the San Martino district, where the two roads meet. From 1339, arcade spaces below are documented, which the town hall rented out for commercial activities. The tower’s presence is indirectly documented from 1328 through the municipal payments for the *super palacium comunis* custody, which certifies its use as a lookout post, also confirmed by the expenses in 1339, for purchasing the *covi* to communicate with signals and for the construction of a wooden *bivocca*; in the Visconti age, the tower was used as the chief magistrate’s residence [La costruzione di una Villanova 2004].

The civic tower (the only tower allowed in the burg) is located outside the built-up area on the supporting axes of the village. Its original isolation can be hypothesized, preceding the construction of the building. The tower has a total height of 36 metres; we know from sources that it underwent several interventions in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the remodelling of the four pillar bases, forming its base.

##### 5 | Civic towers in seigniorial urban centres: an example

The public presence on the *platea* of Saluzzo, capital of the homonymous Marquisate, is testified by the impressive size of the communal palace with the civic tower. It stands alongside the dou-



ble curtain of buildings erected by the noble families, in addition to the castle and several other properties also belonging to the Marquises of Saluzzo. The lack of a religious presence along the main road of the burg – only the parish chapel was recorded in 1253 – has been noted as an anomalous element compared to other situations in Piedmont towns. We must remember that the religious institutions did have their own assets along the *platea*, as well as the presence of the preachers' monastery from 1281, in an outlying position, with the tall campanile offsetting the civic tower [Gullino 2001; Rao 2011].

The communal palace was subjected to complete reconstruction in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, reusing the ancient *domus*, redefining the overall volume of the building and the decorative elements inside and outside the palace. The major impact of the building on the *platea* indicates recognition of communal power by the Marquis and the desire of the communal government to control the city, testifying the progressive emancipation of the *homines* from the Marquis. The palace overlooks the ancient *platea* and has three floors above ground. The ground floor opens with three slightly acute arches. The element that best identified the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century site was undoubtedly the richness of the terracotta decorative elements, typical of the culture of many towns in Piedmont and Lombardy. The construction of the tower does not seem to have taken place at the same time as the reconstruction of the adjacent building: the single-lancet windows have older figurative characteristics than those on the main prospect, the putlog holes are out of line and the masonry work and frieze are interrupted next to the building. These aspects lead us to believe that it was built before the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century and the expansion of the palace. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the communal tower looked very different to today, ending with crenelations, bartizans and machicolations, as testified by two historical iconographies. Despite there being no privately-owned towers standing today in the urban fabric of Saluzzo, certain documental mentions in the 15<sup>th</sup> century land registers remind us of their sporadic existence. The towers in Saluzzo seem to have been used mainly to defend the walls, castle and campaniles of the numerous religious complexes, including the civic tower, rather than the privately-owned structures [Beltramo 2015].

## 6 | Conclusions

This first phase of the research on the municipal towers of north-western Italy highlights some recurring situations and opens further questions for development of the study.

Urban areas dedicated to administrative functions in Italian municipalities are multi-functional, have intense exchange in using space and wide interaction between religious and civil power. In the early days we witness the reuse of pre-existing buildings and towers, acquired or simply used for civic functions.

In some municipal cities, the construction of a civic palace did not occur for the entire first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional places of administration of justice, the meeting of the Council of Credenza, and the people's assembly maintain provisional seats, devoid of architectural structures conceived for the government function. In most cases, it is religious bodies that offer a temporary congregation space, inside large urban churches or in the same cathedral in cases where the municipality was founded as an episcopal city. This occurs not only in bishop seats, such as Alba, Asti and Acqui, but also in mercantile cities like Chieri and in rural towns like Biella. Generally, the main square hosts the public assembly of citizens, while the restricted governing bodies, such as the council of Credenza, meet in smaller rooms. In these cases, the bell of the bell tower marks the town's activities and the control and reception of small assemblies and the drawing up of deeds. The example of

Casale, where the bell tower of Sant'Evasio was a valid sighting point for the civic guards, is symptomatic of widespread use in the cities of northern Italy. Even where the tower and the building stand as autonomous buildings, the connection with a religious body is highlighted on the urban plan, and the Broletto is situated overlooking the parvis of a church (whether it is a cathedral or not), perceived as the 'chapel of the city'. Examples of this include: Santa Maria Maggiore in Vercelli, the cathedral of Santa Maria in Ivrea, San Secondo in Asti, the cathedral of San Pietro in Alessandria, where the mention of «actum in Alexandria, in maiori ecclesia Sancti Petri, in pleno consilio, campana more solito convocato» recurs in several documents, and in Alessandria in 1228, where the agreements with Milan also stipulated in the bell tower on the northern side of the façade. In Chieri, the council of Credenza usually meets inside the San Guglielmo de Banchetis church, and since there is no municipal tower, it is the church bell that generally calls the council for the meeting [*Statuti civili del Comune di Chieri* 1913, 109].

It thus finds confirmation of a link between the municipal magistracies and the most revered sacred spaces, which is also found in other towns of the Italian Po Valley.

Another important aspect that seems to emerge from the early research stages is the reuse of towers belonging to private individuals that are incorporated into the new structures of the municipal buildings or acquired to transform them into civic towers. In the case of Brescia, while the Torre del Popolo was already erected, dating from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, between 1223 and 1227, the *palatium Novum Maius* was rebuilt in stone with larger dimensions, also incorporating the tower of the Poncarali family. In Bergamo, the *ospicium magnum* of the municipality with the related tower was acquired by the Suardi family in 1251, and similar practices were found in Vercelli, Turin and Novara. This could also confirm the numerous cases in which the tower is detached from the municipal building and not exactly located in its proximity. Similarly, the civic tower of Padua belonged to the leader Tiso VI from Camposampiero who, in 1215, ceded it along with the nearby palace to the community.

The civic towers are an architectural heritage resilient to changes in the urban fabric, although it must be emphasized that many were destroyed by war events or damaged by earthquakes that particularly hit the south of Lombardy, Brescia, in 1159 and 1222; many have been restored in the modern age to make the main symbol of the city more monumental.

Thus, the iconography of the modern age and the images of contemporary cities offer a panorama where the civic towers stand next to the bell towers or the domes of the main religious buildings, mute evidence of civic power and the symbol of contemporary municipalities.

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# The civic tower of Arquata del Tronto: a symbol of rebirth from earthquake ruins

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## Abstract

The article deals with the problems of post-earthquake reconstruction in the areas damaged by the events that developed between 2016 and 2017; in particular, the Civic Tower of Arquata del Tronto, a small village located in the internal areas of the southern Marche is considered as a case study. On the tower was built the Monument to the Great War Fallen which expressed significant symbolic qualities, recognized as an identity value by the community.

## La torre civica di Arquata del Tronto: un simbolo di rinascita dalle rovine del terremoto

L'articolo affronta le problematiche della ricostruzione post sisma nei territori danneggiati dagli eventi che si sono sviluppati fra il 2016 e il 2017; in particolare, viene considerata come caso studio la Torre Civica di Arquata del Tronto, un piccolo borgo localizzato nelle aree interne delle Marche meridionali. Sulla torre era posto il monumento ai caduti della Grande Guerra che esprimeva significative qualità simboliche, riconosciute come valore identitario dalla comunità.

**Keywords:** Earthquake, symbols, identity, reconstruction.

Terremoto, simboli, identità, ricostruzione.

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Received October 29, 2019; accepted March 30, 2020

## 1 | Introduction

The recent seismic events have caused extensive damage to cultural heritage in the inland areas of the Marche region, showing the extreme fragility of the territorial system, with strong consequences on the economic and social contest, inhistoric villages, the high seismic vulnerability of the building has caused the most significant damage; it's particularly complex to apply regulations and design tools aimed at protecting and preserving historical-cultural values and the strategies of re-building are very complex. Therefore, it's necessary to start again from an expansive knowledge of the historical system in the area of the central Apennines, mostly unknown, to identify recurrent types and techniques through which the foundations and subsequent development of the building were laid.

The monuments to the Fallen during the First World War in Arquata del Tronto, a small Apennine town in the Marche Region, on the border between Lazio, Umbria and Abruzzo, provide an opportunity to illustrate the difficulties experienced by the territories which were so severely affected by 2016-2017 earthquakes. Arquata is set in the center of a great territory that includes several villages, almost all of which were severely damaged by the earthquake. The Apennine landscape is dotted with the smaller villages joined by a weak infrastructural network and an axis that has played a decisive role in history: the Salaria road of Roman origin. The community has always maintained a strong link with its assets of identity that represent its intangible and tangible heritage. The intangible heritage, a reflection of the community's vitality, is made up of all the knowledge, artistic expressions, social practices, religious rituals and traditional techniques of craftsmanship. Traditions have continued to mark the lives of populations, as an expression of

the adaptation and use in the environment where they have always lived and in which they would like to continue living. Both the intangible and the tangible heritage express a concrete manifestation of the spirit of the community, whose preservation can only represent an instrument for a sustainable rebirth. For this reason, it is necessary to understand how this community has been able to respond to the disastrous event, modifying both its habits and its perceiving ways, to strengthen its capacity for resilience. Within this scenario, a capacity for reaction in response to changing circumstances has manifested itself, prioritizing a wide-ranging consultation, to create a sense of sharing in the decision-making process aimed at building a strategy for the rebirth of the area of Arquata del Tronto. The complexity of the district already in major crisis before the seismic events, has been analysed, highlighting a series of issues for the reconstruction of the local identity.

## 2 | The significant value of Arquata del Tronto and the main architectures

There is no definite information on the origin of Arquata; some scholars identify it with the ancient *Surpicanum*, located between the two *Statio* of the *Peutingarian* Table. It is commonly agreed that Arquata has, from its origins, represented one of the most important stop stations of the Historical Road between Ascoli Piceno and Rome. Its first mentions date back to the 11th century, in 1255 it was spontaneously subjected to Ascoli, from which it received a large amount of autonomy in return [Galiè, Vecchioni 2006, 45-56]. During the fourteenth century it had enjoyed relative independence from Ascoli until 1429 when Pope Martino V ceded it to Norcia, under whose dominion it remained until the eighteenth century. With the French invasion of 1809, the Prefecture of Norcia was abolished and Arquata was subjugated to Spoleto; a permanent garrison will be assigned to it and the third fortress of the Department of the Trasimeno will be declared [Cecchi 2005, 11-40]. After the fall of Napoleon, the Papal Government of the Restoration gave Arquata to Umbria and incorporated it into the delegation of Ascoli Piceno, where it became part of the Pretoriale Jurisdiction in 1832 [Bucciarelli 1982, 27-30].

The territory includes twelve hamlets, all at high altitude dispersed over a large wooded area; they crown the high eastern slopes of *Monte Vettore* and *Sibillini* chain. The administrative centre of the area Arquata *Capoluogo* is characterised by a slew of evidence to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The architecture forms an urban structure that is articulated around the main Umberto I Square. The square, an example of a strongly-polarised space, was the vital heart of the village, not only for its architectures, some of which were important, but also for the large number of activities that made it a socially-relevant place [Ferrero, Mandolesi 2001, 54].

This square, with its elongated shape defined by irregular wings of buildings belonging to different periods, was dominated by the ancient civic tower. Archival research shows that the town of Arquata was surrounded by a solid wall system, except for the south side which was protected by the natural shape, in it, there were some access gates and at least five or six defence towers, located at strategic points along the ancient transit roads, and which were able to counteract enemy invasions; the civic tower, also called *Bell tower* or *Public bell tower*, was the most important, connected to the stronghold located at the highest point of the village, from which control could be easily exercised and which looked over the surrounding region [Carfagna 1996, 59-63]. Originally, the tower had a crenellation on the top but later it assumed the shape of the typical *campanile*, with a round arch for the bell dating back to the mid-sixteenth century; at the beginning of the twentieth century the other three sides were added, forming a proper belfry to better protect the ancient bell, to which in 1661 a second one was added [Lalli 2017, 23-25].



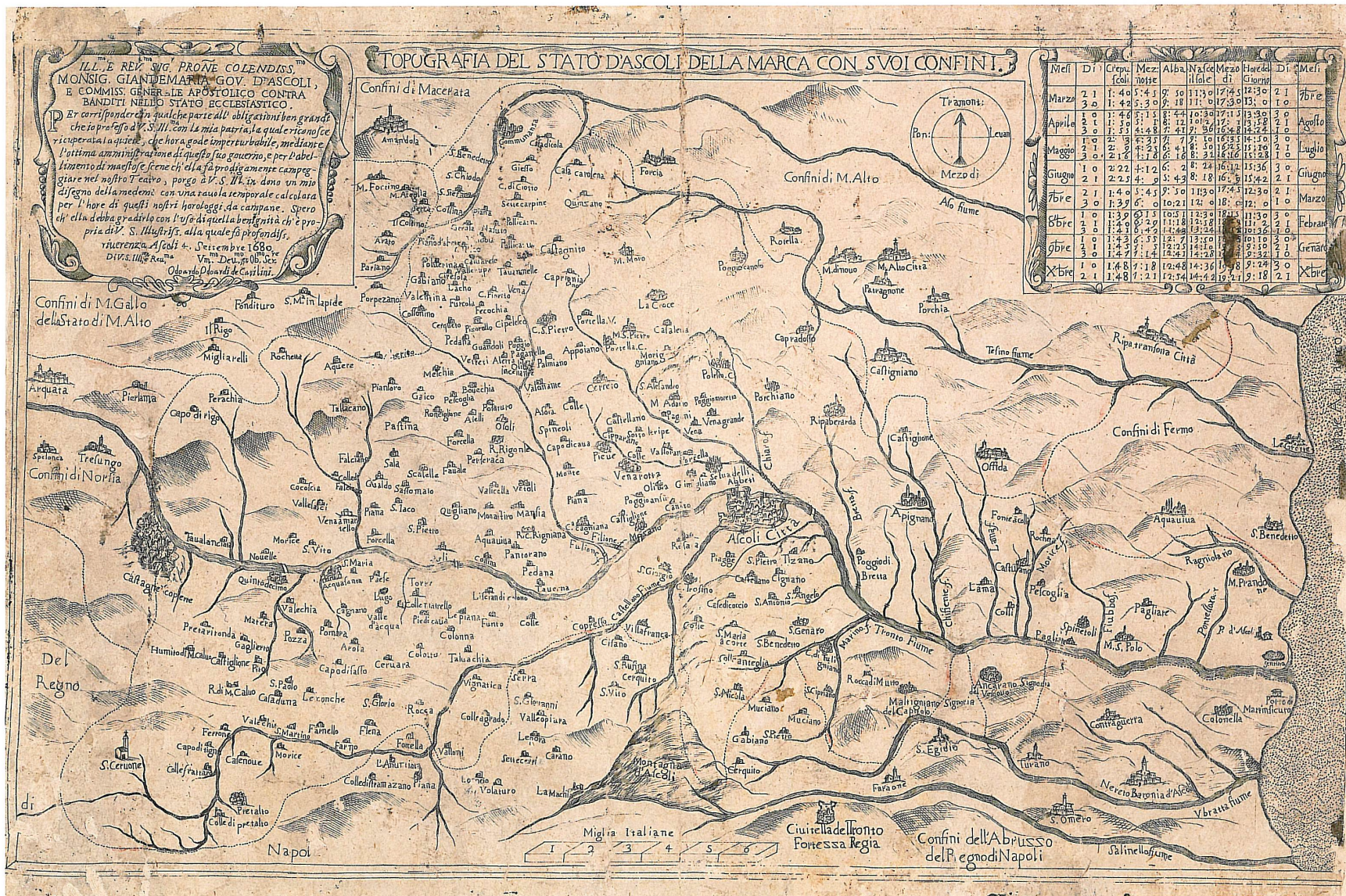


Fig. 1: Odoardo Odoardi de' Catilini, *Topografia dello Stato D'Ascoli della Marca con suoi Confini*, 1680. Archivio di Stato di Roma, Collezione di Disegni e Mappe, I, cart. 6, n. 247 (Cartoteca Storica delle Marche, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060509131607/http://www.sistemamuseale.provincia.ancona.it/galleria%20immagini/serrasanquirico/cartssquirico.htm>).



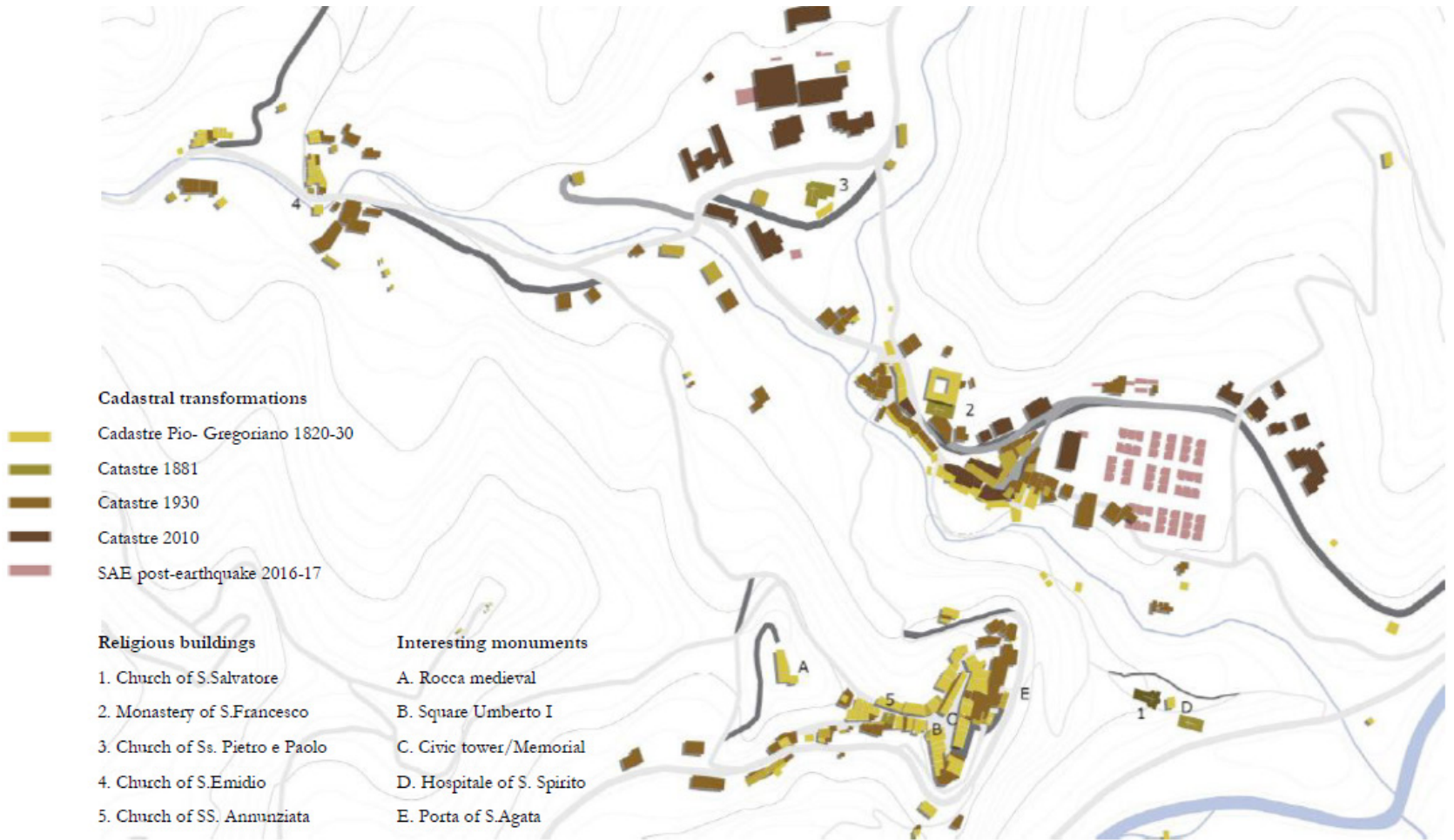


Fig. 2: Cadastral evolution of Arquata and main places of interest (by the author).

