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MONOGRÁFICO: ARQUEOLOGÍA Y RESTAURACIÓN DE EDIFICIOS HISTÓRICOS /  
MONOGRAPH: ARCHEOLOGY AND RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

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## The historical centre of Genzano di Roma (Lazio-Italia): a disappearing architectural heritage

### *El centro histórico de Genzano di Roma (Lazio-Italia): un patrimonio arquitectónico en proceso de desaparición*

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#### ABSTRACT

Aim of this paper is to show how it is possible to start important considerations, under a practical and theoretical point of view, on misleading conservation practices of the historical city Centre, in relation to some episodes in Genzano di Roma (Lazio-Italia). These wrong restorations are caused in the majority of cases by the complete absence of interventions following conservation restrictions, which could defend both the material and immaterial heritage as part of the community's identity. These reflections, combined with the work conducted in the last years, might constitute an interesting analysis, showing how there is still much to do regarding the complicated relationship between architectural projects and archaeological research, and between urban development planning and urban vertical archeology. This paper allows to reflect also the role of vertical archeology as Archeology of Complexity and its involvement in the preservation of the memory of buildings.

*Key words:* Medieval city centre; Building Archaeology; Middle Age; city history; historical memory; Lazio; Italy.

#### RESUMEN

El objetivo de este documento es mostrar cómo, en relación con algunos episodios ocurridos en Genzano di Roma (Lazio-Italia), podría ser posible generar una profunda consideración desde un punto de vista práctico y teórico sobre la mala conservación del centro histórico de la ciudad. Estas malas restauraciones están causadas, en la mayoría de los casos, por la ausencia total de intervenciones con restricciones de conservación, que protegerían su integridad y, por lo tanto, defenderían el patrimonio material e inmaterial de la identidad de la comunidad. Estas reflexiones, combinadas con el trabajo realizado en los últimos años, podrían constituir un análisis interesante que muestre que aún queda mucho por hacer en las complicadas relaciones entre los proyectos arquitectónicos y la investigación arqueológica y entre la planificación del desarrollo urbano y la arqueología vertical urbana. De lo que se desprende de este documento, el consentimiento para reflexionar también sobre el papel de la arqueología constructiva como Arqueología de la complejidad puede participar en la preservación de los edificios como elemento de la memoria histórica.

*Palabras clave:* centro de la ciudad medieval; arqueología de la arquitectura; Edad Media; historia de la ciudad; memoria histórica; Lazio; Italia.

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To preserve a city, one cannot just save its monuments and nice buildings by isolating them and adapting the new urban setting around them, but it is necessary to save the ancient context intertwining with these buildings.

Conservation must be integrative.

M. Piacentini 1916

## FOREWORD

This paper arises from some recent episodes:

- a) The fall of plaster in one of the main roads of the medieval town of Genzano di Roma, which made part of the original masonry visible, showing the presence of *spolia* (Fig. 1).
- b) The debate originated on social media among local groups on this discovery, on the town history, and in particular on some specific architectural elements with a relevant connection to the community historical memory.

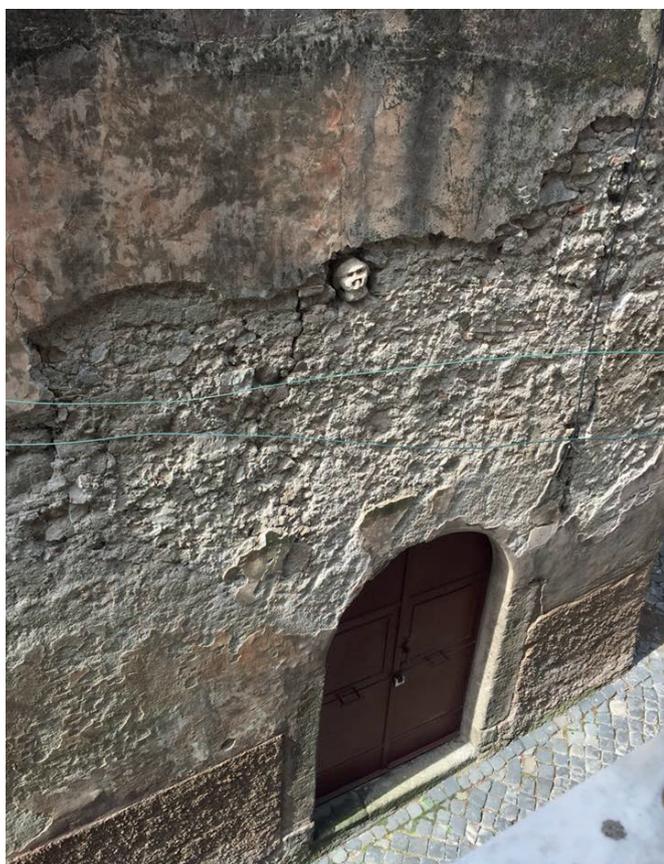


Figure 1. The wall came to light in September 2018.

- c) The verification of the preservation status of the medieval architectural heritage in Genzano di Roma (both built and excavated), compared to those preserved ten years ago.

These episodes brought me to important considerations under a practical and theoretical point of view: in certain peripheral areas surrounding Rome many of the historical towns are not preserved, but rather left in decay and often badly restored. These bad restorations are caused in the majority of cases by the complete absence of interventions following conservation restrictions, which would protect both the material and immaterial heritage as part of the community's identity. These reflections, combined with the work conducted in the last years on the inhabitation patterns of this area of the Roman countryside, might constitute an interesting analysis. After the consistent archaeological research to support the recovery of buildings and historical centres, appearing as the highest and most appreciated activities of our discipline in Italy, the situation revealed how there is still much to do in the complicated relationship between architectural projects and archaeological research, and between urban development planning and urban vertical archeology.

## INTRODUCTION

In September 2018 the fall of a large part of plaster from one of the houses of the medieval city centre brought to light a portion of its original masonry. A reused marble head decoration appeared to be inserted within it (Fig. 2). This episode was posted on the social network Facebook



Figure 2. A view of the ancient element reused in the wall.



Figure 3. The Tower called "Torre Saracena".

in one of the local city groups and a conversation started on the interpretation of the discovered piece. A few weeks later, a picture was posted in the same Facebook group of the so called "Torre Saracena" (Saracen Tower) (Fig. 3). In both cases, a long debate was opened on the cause of the presence of that particular element within the masonry, on the history of the tower and on the reason and the correct meaning of its name. The considerations brought then to a detour on the history of the town, its origins and development. Taking part in this conversation, as a scholar I realized how wrong the perception on