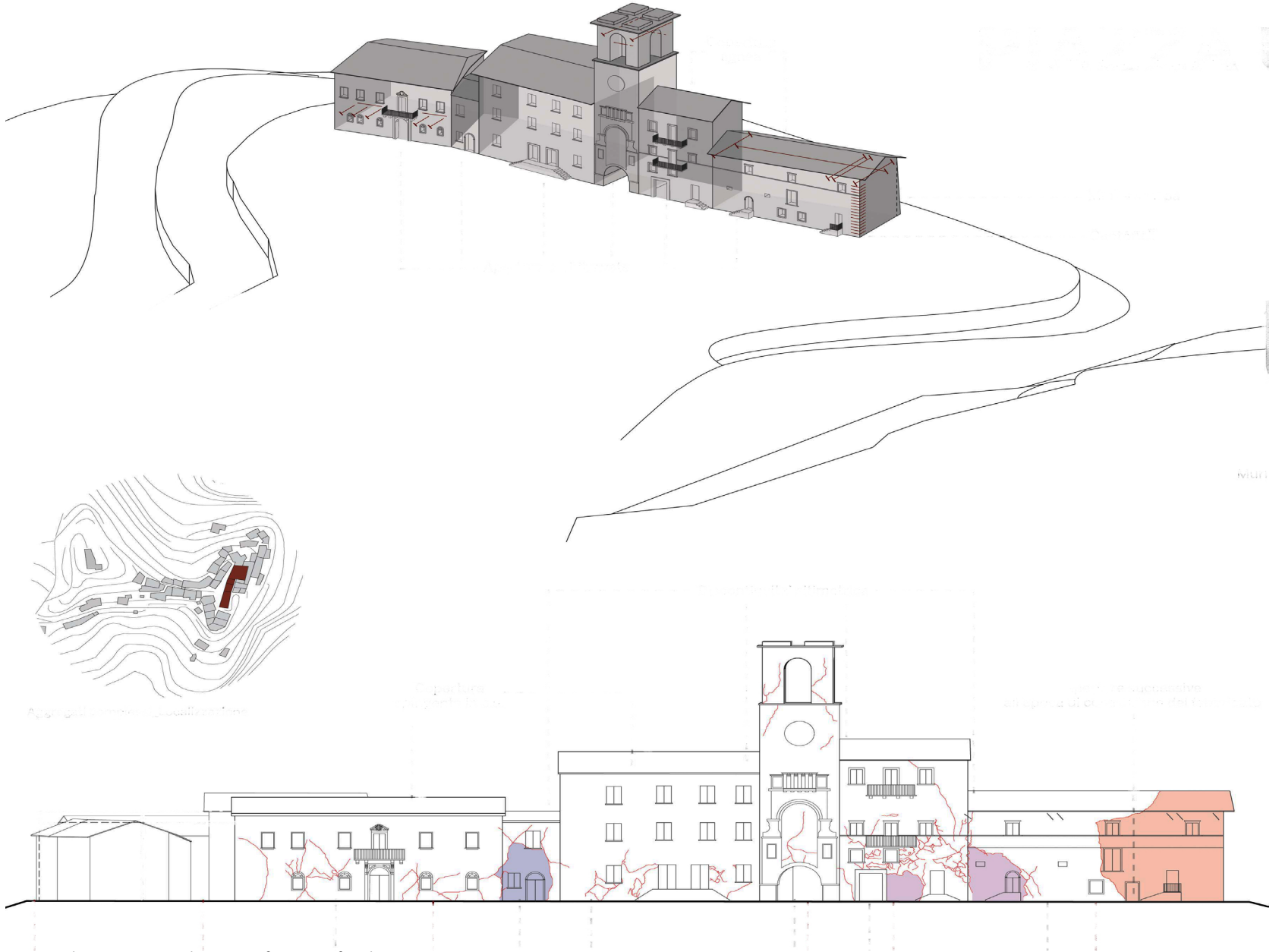


Fig. 3: Umberto I Square in the center of Arquata after the earthquakes (by the author).

ARQUATA



PIEDILAMA



PRETARE



SPELONGA



TRISUNGO



COLLE



BORGO



Fig. 4: Cataloguing of the memorial monuments in Arquata del Tronto, still present after the earthquakes 2016-2017 (by the author).

The tower, with a square floor of 4 metres on each side and around 19 metres high, was made of local sandstone; the high wall structure was crossed in the base part by a round arch in worked stone blocks that led to a steep ramp which descended towards the Tronto river and was reunited with the Salaria road. The tower had been damaged during various earthquakes, including the one in 1672; in 1703 the strong shocks that had hit the central Italy, with epicenters and intensities which were like the recent earthquakes, had again ruined the bell tower. The chronicles report information on the situation recorded in Arquata, where the churches were “weakened”, the bell tower and the Rocca “indemnifiable”, while many houses had collapsed and those which remained were considered unusable. The tower was promptly restored, and about two centuries later the decision was taken to build a memorial plaque dedicated to the Fallen of the First World War on its north wall. The territory had left many soldiers on the battlefield during the Great War, being a border area where very intense fighting had taken place. For this reason, in the various hamlets, numerous memorial plaques and monuments had been made in memory of those sad events<sup>1</sup>.

For the construction of the most important memorial monument of the territory was chosen the main square of Arquata, reference point for the Community, in 1925, an invitation to tender competition was published, in which it was planned to build the monument under the medieval fortress at the highest point of the town. Some personalities were invited to take part in the competition, including, the sculptor Arcadio Ferranti, professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, the architects Cesare Bazzani and the architect Vincenzo Pilotti, both involved in the design of some public buildings in the nearby main town of the Piceno area. Vincenzo Pilotti (1872-1956) one of the most important Italian architects of the first half of the twentieth century, among the most prolific exponents along with Marcello Piacentini, Cesare Bazzani and the

<sup>1</sup> *Census and cataloguing of monuments to the Fallen of the Great War*, Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation (<http://iccd.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/428/progetto-grande-guerra-censimento-dei-monumenti-ai-caduti-della-prima-guerra-mondiale>, visited in July 2018).



brothers Adolfo and Gino Coppedé of the eclectic style in Italy. He was born on February 13th, 1872 in fraction Marino del Tronto of Ascoli Piceno. Its production, documented by beautiful drawings almost all made with pencil on glossy paper, ranged from urban themes to residential themes developed for the upper middle class of the Marche Region.

He presented his own projects for the town hall of Rieti, the school buildings of Iglesias, Città di Castello, San Benedetto del Tronto, Grottammare, Vigevano, Pratola Peligna, Città Sant'Angelo, Atri, for the high school-gymnasium of Teramo and many other buildings public throughout Italy and abroad. Noteworthy for Pilotti's career is the Pescara season which between 1927 and 1935 saw him involved in the design of the major public buildings: the Government Palace, the Duomo, the Bishopric, the Court, the Town Hall, the Liceo Ginnasio D'Annunzio, the Chamber of Commerce and many others [Gabrielli 1956, 34-40]. He worked with equal commitment in Ascoli and Teramo where even here he built the major public buildings such as the *Muzzi* palace in Teramo and the *Tarlati* palace and the Sacred Heart church in Ascoli. Despite his extensive production, Vincenzo Pilotti still awaits a thorough critical study and undoubtedly holds a piece of the twentieth-century Italian architecture mosaic that perhaps has always neglected him for the "provincial marginality" of his creations [Neri, 2003, 15-19]. Vincenzo Pilotti had designed the war memorial for the city of Grottammare in 1924, a travertine obelisk surrounded by braziers and votive flames and the one for the nearby Porto San Giorgio in 1925, on top of which is a bronze statue depicting the Dea Roma Vigilante.

On 1 May 1925, the organising committee sent a letter containing the invitation to participate in the competition for the creation of a «targa con sottostante ara votiva, [...] sulla scogliera che sostiene la torre bassa della Rocca Medievale», in the letter, it is specified that the designers were given free rein in carrying out the theme, but that the monument should not have a "funerary character" and above all it was important that «the design fits in with the austerity of the location chosen as a site». Each designer was required to present drawings and a plaster model in 1:20 scale, to submit it to the judgment of a special commission<sup>2</sup>. On 31 July 1925, Vincenzo Pilotti sent his project, declaring that he wanted to confer a high monumental value on his work., in a letter, dated 31 July 1925, Sacconi writes that he wanted to give the monument «l'espressione di una viva esaltazione di quegli eroi che seppero immolare la loro vita, per il bene e la grandezza della Patria [...]». Le linee generali e le sagome architettoniche del monumento in travertino verranno eseguite con grande semplicità per modo che l'insieme dell'opera riesca in armonia alla severità della rocca sovrastante [...] nutro quindi fiducia di aver corrisposto ai desideri di codesto On. Comitato»<sup>3</sup>. On 3 October 1925, after examining all the sketches, the Pilotti project was declared the winner, thanks to his experience in the design of this type of work. Although it was already in an advanced state of implementation, doubts remained about the location of the monument, as the site was considered unsuitable. As can be seen from the correspondence of 1926, the location of the monument was definitively modified, moving it to the central piazza Umberto I, on that civic tower that already represented the symbolic building of the old village. The physical place in which to commemorate the deaths of the Great War was thus to coincide with the main urban space, in which the symbolic representation of death was added to the testimonial value of the public tower, a reminder of the independence of the Free Municipality, in the new project of Pilotti, the vertical exploitation of the existing tower was foreseen, to affix a commemorative plaque in white Carrara marble with dimensions of 4.25 x 8.20 square metres that developed upwards, also incorporating the basal arch in the composition. Carved elements and mouldings constituted the frame of the central headstone, containing

<sup>2</sup> Archivio di Stato di Ascoli Piceno (ASAP), Fondo Pilotti Vincenzo, Commissioni pubbliche, 1925-1928, b. 2, fasc. 27, f. 12 r-12v.

<sup>3</sup> ASAP, Fondo Pilotti Vincenzo, Commissioni pubbliche, 1925-1928, b. 2, fasc. 27, f. 24r-25v.

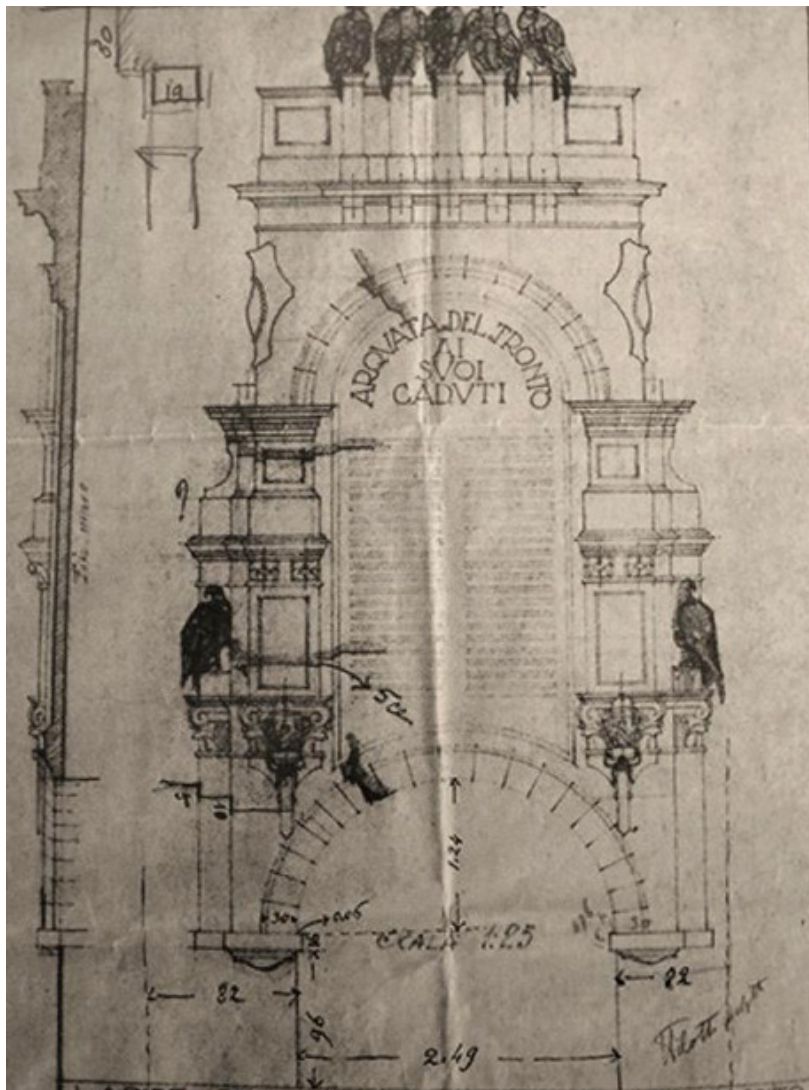


Fig. 5: Project for the War Memorial by V. Pilotti in 1926-1927, Archivio di Stato di Ascoli Piceno, Fondo Pilotti Vincenzo, Commissioni pubbliche, 1925-1928, b. 2, fasc. 27.



Fig. 6: The monument to the Fallen of the Great War before the seismic events 2016-2017 (photo by the author).



the names of the fallen and surmounted by five corbel supporting bronze eagles. The sculptor of Florence Enrico Brunelleschi realizes the eagles depicted with wings closed, the central one looked forward with a fierce expression, while the others looked to the side. Brunelleschi states that «With this arrangement a harmonious and well-matched whole could be obtained». Under the corbels were the coats of arms of the Municipality, two helmets decorated the capitals while on the ring of the arch, other symbols were placed that recalled the events of the war [Lalli 2017, 91-92].

The masonry was built with blocks of local sandstone and showed at the 4 corners of the square corners, in the lower part, the building had the central opening of a round arch, functional for access to a small staircase that guaranteed the connection between the interior of the village, the Tronto river and the ancient *Salaria* road, in ancient times, you entered the square from a passage that communicated with an adjacent building, perhaps a probable institutional site, in more recent times, it was possible to enter from a trap door that opened below the arch vault. On the main façade of the tower, facing the square, there were, until the day of the collapse, starting from the bottom: the round arch, the War Memorial, the clock stopped at 3:36 am on 24 August 2016, the belfry with the main bell dating back to 1585, the minor bell, from 1661, placed on the top together with an iron cross and a wind vane. This composition of elements corresponds to the arrangement that took place in the year 1928. On the top, 5 shelves supported as many eagles cast in bronze, affixed there as an allegory of Victory, represented with closed wings and brought closer to the sides, with the eyes turned and oriented in different directions. Only the central eagle stared ahead.

Over the centuries, the civic tower of Arquata has undergone various changes that have undermined its resistance, through the opening of gates, the closing of windows with unsuitable walls, the changing of the floors and the super-elevation, making it particularly vulnerable. Pilotti's own project had created considerable weight in the structure where some cracks had already occurred, in 1988, the Administration started a series of preparatory studies for carrying out a restoration to improve the structural whole, which had already been weakened by previous earthquakes<sup>4</sup>.

Fig. 7: The War Memorial of Arquata del Tronto with the five eagles in bronze, that represent an allegory of Victory before the seismic events 2016-2017 (photo by the author).



<sup>4</sup> Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio delle Marche, Arquata del Tronto, AP. 9, *Lavori di restauro della "Torre campanaria" comunale, Relazione tecnico illustrativa dell'intervento di restauro*, 1988.



Fig. 8: Arquata after the first seismic events, August-September 2016 (photo by the author).



### 3 | The seismic events and the prospects for reconstruction

The territory of Arquata del Tronto was severely hit by the seismic sequence that affected central Italy in 2016, with two significant episodes (24 August - magnitude 6 and 30 October 2016 - magnitude 6.5) that caused significant collapses, undermining the consistency of the architectural heritage in the small Apennine villages.

After the shock of 30 October 2016, all the buildings around piazza Umberto I have collapsed; even the civic tower, which was already particularly vulnerable, has not held up to the violence of the earthquake and has collapsed, carrying with it the great memorial plaque to the Fallen of war. The citizens immediately strived to save the only recognisable testimonies of the monument, namely the bronze eagles and the ancient bell placed on the top of the tower. This event demonstrates how, in the event of a crisis, the population turns its gaze to those comforting artefacts, now an integral part of daily life, to rediscover the spiritual connection which, although weakened, remains to mark the terms of a strong identity character.

The area affected by these events is in a very active seismogenic area, already characterized in the past by phenomena of considerable magnitude; the main events that occurred in the past are those of 1328, 1703, 1730, and 1859 [Boschi et Al. 1995]. During the twentieth century, minor damage occurred, such as the 1915 earthquake that destroyed Avezzano, causing several collapses even in the Arquata area [Nimis 2009, p.24]. After the 1997 earthquake, the area did not suffer significant damage, although some interventions were done, following the procedures identified by the Marche Region, mainly oriented to a seismic improvement of the structures, especially for those of significant historical-artistic value. As some recent Italian earthquakes have highlighted, many historic buildings, particularly those of monumental significance, while having a significant role in the formation and expression of the urban image, are extremely vulnerable and present risks not only for material security but also for the collective memory. They represent social values, shared over centuries of history, which manifest themselves through tangible signs in the territory [Zampilli, Brunori 2018, 28-31].

The tragic seismic events developed in the inland areas of the Marche Region, have brought out, with greater force, phenomena that were already underway for some decades: depopulation and abandonment, economic decline and consequent construction degradation, both in the production of new architecture and in the restoration of ancient buildings, in the case of some urban settlement within the seismic zone, we witness a scenario of almost total devastation, which requires not only a reconstruction but a real new foundation [Cipolletti et Al. 2019, 55-70]. It



Fig. 9: Collapse of the buildings in the piazza Umberto I of Arquata del Tronto after October 2016 and detail of one of the fallen eagles with other sculpted fragments (photo by Sante Corradetti).

Fig. 10: Consuelo Malta, *Render that illustrates the reconstruction project of the Memorial Tower in Arquata del Tronto*, December 2016.



was necessary to impose a strategic-planning order, so that the new foundation could respond to predetermined goals. For a re-foundation of the Apennine historic centers devastated by the earthquake, it is possible to assume new interpretative paradigms, starting from the spaces of connection-aggregation and from the symbolic monuments [Petrucci 2018, 45-64]. The monument to the Fallen in Arquata del Tronto, placed in its main square, has represented over the centuries a strong symbolic and identity reference for the local community. Its value requires a reconstruction according to a rigorous method which must capture the complexity of the theme, in some cases it may be proposed a recovery strategy, according to the famous saying “where it was, as it was”, repeatedly called in recent years about the areas destroyed by the earthquake; it is based on the need to integrate a “menomata espressione”, linking the authenticity of the monument with its formal completeness and the absolutization of some architectural elements, such as, the shape, the geometry or other aspects. From this type of approach, it can result a historical distortion in interpretation. For this reason, a design methodology is proposed; this method is based on an ability to combine contemporary architectural languages, with a careful historical-critical reading of the monument, before the collapse caused by the earthquake. This allows to identify tools and methods oriented to an intelligent and historically aware reconstruction, an act of critical reinterpretation through new semantic codes. More than a conceptual conservation or a pseudo-mimetic reproduction, a global protection of the “places civilization” is pursued and an active enhancement, in which tradition and innovation, ancient and new architectures can converge towards a renewed local identity, also through a possible welding between the sphere of artistic production and the procedures of restoration. The project uses the materials of the local building tradition to create new contemporary artistic forms. The remains of the collapsed bell tower, in particular the cast iron eagles, are set in a new spatial configuration. The body of the civic tower is broken down into thin blades which allow, as it once was, to appreciate the landscape behind it, represented by the lower hills of the Sibillini Mountains. The wind wedges itself inside the cracks and generates particular sound effects.

The reconstruction of the Memorial represents a symbol of rebirth, a “beacon of memory” not only to remember the war dead, but also the losses due to the disastrous earthquake.

#### **4 | Conclusions**

For a conscious reinterpretation of the inland areas affected by the 2016-2017 seismic crisis, some reflections are needed: one of the most complex questions concerns the relationships between the ruins that must be rebuilt and the new architectural language that must be declined. The most complex issue is that of identifying the tools for an intelligent and historically aware reconstruction, in this case, rather than an abstract conservation or a pseudo-mimetic reproduction of the urban context and its main monuments including the civic tower destroyed by the earthquake, a project has been proposed that inserts the signs of the local identity into a new modern configuration. As Marc Augè observes, we find ourselves today in front of the city which is understood as an immense ruin where historical and current debris coexist; for this reason we need to free our imagination towards “small utopias”, rejecting the grandiose visions of a “total planning”, instead proposing a “collage city”, where we can activate gradual processes of regeneration and timely adaptation of what remains, favouring progressive adaptation paths focused on some significant public spaces as the main square of Arquata del Tronto.

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# A rediscovered sign of the medieval identity in the ancient town of Palermo: a tower house in the Kalsa and its historical stratifications

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## Abstract

A building supposedly belonged to the House of Chiaramonte (or Chiaromonte) in Sicily reached us incorporating into a larger building in the Kalsa district, which is of Islamic foundation, in Palermo. The sudden detachment of the plaster and some stone elements from its façades at the beginning of the 80s of the 20th century made it possible to identify the clear traces of a fourteenth-century towered house, characterized by a series of four three-mullioned windows with archivolts made by rings of broken sticks.

## Una testimonianza ritrovata dell'identità medievale nel centro storico di Palermo: una casa-torre nella Kalsa e le sue stratificazioni

Un palazzo presumibilmente appartenuto al Casato dei Chiaramonte (o Chiaromonte) in Sicilia è stato custodito per alcuni secoli all'interno del volume edificato di un edificio nel quartiere della Kalsa, di fondazione islamica, a Palermo. L'improvviso distacco dell'intonaco e di alcuni elementi lapidei all'inizio degli anni '80 del XX secolo permettono di identificare le evidenti tracce della facciata di una casa-torre trecentesca, caratterizzata da una serie di quattro trifore con elementi a sesto acuto ed archivolti a ghiera di bastoncini spezzati.

**Keywords:** Sicily, Palermo, Chiaramonte's Architecture, Cefalà Palace, Conservation.

Sicilia, Palermo, Architettura Chiaramontana, Palazzo Cefalà, Conservazione.

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Received November 20, 2019; accepted April 14, 2020

\* For greater clarity in reading the text, the author translated the transcriptions of essays and documents.

## 1 | Introduction

A gothic building attributable to the House of Chiaramonte in Sicily has been incorporated and kept for some centuries within the volume of Palazzo Cefalà in Alloro street, in the heart of the Kalsa district, that is of Islamic foundation, in Palermo. The naming of the building may be modified in relation to the its more in-depth historical investigation. The unexpected collapse of the upper part of the façade of Palazzo Bonagia (sited right in front of the building) at the beginning of the 80s of the 20th century and the violent impact with Palazzo Cefalà façade caused it some serious damages, such as the fall of the plaster and the breaking of some stone elements. After having removed the unsafe parts, the architectural palimpsest has been unveiled and some significant portions of an elegant façade of a fourteenth-century tower house re-emerged, characterized by a series of four gothic windows with pointed arched elements and archivolts with rings of broken sticks, surmounted by a weft of interwoven bows made by two-tone stone elements (calcarenite and lava stones).

The stylistic analysis of the cited architectural remains of the medieval preexistence and the comparison of construction techniques and materials confirmed the Chiaramonte ancestry of the tower house incorporated in the organism of the current larger building: the common formal and constructive matrix of the cited elements with the similar openings and walls of the Palazzo Chiaramonte (the *Steri*) in Palermo is obvious but there are also others that refer to Palazzo Sclafani, built next the Norman Royal Palace [Di Marzo 1858, 317-337]. Some architectural elements also reveal a certain stylistic and building affinity with a medieval building in Protonotaro street and other remains of façades in S. Antonio street in Palermo. The original

towered house in Alloro street, overwritten during subsequent modernization works and transported to the present day, episodically re-emerged from the eighteenth-century façade, further modified until the twentieth century. After the collapse and the partial removal of the plasters, it resulted as a multi-layered architecture which shows a vibrant system of superimposed and intersected layouts, fragmented and discontinuous, of great visual suggestion [Spatrisano 1972, 94; Ventimiglia 2003, 7-30].

This paper is intended to present a summary of the study activities carried out to better qualify origin and building culture such as expressed into the cited medieval openings and identify the architectural traces that coexist in the current conformation of the building, coming up to the definition of the best strategy for its conservation.

## **2 | The Gothic in Sicily and the Chiaramonte's architecture**

The wise and clever policy of the Normans, their tolerance in religious matters and vast cultural interests, early granted the maintenance and development of the three cultures, Greek, Arab and Latin, existing in Sicily at the time of their conquest (started in 1061). In the peaceful coexistence, the process of assimilation of these three communities began together with the formation of that culture that assumed great prestige in the Christian western world [Spatrisano 1972, 15]. On this political and social background, the style that frames the chapter of the fourteenth and fifteenth-century architecture in Sicily is still Gothic, declined in a serene balance of the three main artistic trends of the time: the trend traditionally faithful to the Arab-Norman motifs founding the so-called "Chiaramonte architecture", the architectural trend of the Durazzos and Catalan gothic styles (not without some original local reworking) and, although to a lesser extent, the Renaissance renewal movement.

The architectural scene of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was certainly very lively and rich in meaning, as the talented stonemasons and decorators gathered the suggestions offered by the local architecture of the past formulating an eclectic, composite and typically Sicilian language, with original stylistic features somehow connected to ideals of the population [Spatrisano 1972, 51-61; Giuffrè 1996, 33-48].

Some historical research confirmed the relationship between Palermo (the capital of the island) and the Gothic, attesting there were fruitful cultural exchanges in the Mediterranean area even later, thanks to the constant presence and conspicuous activity of artists, sculptors and architects between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries [Calandra 1938; Meli 1958; Nobile 1995, 95-103; Garofalo, Nobile 2007, 7-22].

The urban dwellings of the House of Chiaramonte prove to share some substantial stylistic features that were recurrent in Sicily during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, such as the stone use in zig-zag mouldings of Anglo-Norman origin (broken sticks) set in the laced rings of the portals and the two or three-pointed arched windows (mullioned or trifora), very common even in other southern Italian territories, like the Amalfi's district and Neapolitan areas. They were currently implemented in order to beautify the external and internal facades of churches, palaces, monasteries, bell-towers, convents and hospitals. This stylistic code rapidly became a clear signal of political power.

The Chiaramontes arrived in Italy and settled in Sicily at the time of the Norman conquest, affirming their hegemonic role under the Swabian and Aragonese dominations. A branch of the family remained in Puglia. Federico was a son of Ugo Chiaramonte (probably the first arrived in the isle in 1066), who married Marchisia Prefolio in Agrigento; Manfredi, Giovanni and Federico II were born from their marriage, soon starting the rise of the family in the island. They became



prominent members of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Sicily established after the assembly of the Curiae Generales convened in Palermo by Roger II of Hauteville in 1130. The saga of the dynasty ended in 1392 with the death of Andrea, beheaded in front of the Chiaramonte Palace in Palermo. The genealogical tree of the Casato of Chiaramonte in Sicily was traced in Spatrisano [Spatrisano 1972, 271-276; Sessa 2000, 214].

The Chiaramontes built a considerable number of religious, civil and military buildings, many of which still existing in western Sicily (*Vallo di Mazara*) and the county of Modica, since the beginning of the fourteenth century. Signs of common gothic pattern are also found in England, France, Normandy and in various places where architectures characterized by the same stylistic and constructive features are observed [Fanelli 2007, 331-354].

According to some hypotheses, the heads of the family had begun their work of architectural embellishment since two centuries before the Norman invasion of Sicily [Sessa 2000, 221]. Becoming extremely powerful in the isle along the fourteenth century, the Chiaramontes demonstrated their influence through the construction of many civil and religious buildings, in which they imposed their artistic seal resorting to the moulding of zig-zag sticks (a sort of family mark), an architectural connotation that came from the Arabs and that was adopted by the Normans for decorating portals, columns and windows [Mauro, Sessa 2004, 36-65]. Before to be observed in Palermo, this architectural feature was adopted in the city of Agrigento and its neighbourhoods, because the state-owned city of *Girgenti* (Agrigento's ancient name) had already been under the direct jurisdiction of the Chiaramontes for a certain period. It's important to underline that the cited architectural connotations are not apparent in the buildings of other hegemonic Sicilian families of the time, like the Sclafanis, the Ventimiglias and the Moncadas [Sessa 2000, 213]. The ancient building discovered in Alloro street in Palermo added some fundamental elements to the knowledge of Sicilian architecture of the fourteenth century: it reveals many stylistic and formal features which can be observed also in other edifices, such as in Palermo both in the *Steri* palace (the main residence of the Chiaramontes, built since the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century) and the palace of the Sclafanis, started to build in the 1430s. It also shows some similarities to other architectures of the same period, even if some features may suggest it can be earlier.

### 3 | The road of the Laurel in the Islamic district of Kalsa

Retracing the urban evolution of the place in which the building developed can add some elements to the reasoning on Cefalà Palace and its medieval inclusion. Alloro street was the main road of the Islamic citadel, assuming different names over time. A large laurel tree grown in the courtyard of Palazzo Bellacera was explanted in December 1804 due to the intrusive size it had reached, but Rosario La Duca clarified that the name of the street has remained unchanged even after the removal of its remains. The road however had different names over the centuries [Morso 1827, 209; La Duca 1985].

After the impetuous flood of the Kemonia river in 1557, the city Senate diverted the river's path towards the bed of the Oreto river; the ancient riverbed was filled and a new road was established in the available area, first called the "road of the Germans" (*Strada dei Tedeschi*). Villabianca reported that the dwellings "of the halberdiers of the Germans palace" (*Tedeschi alabardieri di palazzo*, i.e. the Alemannic troops that formed the Viceroy's personal guard) rose along it, but he did not introduce detailed references to their precise locations [Gaetani 1760, 122; La Duca 1984].

A description of the *Ruga de Alamannis* is reported in a parchment dated 1293, stored in the *Tabularium* of the Magione<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore specified the location of the Cistercian House of the

<sup>1</sup> Archivio di Stato di Palermo, *Tabulario della Magione*, parchment dated 11 May 1293, TM 257.

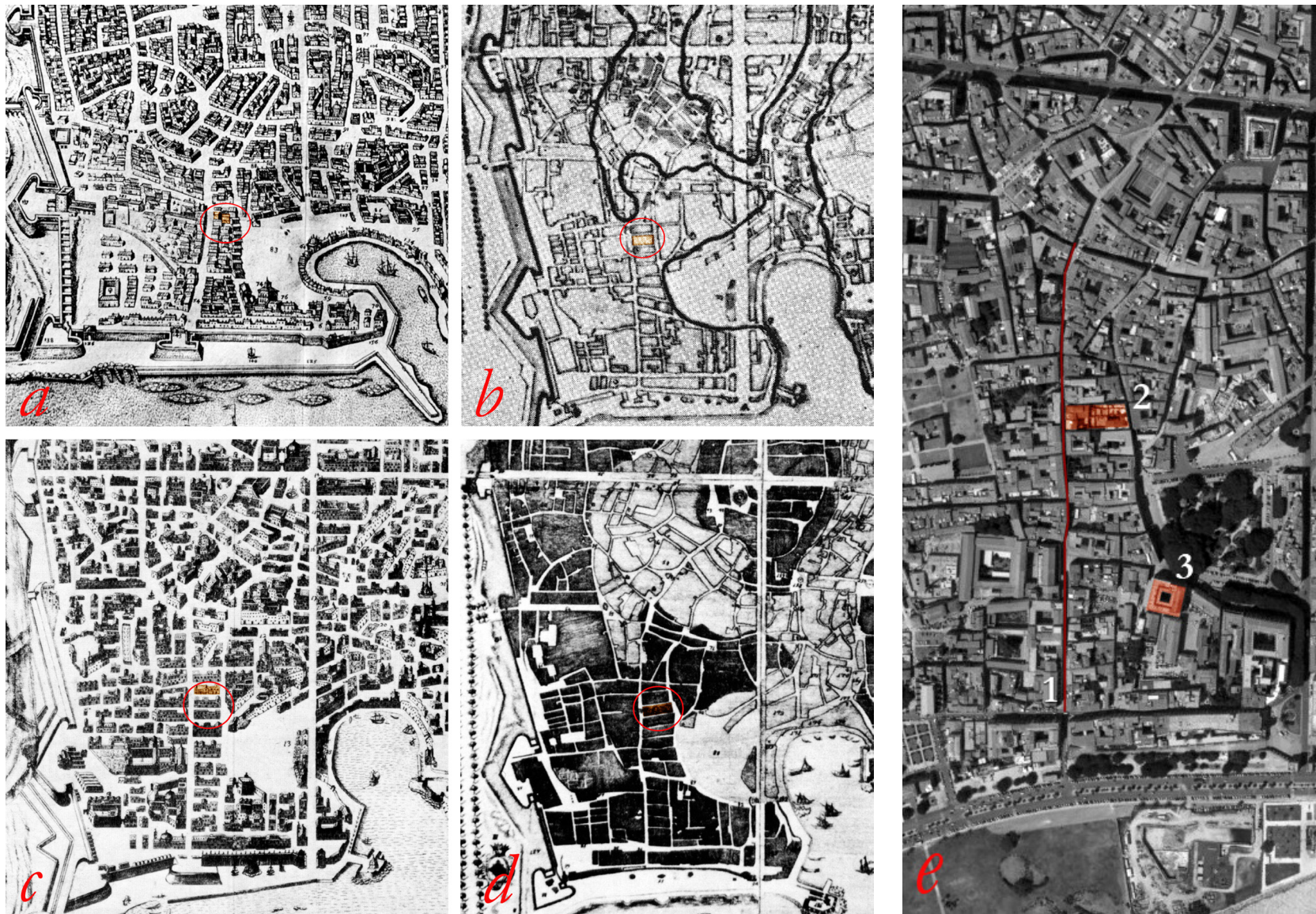


Fig. 1: Palermo, the Kalsa old district and the case-study building in the historical and current maps: a) Georg Braun, Franz Hogenberg, *Palermo*, in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum: Liber quartus Urbium Praecipuarum totius Mundi*, Colonia, Koeman, 1588-97, tabula LVI, part.; b) Domenico Campolo, *Palermo*, 1726, part., Biblioteca Comunale of Monreale; c) Antonio Bova, *Palermo nel terremoto del primo settembre 1726*, part., in A. Mongitore, *Palermo ammonito, penitente e grato nel formidabil terremoto del primo settembre 1726*, Palermo, Felicella e Gramignani, 1727; Francesco Maria Emanuele Gaetani marchese di Villabianca, *Pianta geometrica e novella secondo lo stato presente della città di Palermo...*, 1777, part. [de Seta, Di Mauro 1998, 6, 71, 106, 107]; e) Alloro street (1), Palazzo Cefalà (2) and Palazzo Chiaramonte (3) in a current aerial view.



Magione, in a street that was only one road away from the *Ruga de Alamannis* (that is the closest parallel) and nine streets from the Oreto river. At that time, the river was also called *Abbes* in Arabic or *fiume dell'Ammiraglio*. The parchments dated 14 August 1293 (TM n. 259) and 27 February 1384 (TM n. 670) contain references to the *ruga nova* too. The scrolls of the *Tabularium* are kept in the State Archives of Palermo, housed in the former monastery of Gancia. Its cartography can be consulted also at the State's archive seat in Vittorio Emanuele street. This evidences that the road was already existing at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; consequently, it cannot be identified as the road located in the area of Kemonia river. The document clarifies that the Cistercian monastery of Magione was built in an area close to the *Alemanni* road, which should be identified as the current Alloro street [Lo Cascio 2011, 161-162, 363].

The remains of the fourteenth-century building recognizable through the cited medieval openings discovered onto the facades of Palazzo Cefalà have confirmed the historic position of this street and the near alley as preserved over centuries. The height of the street level was instead modified when a vast landfill of the two riverbeds of Palermo was made by the Cistercians of the Magione reclaiming the area of *Chalesa* (or *Kalsa*, the Arab quarter) [Tomaselli 1997, 284-295; D'Angelo, Garofano 1997, 296-310]. Today's path of Alloro street partly corresponds to the main road of the Arab citadel *Al Halisah*, where the administrative headquarters and residence of the Emir were allocated to get a safer fortified site for the control of attacks from the sea and the defense against internal incursions of the local population. Around 973, the Islamic citadel was one of the five independent and circumscribed quarters that constituted the structure of a multifaceted and cosmopolitan city [Hawqal 1880; Ruta 2009]. During the medieval expansion of the city, the ancient road of the Laurel confirmed its role as a fundamental urban fulcrum: the construction of Gancia's church and Palazzo Abatellis, two of the most celebrated edifices of Aragonese origin, rectified its route to the sea, so creating the basis for the subsequent interventions in the Baroque age [Sommariva 2004, 307; Giuffrè 2006, 158-161; Nobile 2007, 39]. All through the sixteenth century, the entire area was reformed through the opening of new roads. Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the most important noble families of Palermo built their palaces along Alloro street, according to Villabianca, such as “a sequence of magnificent buildings” that persisted until the sunset and the impoverishment of the baronage, that then caused the slow abandonment and decay of those palaces [Gaetani 1760].

#### 4 | The current palace and the discovery of the fourteenth-century house

The history of the palace that belonged to the Dukes of Cefalà is as complex as the urban events of the district and the road along which it stands. The architectural organism is part of the system of long blocks, divided by narrow lanes whose origins date back to 1421, today marked by some second post-war reconstructions. The nucleus built in the Chiaramontes' period re-emerged after the collapse of the façade of the Bonagia palace and the subsequent removal of the plaster from the main façade of Palazzo Cefalà. According to some sources, the original nucleus of the palace was built in the late fifteenth century, being then repeatedly transformed since the sixteenth century [Chirco 2006, 198]. In his *Palermo restaurato* manuscript, Vincenzo Di Giovanni reports that the palace of Vincenzo Pizzinga, once a royal residence, was in the “strada del lauro” next the house of Bellacera (today's palazzo San Gabriele). It can be assumed that the Pizzingas owned the palace at least until 1456 [Di Giovanni 1615, 144, 234]. During the sixteenth century, the Cefalà palace certainly belonged to the Pezzingas, family of Pisan origin long established in Palermo and Messina<sup>2</sup> [Gaetani 1760, 122; Patricolo 1986, 104; La Duca 2000].

<sup>2</sup> Archivio di Stato di Palermo (Sezione della Gancia), *Carte Gesuitiche*, grant act of 1857.

During the fifteenth century, the palace began to be enlarged; the promulgation of King Martino's Pragmatics in 1421, allowed who wanted to expand noble palaces to acquire small buildings or courtyards in the next surroundings, by paying their market value increased by a third as taxing. The revision of the urban structure of the district and the transformation of the buildings started at that time. The document, in addition to dictating rules relating to new buildings, authorized the expansion of the existing palaces based on the incorporation, unification or demolition of old structures.

According to the Marquis of Villabianca, the ownership of the building passed to Nicolò Diana Castello, Duke of Cefalà, in 1615. He was the first duke of the territory of Cefalà Diana, as let him with concession of the title in 1684, representing one of the most important family figures [Gaetani 1760]. Francesco Maria Emanuele Gaetani, Marquis of Villabianca, in the manuscript Palermo d'oggiorno, compiled in the last decades of the eighteenth century, clarifies some changes in the building ownership. The extension of the building took place during the eighteenth century when the original layout was altered. A new large portal was opened in the main façade, that was completely revised in its general setting and design, opening new windows and plastering it [Piazza, Scaduto 1995, 543-562; Scaduto 2000; Scaduto 2013, 57-68]. The palace was bought by Alessandro Filangeri, Prince of Cutò and Marquis of Lucca in 1673. Gaspere Guercio (engineer of the Senate) and Carlo Mansanto (master builder) produced an estimation to evaluate the building setting, as well as the interventions necessary to «meliorare e quella ingrandire e farà una casa più ammanata che daria decoro e magnificentia alla città». The act was stipulated by the notary Domenico Cirafici on 7 August 1673; today it is preserved in the State Archive of Palermo [Giuffrè 1995, 543-562; Romeo, 2007].

In 1816, the property passed to the family La Grua Talamanca, to which belonged the Princes of Carini; in 1859 it was sold to Ignazio Pilo, the Count of Capaci. The large building was then divided between many owners, thus more modifying its layout. The act stating the emphyteusis of the wide property was written on 10 September 1859 by the notary Giovanni Pietro Azzarello in Palermo. Nowadays, Palazzo Cefalà's fronts have a degraded and incomplete aspect due to the damage caused by the collapse of the façade of Palazzo Bonagia, placed just in front of it. Then, the bombing of Palermo during the air raids in 1943 produced serious damage within the district of Kalsa and all the city of Palermo.

On the basis of the metric survey, instrumental investigations and stylistic comparison with other buildings resulting from the synthesis of Hispanic and late gothic elements of Anglo-Norman origin, traditionally ascribed to the Sicilian tradition of the Chiaramontes' architecture, it is maybe opportune to reformulate the hypothesis about the foundation of the building, placing it during the first half of the fourteenth century, slightly prior or contemporary to the construction of Chiaramonte Palace, the family main urban edifice in piazza Marina, and the Sclafanis' Palace in the area of Royal Palace.

The topographic survey of the entire building was carried out in 2002 by using an electronic total station. The main façade of Cefalà Palace was detected by photogrammetric procedures and investigated through thermography too. The mineralogical-petrographic characterization of calcarenite taken from the front of the medieval building confirmed that it is the same stone used in Palazzo Chiaramonte, i.e. the main urban residence of the family, of proven dating. Moreover, the dimensions of the small blocks of stone are the same in the two cited buildings. The identity of the first owner of the building is unknown but the Chiaramontes and Sclafanis dominate the local political scene since the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and stimulate the edification of new



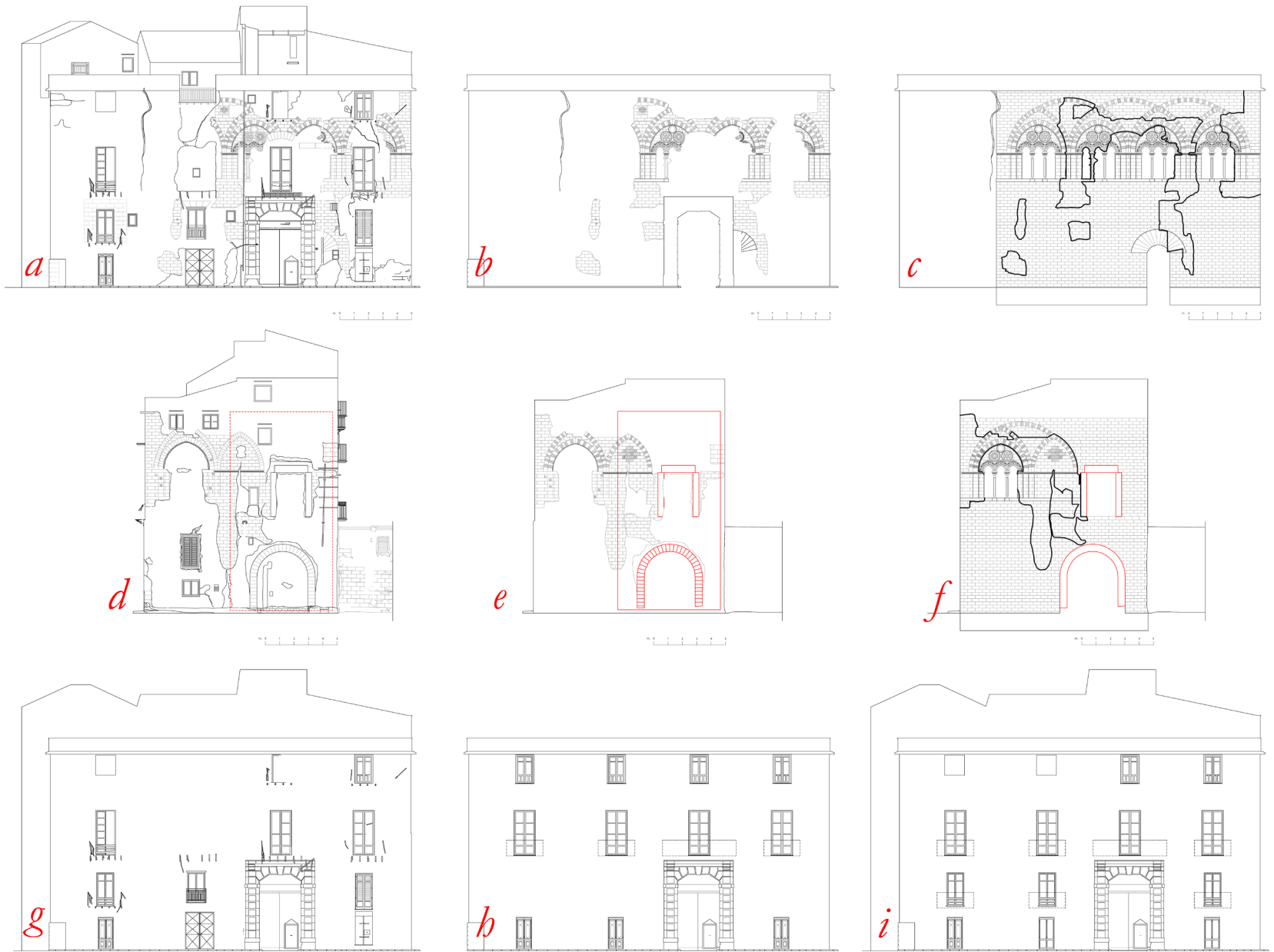


Fig. 2: Palermo, palazzo Cefalà, the external façades and details of the supposed building phasing; identification of the original architectural elements and the hypothesis about the fronts of the 14th century tower house (a-c main façade, d-f side front); the hypothesis about the eighteenth-century façade alteration in time (g-i). The traces of a pre-existing tower (perhaps dating back to the Islamic domination) then incorporating into the medieval edifice can be seen in the side front hypothesized in red, d-f (graphics by the author).

Fig. 3-4: Palermo, Cefalà Palace. The front damaged by the collapse of the façade of Palazzo Bonagia, before the removal of the plaster and recent reinstating of the surfaces (photo 3 by Giovanni Trovato, early 1990's; photo 4 by the author).



buildings characterized by specific stylistic features [Spatriano 1972, 51-52, 80; Capitano, 1974; Ventimiglia 2003, 31-145]. The large three-light window on the main floor of Palazzo Chiaramonte in Palermo, which opens to the internal courtyard, presents a significant consonance with the remains of the windows re-emerged under the plaster of Palazzo Cefalà: the general layout, the constructive system, the main features defining the style of their decorations have unquestionably many traits in common each other. By reading the signs left by their stonemasons, formal and geometric characteristics, it is possible to frame the building in the Chiaramontes' artistic culture, revealing its assonances and affinities to other edifices and structures owned to that family, which are attributed and dated philologically [Spatriano 1972].

The comparison between the three-light windows allows us to formulate the hypothesis that the same hands worked them, perhaps in similar time too. The three-light windows of the two buildings are designed following similar proportions, using approximately the same decorative elements and building materials. The slightly protruding bi-chromic bands that develop intersecting arches in succession above these three-light windows are also present in the façade of Palazzo Sclafani, similarly to the other cited cases, both for the proportions and the building materials. Some details are also common in two other fourteenth-century buildings in Palermo, sited in Protonotaro street and S. Antonio street, of which less extensive or only episodic pieces have been preserved [Ventimiglia 2003, 13; Sutera 2007, 31-38; Scibilia 2007, 113].

It should be excluded that about a century passed between architectures that (basing on a meticulous comparative stylistic and constructive analysis) reveal the work of artisans who bear the same technical-artistic culture related, at most, to two successive generations of stone masters.

### 5 | The visual poles of the Chiaramonte: architecture, politics and image

The structural collapse occurred in Alloro street in the early eighties of the twentieth century fortunately did not produce victims, although the facade of Palazzo Cefalà was seriously damaged by the collision: the road was completely blocked by the rubble consisting of stone elements, pieces of plaster and remains of the iron railings of the balconies. The fall was sudden and certainly due to the absence of static equipment in the remains of Bonagia Palace, largely landed in the course of the bombing of Palermo during the Second World War. Removed the debris, the detachment of the finishes from the façade brought back to light the architectural elements of a medieval building that should be recognized as a towered house belonging to the Chiaramonte's architectural culture [Ventimiglia 2003, 24]. In this regard, it is appropriate to re-

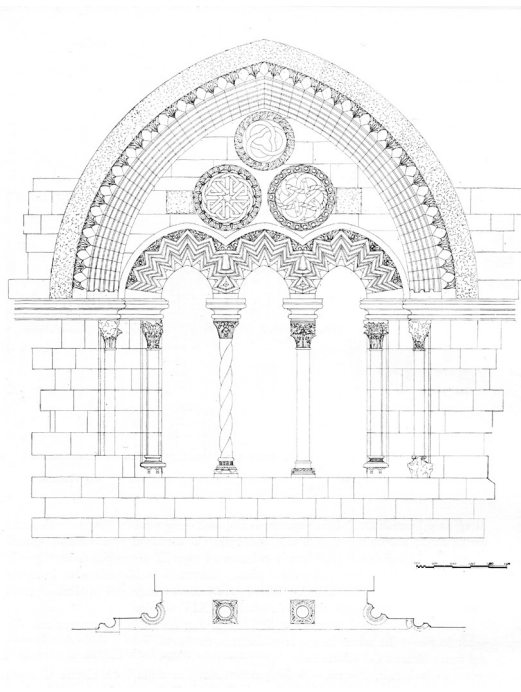


Fig. 5-6: Comparison between the fourteenth-century windows of Palazzo Cefalà (left) and Palazzo Chiamomonte in Palermo [Spatrisano 1972, 52].

call some aspects of the Chiamomonte's building policy and the distinctive features of the architectural language of their buildings. The dwellings belonging to the Chiamomonte in Sicily recall some figurative features of the fortified structures built by the king Frederick II Hohenstaufen [Di Blasi 1846; Maurici 1985, 3-25; Belvedere, Santoro 1994; Di Stefano, Cadei 1995, 367-696; Giuffrè 1997, 215-234; Maurici 2015, 18-27]. They are characterized by the formulation of a specific trend – recognizable as “the Chiamomonte's architecture” – directly related to the Sicilian medieval tradition mixing Norman and Swabian building cultures. However, the defensive vocation is here coordinated to the residential one, creating a scenario of rigorous solemnity. The powerful dynasty of noble warriors, wealthy owners of fiefdoms, great patrons of arts and architectural promoters, expressed indeed a definite political image, even in competition with the royal programs of the Aragon dynasty of Sicily [Di Marzo 1858, 317-337; Sessa 2016, 131-156]. Unlike the other families gathered around the first kings of Sicily of the Aragon court, the Chiamomonte demonstrated a clear desire to make their buildings recognizable since the first decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. They assigned a key role to the pointed portals and windows (single, double or triple) adorned with archivolts that circumscribe radial segments mainly defined by stone or lava inlays, with shaped bosses or with complex radial rings carved in stone. These architectural elements usually appear molded with concentric motifs of broken zig-zag sticks; some stylistic recurrences are to be attributed to probable transfers of exceptionally skilled carvers and stonemasons operating in various sites [Di Marzo 1858, 317; Capitano 1974; Santoro, Belvedere 1994; Filangeri 2000; Lima A. I. 2006; Rizzuto 2009, 389-394; Lima 2015, 13-31]. According to Ettore



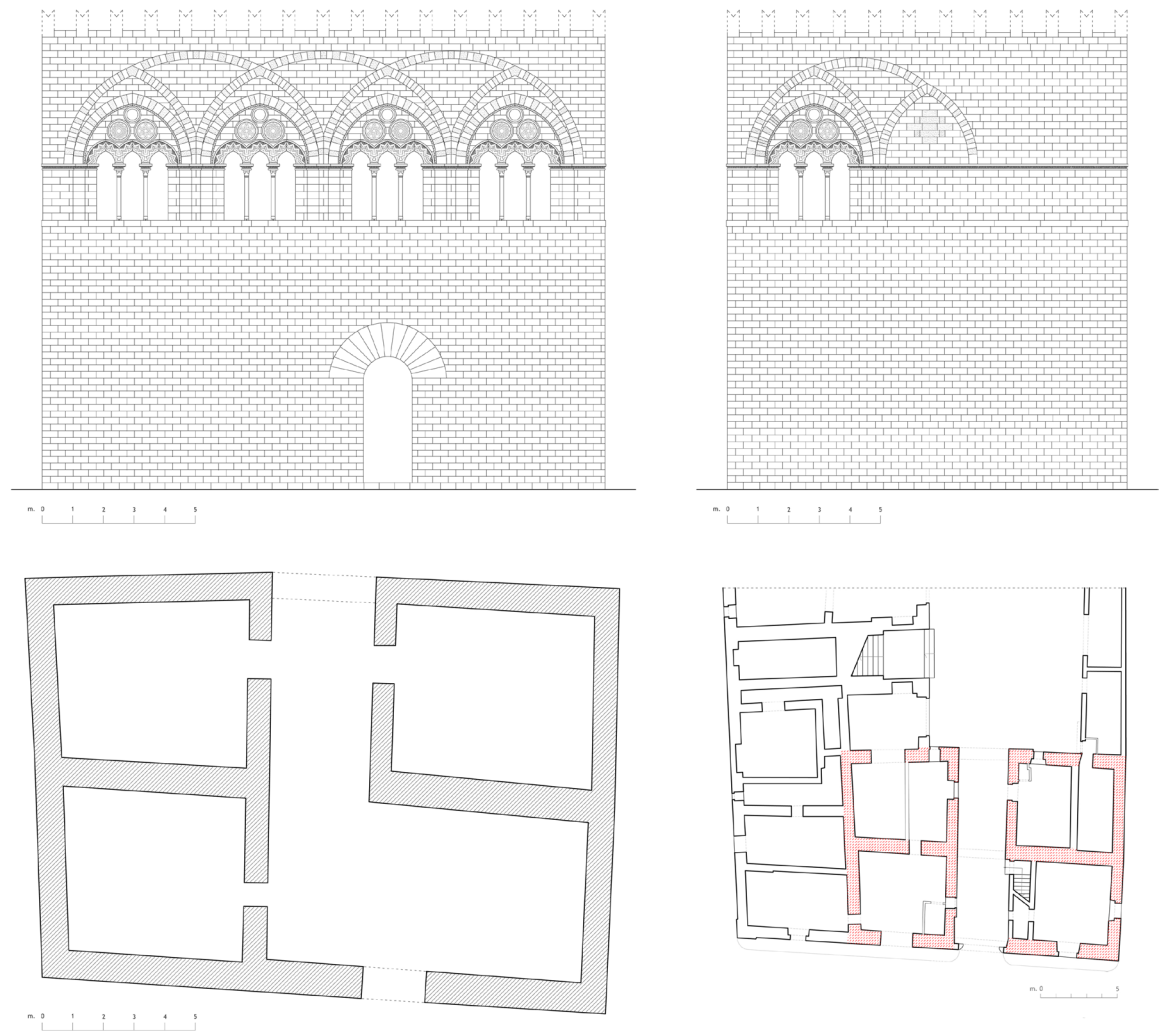


Fig. 7: Palermo, the Chiaramonte's former architecture englobed in the current Cefalà Palace in Palermo: graphic hypothetic reconstruction of the medieval fronts based on the metric survey of its current material evidences (the crowning battlements are not verified by any evidences) and graphic reconstruction of its ground floor plan in the current planimetric layout of the building (by the author).

Sessa, «i Chiaramonte [...] si distinguono nel novero dei tanti feudatari dell'isola anche per una sorta di programmatica attività edificatoria che, oltre alla realizzazione di chiese e complessi monastici e ad ingenti opere di fortificazione e infrastrutturali su gran parte del territorio siciliano, riguardò un formidabile ciclo di dimore. [...] Un'architettura di questa dinastia doveva essere sempre riconoscibile quale parte del medesimo sistema di dominio, non tanto per la presenza di insegne e sigle araldiche quanto per il comune denominatore stilistico» [Sessa 2000, 213]. Once the War of Vespers was over, the Sicilian aristocracy re-launched its feudal vocation, even by a systematic defensive redevelopment of their premises, building or restoring castles, fortified vil- lages and towers. It has been pointed out that «questa nobiltà, pur facendo del feudo nell'interno





Fig. 8: Palermo, Cefalà Palace. Remains of the sequence of four three-mullioned windows in a photogrammetric image of the façade processed in November 2002 [Ventimiglia 2003].



montuoso dell'isola il proprio punto di forza sia economico che di potere armato [...] inizia ad assumere un ruolo egemone anche nelle città eleggendole a luogo di residenza e di organizzazione dei sistemi di possedimenti e affari ma vi importa, trasformando prevalentemente “tenimenti di case” acquisiti solitamente per fasi successive, il modello munito di dimora, quasi sempre con dipendenze limitrofe» [Sessa 2000, 217].

The typology of the towered house had been already quite widespread in Sicily, especially within the coastal towns with conspicuous mercantile activities and flourishing Jewish communities, as in Palermo, mainly in the urban district of *Kalsa* and in the area surrounding the port. The aspiration to set up an influential *Signoria* soon determined a type of noble variant of the tower house model, characterized by its stereometric aspect and marked defensive imprint. To this political and architectural background must be then traced back the rediscovered testimony of the Chiaramonte's building long remained incorporated within the organism of Palazzo Cefalà until its sudden resurfacing.

### 6 | (Re-)Emerging architecture as a sign of urban memory

As already clarified, a collapse of the higher portion of the façade of Palazzo Bonagia, due to the abandonment of the building, happened in 1981. Because of the violent impact of the stone blocks to the front facade of Palazzo Cefalà, all the protruding parts on the road were damaged or completely removed, as well as a portion of the masonry collapsed. The roadway was invaded by rubble in the collapse area and the local Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali supervised a following phase of monitoring and emergency measure. The detachment of some pieces of plaster brought to light some masonry elements hidden for centuries under the covering layers and a first intervention on the front of the building was financed in 1997. The necessary intervention consisted of cognitive investigations to be carried out by removing the plaster to completely uncover the architecturally relevant elements; at that time, no other preliminary study action (also through instrumental diagnostic investigations) was carried out; at that time, no other preliminary study action (also through instrumental diagnostic investigations) was carried out. The first phase of the “liberation” ended in February 1998, when it was announced that “struc-

Fig. 9-11: Comparison between the windows of some 14th century palaces in Palermo. Chiaramonte palace on the left, Cefalà palace at the centre and the series of windows at the main floor of palazzo Sclafani on the right (photos by the autor).



tures of significant architectural importance” came to light during the execution of the cognitive tests; that is why a further inspection of the Superintendence technicians was requested. On 19 February 1998, following an on-site inspection and the building survey, the total removal of the finishing layers (some of high historical interest) was considered indispensable although the most current culture of restoration prohibits carrying out “liberation” treatment on ancient buildings. Once the scaffolding had been removed, it was clear the pointed triple-arched system of windows that could be seen on the façade in Alloro street is an emanation of the same architectural culture that created the three-light window that opens towards the inner courtyard of the Chiaramonte Palace, sculpted by the same masters of stone carvers. But there are also affinities with the stylistic formulation of the building that Matteo Sclafani (related to the Chiaramonte) built in Palermo in 1330 near the Royal Palace. Ettore Sessa recently reminded that the facades of the Palazzo Sclafani «sono modulati con eleganza calligrafica sublimata nella trama di archi intrecciati sul paramento in corrispondenza del piano nobile», the same ones emerging on the façade of Cefalà Palace, even if there with less severe proportions [Sessa 2000, 213-228].

## **7 | Constructional features and proposals for the conservation of the architectural palimpsest**

All the ancient buildings in the historical districts of the European towns are often the result of a long and complex series of construction, redevelopment, connection of buildings previously arisen, transformation, but also of functional and aesthetic revisions frequently connected to social or political factors. The structural and stratigraphic knowledge of a building is one of the fundamental requirements to approach the understanding of heritage buildings, the basic factor for appropriately designing their conservation and enhancement.

The structural instabilities of the case study were to be directly related to typology, dimensioning and state of preservation of its direct and continuous masonry foundations: the centuries-old building history of the edifice seemed to highlight the hypothesis of non-homogeneous behaviour towards seismic events. Furthermore, although not directly hit by the bombs during the Second World War, the strong vibrations and fires caused by the explosions in the neighbouring certainly determined consequences on the state of its structure and materials during the Second World War. The cultural address now shared and confirmed by the cultural heritage rules considers a preliminary diagnostic approach as an indispensable initial phase to understand and assess the building behaviour, not only the seismic one, from which basically must derive any actions to be carried out on it later [Ventimiglia 2003, 32-145].

The outer faces of the walls structuring the fourteenth-century building here studied are made up of small blocks of calcarenite laid with a minimum quantity of mortar. The impression of a dry pose is probably offered by the outermost layer of the walls, which add an aesthetic value to the structural role. The thickness of the fourteenth-century masonry is about ninety centimeters, but the building seems to have incorporated a preexisting older structure that may possibly be a tower of the Arab settlement. The constructive typology of the bearing walls is substantially the same that can be found in the Chiaramonte and Sclafani Palaces in Palermo, and in other architectures attributable to the same artistic trend in Sicily.

Moreover, these annotations of a historical, technological and aesthetic nature lead us to hypothesize the hasty closure of the fourteenth-century construction site of the tower-house in Alloro street, due to the displacement or higher concentration of workers in a site of greater prestige, such as that of the *Osterio Magno* in Piazza Marina. A careful analysis of the surfaced remains has confirmed that only one of the four original windows was completed in its decorative



Fig. 12: Proposal for the restoration of Palazzo Cefalà in Palermo: preservation of all the architectural elements that can be attributed to each phase of the transformation of the building and critical reintegration of the gaps in the plaster. Below: graphic overlay between the nineteenth-century facade and the front view of the Chiaramonte tower-house (by the author).

Fig. 13: Palermo, Palazzo Cefalà, current view of the main front on Via Alloro and partial view toward the side alley (photo by the author, next page).





apparatus; the other are cruder, with smooth rosettes and without the articulated decorations with arabesques of branches and leaves carved in stone. In a moment that cannot be specified, the stonemasons were probably moved to work on the upper level of the large Palace in Piazza Marina (then left incomplete) and, probably, they were also asked to realize a three-light window able to match the allure of those already made in a minor architecture, that is the tower house just built along the road of the Laurel, one of the buildings of the House of Chiaramonte. The insertion of the three-light window that opens into the loggia of the inner court in the main floor of the *Steri* is considered by some historians to be later than the first erection of the walls. This hypothesis was based on the simple highlighting of the diversity of the window in the court compared to the smaller and two-dimensional ones in the external fronts, even if enhanced by lava inserts [Spatrisano 1972, 39-87; Lima 2015, 13-31].

Based on the new acquisitions, the hypothesis can be considered founded and reasonable since the palace in the “road of laurel” seems to anticipate the realization of the three-light window in the main residence of the Chiaramonte family near the port of Palermo; those rediscovered windows may probably be considered as a sort of prototype for the most refined and mature formulation that can be observed in the *Steri*.

After the Second World War, the structure of the building changed further with the creation of the mezzanine floors. The repopulation of the historic center of Palermo and the transition to the new owners then determined more divisions, elevations and additions. New masses weigh on the structures of the building that grew by modifying its shape, with possible repercussions in terms of static vulnerability of the ancient building.

The building is to be considered an interesting case for the development of a project and a restoration site due to its state of conservation and the presence of many historical stratifications. The remains of a rare example of artificial stone plaster (perhaps the oldest one to have survived in Palermo) can be identified in the main façade of the building [Ventimiglia 2012, 131]. The intervention strategy must begin with a general technique of pre-consolidation of stone and finishing surfaces for the reason that all the material components must be preserved in the multi-layered façade. The consolidation and cleaning of every evidence of plaster and stone on the external fronts must be performed on the detached or swollen parts, choosing techniques based on the use of water, cleaning compresses, non-abrasive and high manual control; consolidating micro-injections are also among the procedures to be performed in the restoration site. Some gaps can be filled with a compatible mortar properly composed and pigmented but made distinguishable with respect to ancient mortars. After having carried out the preliminary compatibility and efficacy diagnostic tests (on-site and laboratory ones), the type of consolidating substance (as the ethyl silicate) and its solvent will be evaluated for the applications on stone elements [Musso 2013, 225; Ventimiglia 2008, 253].

A very prudent and highly conservative restoration should be carried out on the two facades with the fourteenth-century remains where, after the cleaning and consolidation of the wall pieces and finishing surfaces, it will be possible to fill the gaps with plaster properly distinguishing the new surfaces from the ancient one. This can be performed by using a pigmented lime mortar in such a way as to redraw the shapes of the missing parts (as windows, archivolts and overlying bands) in simplified silhouettes, only with very minimal protrusions or recesses that will be highlighted by the way light affects the fronts.

Operating according to the most current theoretical formulation of the restoration discipline, the criteria of the potential reversibility and the distinctiveness of the added parts will be re-

spected; moreover, the potential unity of the work will be achieved without falsifying the historical testimony. Any possible stylistic completion of the defective parts must be strictly excluded. Fascinated by the chiaroscuro suggestion of the older facade and subsequent revisions, the observer will be guided in understanding the Chiaramonte's elements and stimulated to the mental definition of a unitary image, without implementing anachronistic reinstating.

## 8 | Conclusions

The rediscovered architectural testimony is certainly one of the visual poles of a system of political and cultural control in the historical dimension of Palermo and late medieval Sicily, established by the House of Chiaramonte.

The knowledge and conservation of an ancient building that has undergone numerous changes over the centuries require a rigorous and interdisciplinary analytical approach and this research tends to confirm some aspect about the dynamics of the genesis of the fourteenth-century tower-house. The original building kept changing over time and extended its volume to occupy the entire block, incorporating some adjacent buildings; a new façade redefined its front on via Alloro covering all the traces of its previous medieval connotations. In cases like this, the study is very complex because of the scarcity or absence of historical sources or archival documentation. In conservative terms, reasoning about the need for the restoration of the building and the methodological approach to develop it, the questions are no less complex for reasons of various nature, for example, operational, critical, aesthetic or the ones related to the need to guarantee a potentially unitary reading of the monumental ensemble, excluding a classificatory and selective approach to the established historical phases.

Of course, the episodic character of the architectural fragments bound together, the lacunose parts and the re-emergence of numerous material components, of various ages and styles, could confuse the ideas. The ancient building, in cases like this, is characterized by many evidences of great historical value, but the forms of degradation and structural damage to be remedied through a restoration work site make the research activities more complicated.

Based on the assumption that history is an uninterrupted process, the lack of elements that define a unitary framework should never lead to the anachronistic choice to restore the style by reconstructing the lost parts where they were and as they were. For these reasons, the case briefly presented here is certainly interesting in order to reflect on the issue of material authenticity, and on the very current theme of the critical reintegration of the incomplete image, very dear to the Italian restoration culture [Dalla Negra 2017, 34-65].



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# The façade-tower of Santa Maria delle Stelle Church in Comiso. Historical events, vulnerability and conservation strategy

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## Abstract

After recalling the historical events of the construction of the façade-tower of Santa Maria delle Stelle Church in Comiso, begun in 1736 and finished two centuries later, the contribution focuses on the theme of the completion of its structure with the use of reinforced concrete, designed by the engineer Santoro Secolo. In more recent times, some sudden collapses have highlighted the theme of risk and the need to reintegrate the structure. Maintenance and conservation strategies are discussed in the final part of the text.

## La facciata-torre della chiesa di Santa Maria delle Stelle a Comiso. Vicende storiche, vulnerabilità e strategie per la conservazione

Dopo avere richiamato l'estesa vicenda storica della costruzione della facciata-torre della chiesa Madre di Santa Maria delle Stelle a Comiso, iniziata nel 1736 e terminata due secoli dopo, il contributo è focalizzato sul tema del completamento della sua facciata con l'uso della struttura intelaiata di calcestruzzo di cemento armato, progettata dall'ingegnere Santoro Secolo. In tempi più recenti, alcuni dissesti improvvisi hanno posto in evidenza il tema del rischio e la necessità di interventi per risanare la struttura architettonica.

**Keywords:** Comiso, Façade-tower, Completion, Reinforced Concrete, Conservation.

Comiso, Facciata-torre, Completamento, Cemento Armato, Conservazione.

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Received November 20, 2019; accepted April 14, 2020

## 1 | Introduction

The essay retraces the complex history of the construction of the façade-tower of Santa Maria delle Stelle Church in Comiso, begun in 1736 on a project by Rosario Gagliardi and completed with the construction of a bell tower in reinforced concrete two centuries later, marked by disputes and heated debates on the five different completion plans proposed over time.

The violent earthquake that struck the Val di Noto in 1693 determined the collapse of the former façade. In 1736, the Chapter of the Church decided to build a new one and commissioned Rosario Gagliardi to elaborate the project. The architect conceived a tower-façade, but he directed its construction only until the lower part was realized due to a sudden interruption. The work began again in 1880 on a new project by the engineer Giovanni Galeoto, who continued the façade until reaching the second order. The construction site stopped again, and it was necessary to wait until 1936 for the completion of the façade, with the conclusion of the third level designed by the engineer Santoro Secolo. He grafted a stone-clad reinforced concrete structure to the masonry structure, completing the tower with its belfry [Gatto 2007, 8-58].

The front of the mother church in Comiso turned out to be the highest among the churches of the Diocese of Ragusa (over 52 meters) and, in general, among the highest in Sicily. After the completion of the works, the façade appeared as a complex architectural body, one of the most significant examples of Sicilian façade-tower with a belfry in the last order.

After almost sixty years, it was necessary to intervene again to restore the serious damage caused by a collapse in 1994: a lightning struck the large stone sphere at the top of the tower. The globe broke away and fell down breaking the church's roof, the painted wooden ceiling and the pave-

ment. A final reflection wants to underline the importance of monitoring, analysis of vulnerability and maintenance intended as fundamental conservation strategies.

## 2 | From the foundation of the church to the earthquake of 1693

From the 1420s, the history of the fiefdom of Comiso was linked to the presence of the Naselli family who, with the favor of King Alfonso of Aragon, stimulated urban growth with the arrival of new families and the assignment of titles and privileges. In 1724, the Marquises Trigona asked architect Rosario Gagliardi, a native of Noto, to design their residential Palace; later, he will be commissioned by the Chapter of the Mother church to elaborate a project for its unfinished façade. The growth of the urban center continued without interruption until the seventeenth century and, although the earthquake of 1693 had caused breakdowns and some victims, the community promptly reacted repairing the damages and erecting palaces and churches [Stanganelli 1977, 77].

The year of foundation of Santa Maria delle Stelle church is not known, but Santa Maria del Mulino church existed in that site since the Middle Ages and, according to some hypotheses, the new church may have been built in 1480 incorporating its remains [Lauretta 1998, 123; Lena 1976, 41-48]. The study of documents in the parish archives conducted by Giuseppe Berenato has added some proven annotations about the historical reconstruction, and has highlighted the registration of an enforceable canon (1557) and two deeds drawn up by the notary Meli (1581, 1600); moreover, the existence in 1596 of the Congregation of the SS. Sacrament has been attested in the mother church [Berenato 1999, 1; Stanganelli 1977, 172].

The first intervention to face the deterioration of the building and protect its artistic equipment was carried out in 1637 [Stanganelli 1977, 76] on the initiative of the parish priest Barbante who, together with the citizens, pledged to raise the funds: «i giurati dell'università deliberarono di concorrere alle intraprese riparazioni, con onze 100 per un solo triennio, imponendo a tal fine su gli abitanti una soprattassa di 8 piccoli, sopra ogni tumulo di frumento molito»<sup>1</sup>. From 1541, the local workers formed their guilds and were very involved in the reconstruction after the earthquake of 1693, which caused serious damage to the church and the collapse of the upper part of the façade [Gurrieri 1976, 83].

A report found in the parish archive confirms that on the day «undici di gennaio seconda indizione 1693 giorno di domenica ad hora ventuno e un quarto fece un terremoto fortissimo che in questa terra cascorno la maggior parte delli casi, cascò tutta la Madre Chiesa, S. Antonio, la Madonna del Carmine, la Catina, e restò in piedi la chiesa della SS. Annunziata, la chiesa del SS. Nome di Gesù, S. Biagio, S. Giuseppe, Monserrato, S. Lunario, Gratia, Immacolata, Monastero S. Maria Regina delli cieli grandemente lesionati che tutti si dovettero presto riparare»<sup>2</sup>.

## 3 | The reconstruction of the church and the long history of its façade-tower

Immediately after the earthquake, Baldassarre IV Naselli sent a mandate to rehabilitate the church of Santa Maria delle Stelle and in December 1699 the Bishop of Syracuse consecrated and dedicated the church. A 1707 contract demonstrates the execution of maintenance and embellishment works<sup>3</sup>, later also requested in 1736<sup>5</sup> [Amico 1855, 345; Gurrieri 1976, 84].

From the third decade of the eighteenth century, the focus was mainly on the completion of the church through the construction of its main front, and many versions were proposed: the projects of Rosario Gagliardi (1736-1739), Peralta, Giovan Battista Cascione Vaccarini (1773), and Giovanni Galeoto (1880-1884) who built the first two orders. Later, the façade was completed by the engineer Santoro Secolo, who built the third order in 1936. According to Marco Rosario

\* For greater clarity in reading the text, the authors translated the transcriptions of essays and documents.

<sup>1</sup> Diocesi di Ragusa, Archivio Parrocchiale della chiesa di Santa Maria delle Stelle (APSMS), Acta Misc., ser. III f. 13/VIII f. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Diocesi di Ragusa, APSMS, *Diario della ex Chiesa del Gesù*, fol. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Archivio di Stato di Modica (ASM), Notaio Rascitti Mallia Paolo, 70, Vol. 19, cc. 62.

<sup>5</sup> ASM, Notaio Francesco Salvo, 72 (30), cc. 122-123.

Figg. 1-2: Comiso (Ragusa), Santa Maria delle Stelle church, comparison between the photogrammetric image of the main façade [Gatto 2007] and the design by Rosario Gagliardi elaborated in 1736.



Nobile «non vi è dubbio che nel prospetto chiesastico delle chiese madri si concentrarono le aspettative e le ambizioni di vescovi, di parroci, di ricchi finanziatori e anche di intere comunità cittadine [...]. È per questi motivi che anche in piccoli centri lo sforzo di pervenire a risultati moderni e all'avanguardia venne perseguito con tenacia. Le concordi volontà di magnificenza naturalmente non escludevano le dispute, la conflittualità delle posizioni» [Nobile 2000, 13]. The construction of the façade began under the direction of Gagliardi, who raised it to the height of about five meters<sup>4</sup>. Giovan Battista Cascione Vaccarini, in a writing of 1773, notes that «si puol continuare a fabricare sulli pilastri e membretti del prim'ordine di detta facciata fatta sino all'altezza di palmi 20 sulle di loro basi formati con pezzi d'intaglio di pietra forte grossi palmo 1» [Nobile 2000, 78]. In the *Lexicon Topographicum Siculum* (1757), Vito Amico observed that «lungi di là spicca il tempio maggiore del titolo di S. Maria della Stella, di scultura elegante ed ampia [...]. Finalmente ne è in costruzione un esimio prospetto, ma presenta oggidi la sola parte inferiore» [Amico 1855, 345].

The design of the façade-tower drawn by Gagliardi became a source of inspiration for the subsequent projects of Giovanni Galeoto (1880-1884) and Santoro Secolo (1933-1936), defining in its essence the character of the façade that can be observed today. The conformation has some traits in common with the façade of San Giorgio church in Ragusa Ibla, although with less plastic movements. The façade-tower has three overlapping and decreasing orders, connected by spirals; it culminates with the insertion of the bell tower and the bulb termination, which is

<sup>4</sup> ASM, Notaio Francesco Salvo, 72 (30), cc. 122-123.



typical of the bell towers. In June 1754, Gagliardi was certainly in Ragusa to follow the laying of the cornice of the first order, so it is possible that he was also in Comiso to direct the construction of the façade too [Nobile 2000, 82, 90]. Giovan Battista Cascione Vaccarini elaborated the second proposal for the façade of the Mother Church, in two neoclassical orders not realized [Filangeri 1977, 137]. The first two orders of today's façade are the work of engineer Giovanni Galeoto from Comiso, who conceived them sensing the suggestions of Gagliardi's original proposal and completed them in 1884 making use of the local "Comiso stone". The works remained stationary for about fifty years and in the parish archive some drawings of intermediate completion proposals have been preserved, conceived by an anonymous designer (and without date); of these proposals only one entablature seems to have been made in 1907, based on a design by Francesco Giardina. In 1907, the "devotee Francesco Giardina" (as he used to sign) donated a volume, about 45x60 cm, made of 41 sheets, containing 76 drawings, with the pictorial reliefs of the church. On the cover, the author reports: *Collection of ancient painting in the Madrice Church of Comiso*. A proposal to complete the façade with the inclusion of a bell tower is part of the collection.

This testifies there was a wide debate on the subject of completion, which lasted some years until the concrete realization of a third proposal. In fact, the third order will then be designed and built between 1934 and 1936 by the engineer Santoro Secolo, closing the final completion of the facade tower with extensive use of structural elements in reinforced concrete. The reinforced concrete structure consists of a framed system with a constant section, including four levels of horizontal beams connected by inclined pillars in order to follow the progression of the bulb termination. The engineer Secolo was a diligent professional who directed various interventions in the city; among the first to try the use of reinforced concrete even in the context of historic monumental buildings. The information on Santoro Secolo's biographical profile is limited but it is known that he obtained a degree in Ingegneria Civile at the Regia Scuola di Applicazione per gli Ingegneri di Torino, in the same cultural climate where Francesco Bongioannini had studied shortly before. The engineer Bongioannini inspired the first Italian ministerial decree "Sui Restauri degli edifizii monumentali" and Circolare 683 bis entitled "Disposizioni relative ai restauri degli edifizii monumentali" issued in 1882. After elaborating a meticulous metric survey of the church, he proposed a project characterized by the bulb termination with a sphere and a cross in order to give greater impetus to the bell tower. For the termination of the façade, Secolo conceived an internal skeleton made of reinforced concrete elements, intermediate floors and an iron staircase connecting to the bell tower above [Gatto 2007, 43].

After the insertion of the third order, the façade reached a marked verticality (for its height of about fifty-two meters), sought by the engineer to satisfy the request of the Diocese to have one of the highest church façades in Sicily, surpassing in height the front of the nearby church of the Annunciation. This record refers to the year 1936; later the construction of other sacred buildings exceeded this height. Secolo personally directed the works on site, and through his bell cell he ended the long construction process of the façade-tower in the mother church of Comiso, which began with Gagliardi [Lauretta 1998, 125].

#### **4 | Reinforced concrete and monuments at the beginning of the twentieth century**

At the end of the nineteenth century, reinforced concrete began to be widely used both in new buildings and in existing ones and, during the first decades of the twentieth century, enthusiasm for new material also involved the disciplinary field of restoration, but without adequate prelim-

Fig. 3: Project of the last order of the façade-tower with the bell cell proposed by Santoro Secolo, Diocesi di Ragusa, Archivio Parrocchiale della chiesa di Santa Maria delle Stelle.



Fig. 4: Interior of the belfry in the upper part of the façade-tower; the structural frame of reinforced concrete is highlighted, 2018 (photo by the authors).



Fig. 5: Santa Maria delle Stelle church with its façade raised up to the level of the second order; the construction site has been interrupted since 1884, Diocesi di Ragusa, Archivio Parrocchiale della chiesa di Santa Maria delle Stelle, f. Globo II.



Fig. 6: Building site for the completion of the third and last level of the façade-tower; the bell-cell can be observed under construction, Diocesi di Ragusa, Archivio Parrocchiale della chiesa di Santa Maria delle Stelle, f. Globo II.



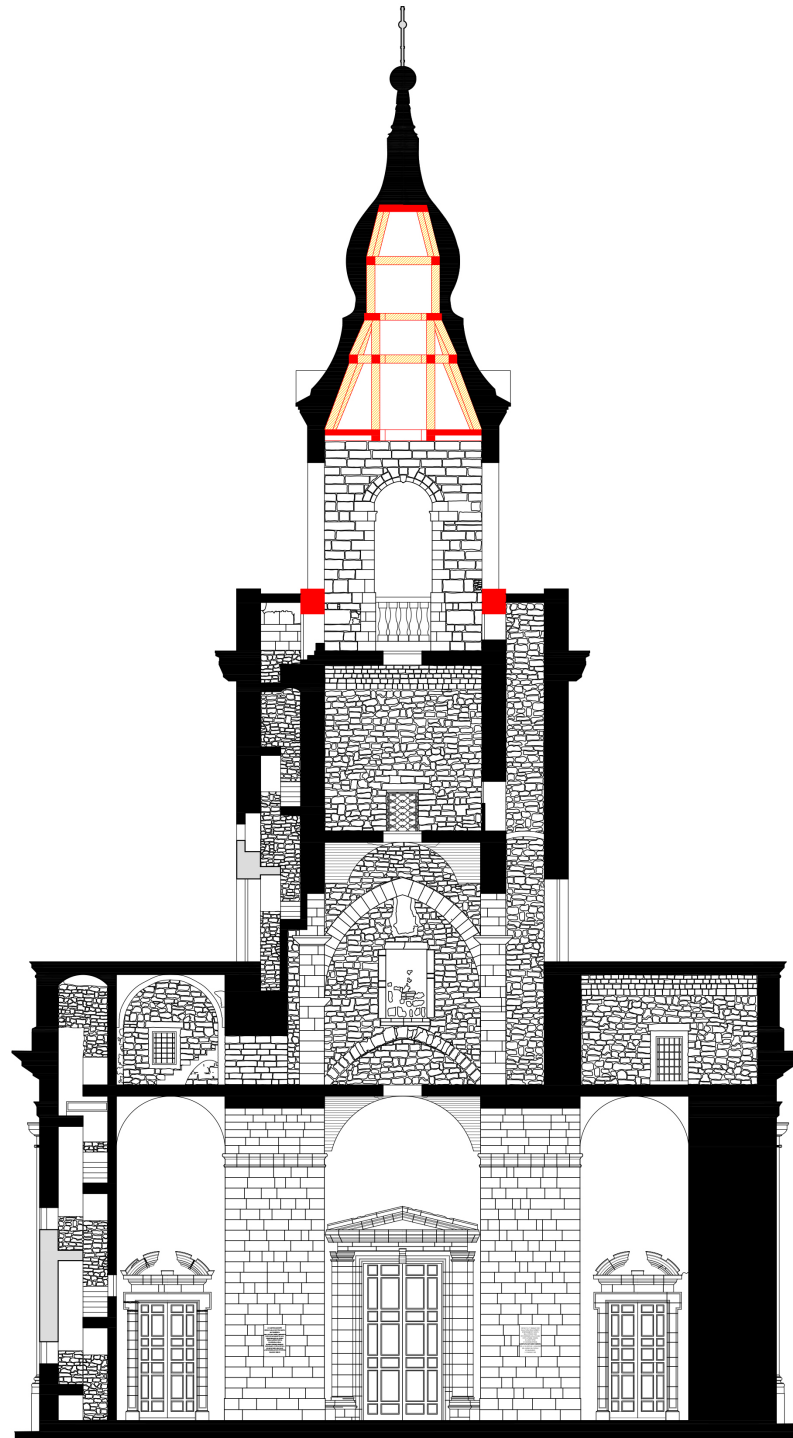


Fig. 7: Comiso, Santa Maria delle Stelle church, architectural survey of the façade-tower, section of its structure. The reinforced concrete elements are highlighted in red [Gatto 2018].



inary experimentation on its durability over time [*Architetture in cemento armato* 2008]. The use of reinforced concrete took place above all through elements to be inserted into the ancient wall structure, reduced to a mere covering. The problems of conservation of concrete structures of reinforced concrete placed in direct contact with the construction materials of ancient monuments have become very current, in recent times [Spinosa 2011, 55-57].

A clear example of this new trend is just the completion of the façade-bell tower of the mother church of Comiso according to the project of Santoro Secolo, concluded at the end of the 30s of the twentieth century. At that time, the scientific legitimacy of the use of reinforced concrete in the context of monuments had already been confirmed during the international Conference held in Athens in 1931; on that occasion «gli esperti hanno inteso varie comunicazioni relative all'impiego di materiali moderni per il consolidamento degli antichi edifici; ed approvano l'impiego giudizioso di tutte le risorse della tecnica moderna, e più specialmente del cemento armato. Essi esprimono il parere che ordinariamente questi mezzi di rinforzo debbano essere dissimulati per non alterare l'aspetto ed il carattere dell'edificio da restaurare»<sup>10</sup>.

In the same year, a similar address was also reconfirmed in Italy by the Consiglio Superiore per le Antichità e Belle Arti, since «allo scopo di rinforzare la compagine stanca di un monumento e di reintegrare la massa, tutti i mezzi costruttivi modernissimi possono recare ausili preziosi e sia opportuno valersene quando l'adozione di mezzi costruttivi analoghi agli antichi non raggiunga lo scopo; [...] egualmente i sussidi sperimentali delle varie scienze debbano essere chiamati a contributo per tutti gli altri temi minuti e complessi di conservazione delle strutture fatiscenti, nei quali ormai procedimenti empirici debbono cedere il campo a quelli rigidamente scientifici»<sup>11</sup>. Among the structural reinforcement experiences that contributed to the general affirmation of this trend in the restoration field are those carried out by Gino Chierici in Naples and the province, repeatedly mentioned by Gustavo Giovannoni as specimens, and by Piero Sanpaolesi in the Tuscan area inspired by the principle of “concealed scheme”, or rather with stone covering elements lacking of a supporting function, the same used by Santoro Secolo to complete the façade-tower of the mother church in Comiso [Spinosa 2011, 55-57].

As with Camillo Boito, Luca Beltrami and Gustavo Giovannoni, the architect Carlo Ignazio Gavini (1867-1936) was also among the first to spread the use of reinforced concrete in the restoration site; in fact, he used it in the chaining of the last level of the bell tower in Santa Maria Church (Antrudoco, Rieti) and in the connection of the façade to the nave of Santa Maria di Collemaggio church (L'Aquila). In his work at the Abbey of San Clemente in Castiglione a Casauria (Pescara), in contrast with the practice of concealment he leaves the reinforced concrete structure connecting the aisles with the transept in sight, becoming an innovator; this attitude however caused disputes between the sector's specialists [Sette 2001, 152-154].

Even the anticipatory experience of the reconstruction of the Duomo of Messina after the earthquake of 1908, which saw the young Francesco Valenti engaged in the first experiences of consolidation and reintegration by placing the reinforced system in its remains, certainly had a decisive influence on the restorers of the time [Genovese 2010, 110-123]; as the affinities with the completion works of Santa Maria delle Stelle Church in Comiso are undeniable.

Regarding the reconstruction of Messina cathedral, Francesco Valenti was commissioned in 1923 for the architectural project and Aristide Giannelli designed the structures in 1928. The project involved the demolition of the surviving masonry, except for the apse and its valuable architectural elements; the construction of a reinforced concrete structure was concealed inside the walls and organized in closed frames according to the seismic norms issued in 1909 [Sette 2001, 142].

<sup>10</sup> Carta di Atene (1931), article V.

<sup>11</sup> Carta Italiana del Restauro (1932), article 9.

<sup>12</sup> Diocesi di Ragusa, Archivio Diocesano, Santa Maria delle Stelle (APDRI), Folio Globo I, telegram, August 1th, 1992.

## 5 | The first failure of the crowning sphere of the façade

A few decades after the façade-tower was completed, the terminal part will prove less ready to stand the test of time, and during the nineties of the XX century it will be affected by a partial failure and a later collapse. On August 1, 1992, some fragments of the sphere at the top of the bell tower fell down on the underlying roofing structures. According to Giuseppe Berenato, a large fragment had detached from the lower part of the globe and, after bumping into a molding of the façade, was subdivided into fragments then falling towards the roof and the neighboring street<sup>12</sup>.

The general static conditions of the church were not compromised, but in the report compiled following the inspection by the technicians of the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali and Genio Civile it was specified that ««si evidenziano dei fenomeni di degrado della pietra di certi elementi architettonici che a causa dell'ossidazione degli elementi in ferro inseriti [...] hanno determinato il distacco di elementi lapidei in corrispondenza del globo in calcare posto alla base della croce sommitale». In the same document, it was noted that «nella struttura in cemento armato sostenente la torre campanaria ubicata sul prospetto principale (che è stata realizzata negli anni '30 su progetto dell'ingegner Secolo) si notano le ossidazioni delle armature con relativo distacco del copriferro»<sup>13</sup>.

The local press gave prominence to the collapse and the community followed with some apprehension the events, voicing the desire for the mother church to be reopened to the public as soon as possible. According to the description of the structural failure, «il pezzo precipitato è la quarta parte di una sfera di pietra, dal peso di quattrocento chili e dal diametro di un metro, posta a cinquantadue metri dal suolo, che cadendo ha sfondato il tetto della matrice e divelto alcune tavole del soffitto ligneo» [Rimmaudo, 1992; Brancato, 1992b].

The work to remedy the damage was prepared in an emergency and began on August 5 of the same year<sup>14</sup>. The technicians of the Genio Civile and Soprintendenza Department who directed the consolidation works judged that, in general, the structures of the church did not present worrying risk situations; however, it was remarked «nella torre campanaria [...] mostra qualche ruga inquietante l'armatura in ferro che è in via d'ossidazione» [Brancato, 1992c]. Once the work was finished, the church was reopened for worship.

## 8 | The collapse of the globe at the top of the facade-tower

On February 13, 1994, at about nine o'clock in the morning, while a religious function was underway, a few moments after having heard the forceful noise of a thunder during an intense storm, the massive sphere placed on top of the façade-tower precipitated ruinously, causing serious damage to the church. In the rapid descent, the heavy globe, its metallic trellis of anchorage to the summit bulb and the three-meter-high iron cross fixed on it caused a large gash in the roofs corresponding to the main nave of the church, in the painted wooden planks which forms the ceiling and in the pictorial canvases applied to it. Reaching the ground inside the church, the heavy sphere caused a significant damage to the pavement [Strada 1994; Rimmaudo 1994].

During the inspection carried out the following day, the necessity of «interventi urgenti di consolidamento e restauro» was highlighted specifying that «bisognerà accertare se l'energia liberata dal fulmine non abbia compromesso la stabilità della parte terminale della facciata a partire dalla loggia campanaria; la copertura della navata centrale presenta uno squarcio di circa sette metri che ha interessato un solaio in cemento armato di laterizi e travetti poggianti sulle capriate lignee, due delle quali sono crollate completamente, altrettanto dicasi per il controsoffitto ligneo

<sup>13</sup> Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale della Protezione Civile, Comando provinciale di Ragusa, report of the day 1 august 1992.

<sup>14</sup> APDRI, Phonogram n. 575.

<sup>15</sup> Regione Siciliana, Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Siracusa, Sezione dei Beni Paesaggistici, Architettonici ed Urbanistici (SBCASA), Inspection report by Salvatore Mancini.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Regione Siciliana, Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Ragusa, Servizio per i Beni Storici, Artistici ed Etnoantropologici (SBCASS), Historical-artistic report by Rosa Carollo and expertise of April 2.





Fig. 8-10: Disconnection of the masonry following the detachment of the sphere; Hole in the cover caused by detachment and falling of the sphere; Stone globe with cross in the central nave after falling from the bell tower [Berenato 1994].



del Barbalonga e per una grande tela che è rovinata al suolo»<sup>16</sup>. About the explanation of the structural collapse it was thought that «il fulmine possa essere stato attirato dalla grande massa ferrosa del traliccio di sostegno delle campane, traliccio reso solidale alla struttura in cemento armato che costituisce l'ossatura portante rivestita di calcare intagliato della cella campanaria. Quest'ultima parte della facciata fu finita infatti di costruire nel dopoguerra, su progetto dell'ingegnere Santoro Secolo e come si evince anche nella relazione redatta nell'agosto del '92 in occasione del crollo della sfera, il cemento armato dell'epoca presenta numerosi punti di discontinuità con molti ferri in vista»<sup>17</sup>.

As already mentioned, the seventeenth century painted wooden ceiling, enriched by the canvas attributed to Antonio Barbalonga Aliberti, was partially broken down and suffered extensive damage<sup>18</sup>.

The Church of Santa Maria delle Stelle was declared unusable once again and the regional councilor Giuseppe Drago went to Comiso in order to evaluate the conditions of the historical building. Shortly thereafter, a joint technical table was set up between the Regione Sicilia, the Soprintendenza di Siracusa and the Genio Civile. The positive opinion for the execution of the works did not delay being pronounced and the restoration site could start in 1994. The population immediately felt the need to relocate the sphere and the cross, launching a fundraiser and a “pro restoration committee”. Regarding the restoration, the possibility of making the parts to be replaced with lighter and more durable materials was not taken into consideration; it was also omitted to consider the question of the distinctiveness of the new inserts as a new stone sphere (once again of Comiso stone) and an iron cross were replaced.

After the removal of the rubble and the installation of the scaffolding on the bell tower and inside the church, it was decided to continue with the removal of unstable stone elements, the execution of small repairs, and the relocation of the new sphere with a cross having the same dimensions and materials as the original ones. Furthermore, the interventions carried out included the dismantling of the damaged trusses and the broken latero-cement floor, the reintegration of the nave roofs with new trusses laid on reinforced concrete curbs and wooden planks, with waterproofing material and tiles<sup>19</sup>. The funds to finance the works amount to two hundred million lire; fifty million lire were allocated to intervene on the sphere in 1992.

The reintegration and consolidation of the painted wooden planks that make up the ceiling of the central nave of the church took place between 2005 and 2007. The two oil painted canvases torn apart after the breaking of the false ceiling were carefully restored but placed in their original location only during a later restoration site<sup>20</sup>. The archives of the Soprintendenza di Siracusa and Santa Maria delle Stelle keep the extensive documentation inherent in each phase of the interventions on the building and on the artistic works it contains. A vast and precious photographic documentation is included in the archive of Giuseppe Berenato. Indeed, the church has been affected by an extensive restoration work in 2015, preceded by a scientific investigation campaign prepared by the “Laboratorio di Indagini e Restauro dei Beni Architettonici “Salvatore Boscarino” (Università di Palermo, Dipartimento di Architettura). Non-destructive or minimally invasive diagnostic tests were carried out under the scientific coordination of prof. Francesco Tomaselli (Università degli Studi di Palermo). The performed surveys are radar prospections, thermography, ultrasound auscultations, measurements of humidity by electrodes and video-endoscopic observations. This argument also recalls two episodes in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century that highlight some similarities with the present case study: a lightning struck the spire of the cathedral of Rouen and the same fate later befell Saint-Denis abbey.

<sup>19</sup> SBCASA, notes 7427/1994 and 2996/1994.

<sup>20</sup> SBCASS, Report and evaluation by Carmela Vella.



Fig. 11: Comiso, Santa Maria delle Stelle church after the restoration, in 2014. View of the cover of the main nave with the wooden ceiling after the reintegration and relocation of the paintings (photo by Carlo Giunta).

Jean-Antoine Alavoine (1776-1834) was commissioned in 1823 to rebuild the spire of the cathedral of Rouen. He proposed the reconstruction in cast iron according to the ancient forms since even the medieval builders would have preferred the use of cast iron instead of stone, as it is a light, homogeneous, economic and indestructible material. This material, however, had not yet been used for large-scale works.

The work received many acclaims, but it was still unfinished in 1848 when it recalled the firm opposition of Eugène Emmanuelle Viollet-le-Duc, who instead argued for the need to use the techniques and materials of the past, albeit with creativity. Furthermore, he stated that his cast iron shape should have imitated the architectural stone elements of medieval language. Finally, he questioned the combination of iron and stone as having different coefficients of expansion, oxidation processes and maintenance difficulties [Carbonara 1997, 114; Sette 2001, 132-137]. In fact, the different coefficient of expansion between stone and iron was probably one of the main causes of the collapse occurred in Comiso. The other episode concerns the *flèche* in Saint-Denis cathedral which had been rebuilt by Debret with heavy materials: it fell when struck by lightning. After the immediate demolition of the remaining part, in 1846 it was further cut to the base of the tower. Debret was removed and the new project was entrusted to Viollet-le-Duc who imagined creating two symmetrical spiers, but the work was never realized [Carbonara 1997, 114].

### 9 | Vulnerability, risk and scheduled maintenance

The “emerging” architectures in the urban landscape are the off-scale buildings that mark the character of the old towns with the recognisability of their identifying sign, but with the passage of time they can determine situations of risk for their significant height. A constant monitoring attitude and the necessary scheduled maintenance must be ensured for them mostly than other ancient buildings that, although historically relevant, have lower characteristics of vulnerability because they are less elevated and exposed to atmospheric stresses. Monitoring of seismic microtremors should be performed using scientific instruments working 24 hours a day in every monument classified as vulnerable; a group of specialized technicians should be present in the context of the operating units allocated to the municipal technical offices [Della Torre, 2014]. In the city of Noto, to recall an example, many bell towers have become accessible to the public and make the necessary resources to ensure their maintenance in the best conservation conditions. The *façade-tower* of Santa Maria delle Stelle church has got some rooms located at various levels that (made accessible in safety) can be used as exhibition spaces to display the *façade* projects, the artistic works and sacred objects of the church. The exhibition path could be concluded in the belfry about twenty-eight meters high, with an amazing view of the city and its territorial context [Ventimiglia, Gatto Vaccaro 2015, 1208-1215]. In the case in question, the grafting of reinforced concrete structures in the upper part of the *façade* requires a higher level of attention in monitoring the state of the metal reinforcements because of the detachment of the concrete cover. In the Mother church of Comiso, a tragedy was avoided only because the church was not crowded with devotees at the time of collapses. The failure of the bulb and the oxidation of reinforcing rods in areas that are not easily accessible caused the significant weakening of the structural components, and only the fall of a portion of the stone globe in 1992 turned on the alarm bell. In the inspection reports of 1992 and 1994 the presence of oxidized metal elements has been highlighted, but the indispensable program of periodic surveys to analyze the state of the reinforced concrete structures has not been prepared, although it is now clear that we should not wait until at the arrival of a new damaging signal from the building.





Fig. 12: Comiso, Santa Maria delle Stelle Church after the restoration. View of the church from piazza delle Erbe, 2016 (photo by Carlo Giunta).

## 10 | Conclusions

The initiatives undertaken to repair the damage caused to the church by the collapses that occurred at the top of the façade-tower have lasted for over twenty years, and have required a great effort by the Diocesi di Ragusa, the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali ed Ambientali di Siracusa<sup>22</sup>, the Genio Civile of Ragusa and the technicians of the Municipality of Comiso. The local press highlighted the development of the complex and articulated affair, keeping alive an intense debate centered on the aspects connected to the responsibility of preserving the cultural heritage and to the issues of risk and environmental protection. As a direct consequence, a widespread social awareness raising action has taken place on the issues of monument maintenance and risk assessment, which also draw the attention of the government of Regione Sicilia. A parliamentary question was presented on 4 August 1992 by Mr Piro, Mele and Battaglia to the Regional Councilor for Cultural and Environmental Heritage and for Education, asking which measures would be undertaken «a tutela della chiesa Madre, del patrimonio artistico della città di Comiso e, più in generale, del cosiddetto ‘Barocco siciliano’»<sup>23</sup>. In memory of the event, the recomposed fragments of the sphere ruined to the ground are now exhibited in the area of the narthex and, in 2016, after more than twenty years and three work sites, the restoration of the ancient wooden ceiling has come to an end with the relocation of the paintings. The year ‘1936’, the name of the director of the completion work ‘S. Secolo’ and of the workers ‘Elia e Turtula’ are engraved on the stone sphere that fell from the tower.

<sup>22</sup> Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa, Sezione Beni Paesaggistici, Architettoni e Urbanistici - Ragusa and Sezione Beni Storici, Artistici e Iconografici. The documentation relating to the territory of Ragusa can presently be consulted in the archive of the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Ragusa.

<sup>23</sup> Diocesi di Ragusa, Archivio Diocesano, Santa Maria delle Stelle.

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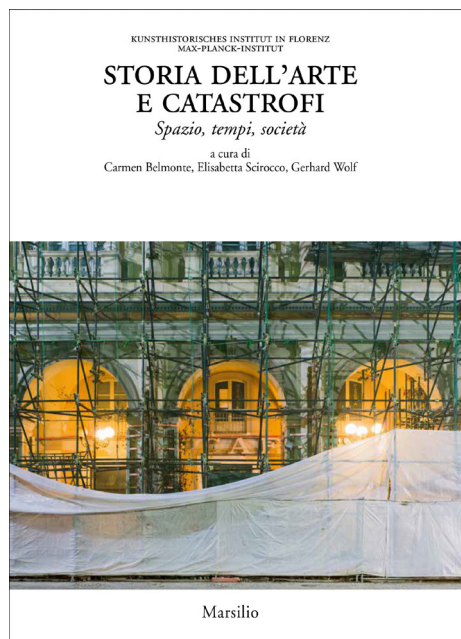
## **Lecture & Ricerche**

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# Terremoti e paesaggio italiano. Storie e cronache dell'arte



*Storia dell'arte e catastrofi. Spazio, tempi, società*, a cura di Carmen Belmonte, Elisabetta Scirocco, Gerhard Wolf, Venezia, Marsilio Editori, 2019, 432 pp., ill.; collana: *Studi e Ricerche* (13).

**Recensione**  
di Massimo Visone

Ancora un contributo sulle catastrofi? L'idea di arricchire il già ampio apparato di studi con nuove fatiche critiche può apparire temerario oggi; tanto più che alcuni dei più recenti eventi non hanno mostrato sostanziali novità nella messa in scena di argomenti da mettere sul tavolo delle discussioni, come origini, contesti, conseguenze, ripercussioni, iconografie, ricostruzioni, restauri, politiche e così via. Nondimeno convegni, seminari e nuove pubblicazioni si succedono continuamente; si pensi, ad esempio, al congresso internazionale organizzato dall'Aisu dal titolo *Fuori dall'ordinario. La città di fronte a catastrofi ed eventi eccezionali* (Roma, 8-10 settembre 2011), con oltre 300 relatori, o a vari progetti di ricerca e diversi saggi disseminati in riviste tematiche e libri sull'argomento, con attenzione ai danni provocati al patrimonio artistico nel corso di un Novecento particolarmente fragile. Il fatto è che le catastrofi – di origine naturale o antropica, non senza drammatiche promiscuità in alcuni casi – hanno saputo creare nel tempo una galassia di situazioni in cui ogni studio che ne è derivato ha creato una presa di coscienza utile a comprendere e maturare ogni sua implicazione pratica e teorica sulla città e sulla comunità. Si pensi al Vesuvio per comprendere lo stretto rapporto tra catastrofi e società e le molteplici valenze tra storia e cronaca. L'eruzione im-

provvisa del 1631 muta la veduta di Napoli, fino a identificare la città con lo stesso vulcano, aprendo una fortunata stagione vedutistica. Le scoperte di Ercolano e di Pompei nella prima metà del XVIII secolo, rivelando le dimensioni che può raggiungere questa catastrofe (di città colpite già da un terremoto nel 62 dell'era cristiana), riportano in auge un rapporto con l'Antico che aveva subito un duro colpo nel corso del XVII secolo. Contemporaneamente le lave, continuando a scendere, causano non minori danni a valle, mentre a monte lo spettacolo pirotecnico attirava la curiosità scientifica di intellettuali e *connoisseur* nel pieno del *Grand Tour*. La fine dello sbuffo fu anch'esso una catastrofe per Napoli, con non poche implicazioni economiche e identitarie allo spegnimento della sua icona, come parte di un più grande paesaggio vulcanico che comprende la baia di Napoli, consapevole che il vulcano non si è realmente spento.

Diverso è infatti l'impatto di una catastrofe naturale per la società che la subisce, come pure i dilemmi che prevarranno nelle scelte a seguire, con il ritorno sistematico delle stesse domande: cosa e come ricostruire? come conciliare le istanze dell'emergenza con la progettazione sul lungo periodo? Come far convergere le esigenze dei cittadini e la tutela del patrimonio culturale?

Tali interrogativi sono talmente ciclici e storici che pochi sanno rinunciare a confrontarsi con questi eventi imprevedibili, a cui è praticamente impossibile sentirsi estranei e di cui è evidente la sua eterna attualità, sia per implicazioni di carattere collettivo, che meramente personale.

Nessuna meraviglia, quindi, se Carmen Belmonte, Elisabetta Scirocco e Gerhard Wolf abbiano recentemente dedicato all'universo delle catastrofi la cura di un libro, con un *focus* specifico sui terremoti. La pubblicazione merita attenzione non solo per la qualità degli studiosi che vi partecipano, ma soprattutto per i contenuti e il nuovo approccio culturale che lo guida. L'opera è il frutto del progetto *Storia dell'arte e altre catastrofi. L'Italia sismica*, curato a partire dal 2014 dai tre storici dell'arte che afferiscono in forme e modi diversi alle due sedi italiane del Max-Planck-Institut: il Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, di cui Wolf è direttore e Belmonte assistente dal 2012 al 2015, e la Bibliotheca Hertziana di Roma, di cui Scirocco è assistente della direttrice Tanja Michalsky.

*Storia dell'arte e catastrofi. Spazio, tempi, società*, edito nel luglio del 2019 per i tipi di Marsilio, è il tredicesimo della collana *Studi e Ricerche* della Kunsthistorisches Institut di Firenze e raccoglie venti scritti di altrettanti esperti del settore, oltre a quelli degli stessi curatori. Il libro è strutturato in undici saggi critici che compongono la prima parte (*Studi*), tre contributi puntuali per la seconda (*Testimonianze*) e sei per l'ultima parte (*Laboratorio: l'Italia sismica*). Si tratta di un volume poderoso che ha poco a che fare con le pubblicazioni precedenti sul tema e si presenta al lettore in tutta la sua forza transdisciplinare. I temi trattati spaziano dalla vulnerabilità del territorio italiano (Emanuela

Guidoboni) e dalla resilienza del paesaggio (Carlo Tosco) alla riflessione sul futuro della città storica (Salvatore Settis); dagli interventi di prima emergenza sui beni culturali al restauro e alla ricostruzione (Fulvio Cervini, Valentina Valerio, Marco Ciatti, Maria Alessandra Vittorini); dall'allontanamento delle opere d'arte dai contesti e dalle comunità di appartenenza (Pavla Langer, Luca Pezzuto e Jamie Sanecki) ai principi e alle metodologie adottate nella ricostruzione e nel restauro architettonico, di cui si ricercano le origini storiche (Valentina Russo) e le ricadute nel dibattito contemporaneo nella Bassa Modenese (Giovanna Ceniccola), rivendicando la perdita *ethos* della storia dell'arte (Tomaso Montanari). Il racconto dei protagonisti del passato, che si confrontarono con catastrofi di diversa natura, come Alessandro Conti nell'alluvione di Firenze (Patrizia Zambrano), si intreccia a quello di esperienze attuali sul campo (Cristina Pasqualetti), mentre si esplorano percorsi di conservazione e di ricostruzione partecipata (Giovanna Ceniccola e Piero Gilento) e si indagano i complessi rapporti tra patrimonio culturale e società, con *focus* esemplificativi su Gibellina (Monica Musolino) e Mirandola (Rita Ciccaglione). Si analizza, infine, la cultura visiva della catastrofe, la sua monumentalizzazione e memorializzazione storica (Françoise Lavocat) e la sua rappresentazione (Alessandro Del Puppo) e si esamina la pratica artistica fotografica quale strumento d'indagine dei nuovi scenari post-catastrofe (Antonio Di Cecco, Beth Saunders).

A dare avvio al progetto è stata la scelta di dedicare un corso di studio al centro storico dell'Aquila rivolto a un gruppo internazionale di dottorandi e dottori di ricerca in discipline e con specializzazioni diverse, ma sempre all'interno del mondo dei beni culturali. La città a

quella data era ancora in gran parte inagibile e fu l'occasione per promuovere due laboratori, l'uno dedicato all'Aquila (*L'Aquila as a Post-Catastrophic City*, 2015), l'altro ai centri dell'Emilia (*Topologie del terremoto. Luoghi, soggetti, istituzioni e rappresentazioni della catastrofe*, 2016). L'interesse si è spostato su una casistica diversificata di città su scala italiana e mondiale in occasione del convegno internazionale *Dopo la catastrofe: la storia dell'arte e il futuro della città* (Firenze, 6-7 marzo 2015), che ha coinvolto studiosi e specialisti impegnati nel campo della tutela. A queste attività sperimentali di ricerca si è affiancata la realizzazione della mostra fotografica digitale *Fotografia e Catastrofe* (online dal novembre 2018), che ha sondato le potenzialità dell'intersezione tra ricerca e fotografia contemporanea, ponendo in dialogo l'indagine visiva del fotografo Antonio Di Cecco dedicata ai paesaggi italiani post-sisma con un *corpus* di fotografie storiche selezionate nei fondi della Fototeca del Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz. In un quadro complessivo che vede una progressiva marginalizzazione delle conoscenze storico-artistiche nel dibattito pubblico e nelle scelte d'intervento, in parte imputabile alla scarsa permeabilità tra ambienti accademici e istituzionali e alla crescente carenza di storici dell'arte nelle istituzioni di tutela, l'obiettivo del progetto è stato quello di stimolare il dialogo tra discipline e competenze per individuare nuovi percorsi sul tema della città post-catastrofe e del suo futuro. Proprio in questa coniugazione degli studi sul patrimonio culturale e delle teorie del restauro con l'analisi delle dinamiche innescate dalla catastrofe e delle modalità con cui esse si imprimono nella storia culturale di un luogo, non manca una sottaciuta dimensione di militanza culturale nel voler rendere efficace il contributo della

storia dell'arte al dibattito contemporaneo sugli interventi da attuare e per promuovere nuovi formati di ricerca.

Al centro dell'attenzione è la storia dell'arte in Italia, dove le distruzioni dovute ai terremoti sono un problema con cui la disciplina si confronta continuamente, non senza implicazioni sui sistemi della tutela e dei relativi complessi normativi. Talvolta, però, la catastrofe è tale da mettere in crisi l'ordinaria cultura non solo dello stesso storico dell'arte, ma anche dello storico dell'architettura. Infatti, per il numero degli eventi sismici, il tessuto storico dei centri italiani, nella sua consistenza urbanistica, monumentale e artistica, è stato tanto ripetutamente modificato, ricostruito e restaurato che possiamo leggere l'Italia come un Paese in costante atto di ricostruzione.

Nel caso politico recente, i tempi lunghi della ripresa sono tali che il terremoto dell'Aquila, tanto vicino nella memoria collettiva per la dimensione della catastrofe, ma distante oltre dieci anni, possa essere affrontato storicamente come un caso studio per analizzare strategie, risultati e criticità nella ricostruzione degli spazi urbani e del patrimonio costruito, così come nel restauro e nella gestione dei beni mobili ed esemplificare intorno a esso tutte le innovazioni possibili per un non augurabile, ma certo prossimo terremoto. In tal senso, il dato di maggiore novità metodologica di questa pubblicazione è essere riusciti a rendere storico un evento contemporaneo e ad attualizzare un approccio storico. Ciò è ancor più vero per un Paese duale come l'Italia, che detiene da un lato il record di beni patrimonio dell'umanità e un elevato rischio sismico. Infatti, non si può non tenere conto, osserva Guidoboni, che «sono oltre 4.800 i siti [...] che dal secolo XI a oggi hanno subito effetti valutati uguali o maggiori all'VIII

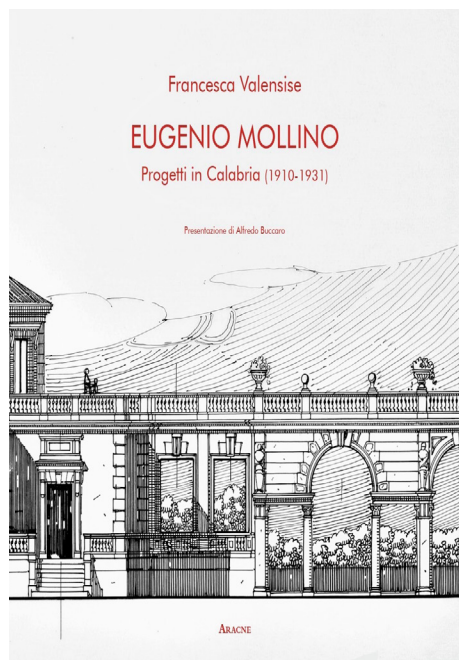
grado della scala MCS [...], ovvero distruzioni tanto gravi da richiedere ricostruzioni estese. [...] D'altra parte, come ignorare che L'Aquila sta preparando la sua sesta ricostruzione? [...] Se restringiamo lo sguardo agli ultimi quattro secoli, dal XVII al XX, ossia al periodo al quale risale una parte consistente del nostro patrimonio storico-architettonico, gli eventi sismici con Intensità epicentrale uguale o maggiore del grado VIII MCS [...] sono stati 168 con una frequenza a dir poco martellante di un evento in media ogni due anni» [pp. 32-33].

In conclusione, come dice Wolf: «Nel libro vediamo la storia dell'arte impegnata in due percorsi complementari: da una parte nella salvaguardia e nello studio di oggetti d'arte mobili, considerati nel ruolo che giocano per le identità e i rituali collettivi, e nell'attenzione alle dinamiche di dislocazione e alle prospettive future di una nuova collocazione; dall'altra parte, come disciplina attiva nello studio e nella salvaguardia di territori, paesaggi e ambienti fortemente antropizzati. Il secondo percorso è forse quello meno presente nella comprensione pubblica della disciplina, ma non meno importante del primo. Attraverso l'osservazione diretta dei luoghi colpiti dai terremoti, abbiamo privilegiato in questa sede il secondo aspetto, più sperimentale da certi punti di vista» [pp. 388-389]. Se proprio una critica si deve muovere al volume, in un libro così attento all'articolazione dei contributi e ricco di un vario apparato di illustrazioni, oltre alla cura dell'*editing*, della redazione dei testi e del progetto grafico, la cabina di regia avrebbe potuto evitare la ricorrenza di alcune immagini, ma tutti gli apparati presenti in calce alla pubblicazione sono utili a fare di questo prodotto uno strumento di consultazione di riferimento nell'ambito degli interventi di ricostruzione post-terremoto.





# Terremoti e cartoline d'Italia. Eugenio Mollino in Calabria



*Eugenio Mollino. Progetti in Calabria (1910-1931)*, di Francesca Valensise, *Presentazione* di Alfredo Buccaro, Aracne editrice, Canterano (RM), aprile 2020, 272 pp., ill.

**Recensione**  
di Massimo Visone

«Ogni generazione ha scritto la sua o le sue storie d'Italia. Attraverso queste storie – politiche, economiche, sociali e artistiche – sono emerse di volta in volta prospettive nuove: le analisi si sono affinate, gli ambiti e gli interessi si sono ampliati, la documentazione si è fatta sempre più imponente. Ma non ci pare si sia ancora tentata una storia che parte da quelle “cento città” che per primo Carlo Cattaneo, più di un secolo fa, aveva riconosciuto come “patrie particolari” e come uno dei caratteri salienti della storia d'Italia». Così Cesare de Seta presentava la fortunata collana *Le città nella storia d'Italia* e ancora oggi la storia dell'architettura, sempre meno paradigmatica e sempre più inclusiva, continua a presentarci studi su un universo ricco e articolato, mostrando un sistema di opere e di professionisti in attesa di narrazione.

Si tratta di un patrimonio costruito disseminato sul territorio che costituisce le identità storiche di intere comunità, la cui conoscenza è alla base del riconoscimento e della valorizzazione culturale delle “cento città” e delle loro identità. Purtroppo, l'intensa urbanizzazione che ha subito il Paese nella seconda metà del Novecento mostra che le “patrie particolari” sono oggi mal distinguibili tra loro, inglobate ormai in tessuti urbani fitti e continui, che rendono irriconoscibili gli antichi confini;

altrettanto avviene per le emergenze puntuali, fagocitate da un anonimo edificato che ha distratto lo sguardo anche degli occhi più sensibili e, qualora questi ne fossero stati attratti, i loro interrogativi sarebbero spesso rimasti senza risposta. Avviene così che le ricerche svelino giacimenti architettonici inediti, con tutte le loro storie da raccontare. A tutt'oggi, a chi si muove lungo la penisola colpisce quanto possano essere diverse città antropologicamente e culturalmente distanti tra loro, ma che a ben guardare invece possono risultare vicinissime, con una rete di relazioni che hanno fatto la storia della nazione. Ciò appare vero nelle tante piccole e grandi monografie di architetti e ingegneri che abitano le nostre biblioteche. È il caso della recente pubblicazione di Francesca Valensise, in cui si riflette una delle tante storie d'Italia attraverso l'opera del genovese Eugenio Mollino (1873-1953) in Calabria.

Se è facile che l'allievo superi il maestro, come si suol dire, meno ricorrente è che la fama di un figlio superi quella del padre. La storia è piena dell'opera di giovani capaci oscurata da quella dell'illustre genitore, la cui notorietà del cognome ha messo in ombra le qualità dell'eredità, non senza tormentati complessi edipici. Carlo Mollino (1905-1973) rappresenta uno dei rari casi in cui, invece, la notorietà

dell'uno ha distolto l'attenzione dall'attività dell'altro. Il primo, figlio unico e viziato, fu architetto, designer, fotografo di spicco del Novecento italiano e dal 1949 docente universitario alla Facoltà di Architettura del Politecnico di Torino. Il secondo, padre adorato e autocratico, fu ingegnere civile intriso della cultura accademica postunitaria, oltre che persona dotata di «una sensibilità da gentiluomo mai ostentata ma ineludibile malgrado le caratteristiche di un carattere ruvido e affatto proclive all'adulazione» [p. 12].

È avvenuto così che, mentre Carlo vantava una fortuna critica crescente, Eugenio abbia dovuto attendere fino al 2001 per uscire allo scoperto, grazie a una tesi di laurea al Politecnico di Torino (Laura Milan, *Eugenio Mollino. Ingegnere professionista a Torino tra 1899 e 1952*, relatori Carlo Olmo e Michela Rosso), ma limitata alla sola produzione torinese. Fino all'inizio del nuovo millennio, le informazioni sulla figura di Eugenio erano sempre da rintracciarsi a margine degli studi sul figlio, come è avvenuto nella mostra *Carlo Mollino. Arabeschi* (Museo di Arte Contemporanea al Castello di Rivoli, 2006-2007).

Tant'è che nel 2011, la stessa Francesca Valensise, nella voce relativa a *Carlo Mollino* per il *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* [vol. 75], inserisce un breve cammeo a proposito del padre: «Piuttosto estraneo al dibattito contemporaneo, Eugenio fu concentrato soprattutto sull'aspetto razionale e funzionale della professione, in linea con la formazione fornitagli dalla Regia Scuola di applicazione degli ingegneri che andava rinnovando i propri percorsi formativi attraverso l'apertura a nuove tecniche e tipologie progettuali. Influenzato

dagli stilemi dell'*art nouveau*, anche nella realizzazione di eleganti progetti per ville private continuò soprattutto ad approfondire gli aspetti legati alla risoluzione di problemi tecnici e impiantistici. Poco proclive alle mode del momento esercitò la sua influenza sul M., la cui padronanza tecnica e l'interesse per l'innovazione tecnologica, assimilati durante la collaborazione presso lo studio paterno, saranno ravvisabili lungo tutto il suo percorso professionale».

Partendo da questo cenno biografico, la studiosa dell'Università degli Studi Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria dedica un lavoro monografico – introdotto dalla *Presentazione* di Alfredo Buccaro – a Eugenio Mollino, figura tanto operosa quanto poco nota e piuttosto sfocata nel panorama italiano, con uno specifico focus sulla sua attività in Calabria tra il 1910 e il 1931. Orfano di entrambi i genitori, dopo gli studi superiori a Voghera, luogo di origine della famiglia, Eugenio si laurea a Torino in Ingegneria civile nel 1896 e frequenta lo studio dello scultore Casimiro Debiaggi. Dal 1901 è impiegato presso l'Ufficio tecnico municipale e nel 1906 apre un proprio studio in città, che in seguito passerà, senza soluzione di continuità, al figlio. Inizia un'intensa e multiforme attività professionale, affiancata da attente operazioni immobiliari che garantiranno la tranquillità economica alla famiglia. La grande attitudine per l'organizzazione del cantiere e il controllo del dettaglio, consentono a Eugenio di lavorare con le maggiori imprese dell'epoca e di occuparsi, con grande correttezza ed esiti sicuri, di temi molto diversi: dall'arredo alla residenza, dagli edifici industriali a quelli pubblici, dagli ospedali alle centrali idroelettriche,

dalle infrastrutture all'urbanistica. L'opera che lo ha reso noto è l'ospedale San Giovanni Battista di Torino, meglio noto come le Molinette (1927-1934), che oggi è ancora la struttura ospedaliera e universitaria più grande del Piemonte e rappresenta il quarto ospedale pubblico per ordine di grandezza in Italia. Queste capacità gli derivarono dalla sua abilità di inserirsi negli ambienti a lui professionalmente più utili, dalla formazione politecnica tardo-ottocentesca – in cui convivono materie come la matematica, l'economia politica, la scienza delle costruzioni, il disegno decorativo e la geometria descrittiva – e dalla sua stessa volontà, che traspare dai suoi disegni, di tenersi aggiornato sulle tecniche e sui materiali più all'avanguardia. Parliamo ovviamente del cemento armato, dove la sua curiosità si rivolge principalmente alla Francia, regina del *béton armé*, e ai suoi primi maestri: Tony Garnier e Auguste Perret.

I percorsi professionali di Eugenio, come quelli di una certa *élite* professionale estranea al dibattito culturale pubblico, si intrecciano sullo sfondo di un mondo complesso di relazioni costituito da conoscenze e amicizie, nate dalla frequentazione di circoli e contraddistinte dalla partecipazione a varie attività socialmente utili e alla pubblicazione in riviste. In quegli anni, due periodici sostennero e patrocinarono il ruolo dell'ingegnere, evidenziando il ruolo che scienza e tecnica rappresentavano per quella classe professionale, a cui spettava il compito di materializzare le aspettative di crescita e modernizzazione dell'Italia unita: il *Politecnico*, fondato nel 1839 e diretto da Carlo Cattaneo, e il *Giornale dell'Ingegnere e dell'Architetto ed Agronomo*, fondato nel 1860 da Raffaele

Pareto. La sua grande fortuna, o il grande merito, è stata quella di essere riuscito a entrare a far parte di questo mondo composto da esponenti della vita politica, economica e sociale, i cui nomi spesso ricorrono tra la sua committenza, ma, allo stesso tempo, di non avere trascurato una committenza anonima, fatta di commercianti, artigiani, piccoli proprietari, che costituiscono la maggior parte dei suoi lavori in tutte le fasi della sua attività professionale, in un insieme di piccoli e grandi incarichi che hanno costruito l'immagine delle città italiane del primo Novecento. In tal senso, la presenza di Eugenio Mollino in Calabria è strettamente legata al primo committente, il commendatore Antonio De Leo (1868-1937): brillante imprenditore che aveva studiato presso il Real Collegio *Carlo Alberto* di Moncalieri. Questi preferirà rivolgersi all'ambiente torinese e tramite le riviste specializzate avrà la segnalazione di un valido professionista torinese. Nasce così un sodalizio che durerà nel tempo, scandito da numerosi incarichi che porteranno in Calabria il linguaggio e la conoscenza politecnica della scuola piemontese, in risposta alle istanze di un territorio segnato dal catastrofico terremoto del 1908.

Il volume si apre con una lunga *ouverture* (Prologo; Parte prima), in cui Valensise riassume il contesto culturale della formazione del nostro *ingegnere poli-tecnico* – di cui Alfredo Buccaro sintetizza il percorso dalla nascita della figura dello “scienziato-artista” all'affermazione dell'architetto-ingegnere nella sua *Presentazione* – e quello della realtà calabrese contrassegnata da una storia stretta *Tra due terremoti*, in cui il testo si giova dei precedenti studi dell'autrice.

In questo senso la Calabria, periferia di un recente Stato unitario e in endemico ritardo con il proprio tempo, sarà lo scenario di una trasformazione fisica e sociale dettata dall'emergenza di due catastrofi sismiche accadute a poco più di un secolo di distanza. Cuore della terza parte è il paragrafo su *La dittatura del cemento armato*, con un significativo contributo per la storia dell'ingegneria italiana. Spicca, infine, la schedatura storico-descrittiva di un inedito repertorio di progetti realizzati in provincia di Reggio Calabria, con disegni provenienti dal *Fondo Mollino*, custodito presso la Biblioteca Centrale di Architettura, Sezione Archivi del Politecnico di Torino. A loro il compito di ricostruire l'immagine della rinascita, dopo che quella catastrofe fu immortalata in un singolare ciclo di cartoline postali e dove furono impegnati architetti e ingegneri di grande preparazione tecnica, come Gino Zani e Camillo Autore.

Il primo intervento di Eugenio fu la grande Villa De Leo, progettata nel 1910 sul declivio dell'antica Bagnara, con «involucri “fiabeschi” (tetti in ardesia, bow windows, pergole loggiate, torrette panoramiche) che mimetizzavano solide strutture, realizzate secondo le recenti norme della legge Antisismica Nazionale, che Mollino “addomesticava” alle più ardite necessità» [p. 11]. La serietà professionale di questo ingegnere piemontese in terra calabrese attrae in pochi decenni la committenza formata da imprenditori e grandi latifondisti locali; una costellazione di residenze urbane, ville di campagna, interventi su preesistenze, insediamenti produttivi, edicole funerarie, testimoniano una costante attività che l'autrice restituisce in maniera puntuale.







This issue of our journal brings to the scholars' attention some themes concerning the history and consequent vulnerability of the 'emerging' elements of the historical buildings, conceived as tangible signs of the urban landscape identity in European historic centres. As recent Italian earthquakes have evidenced, many historical buildings or parts of them are highly at risk not only for physical safety but also for the collective memory they preserve.

The studies here presented analyze in Europe two cities that symbolize Western culture, Paris and Moscow, marked by forms of architecture that have shaped and defined the urban landscape. Then our attention moves to Italy, presenting researches that deepen the genesis and the characteristics of the civic towers from the Middle Ages to the early 20th century in some significant centres of subalpine territories and other ones in Central and Southern Italy, with the cases of Arquata del Tronto, Palermo and Comiso.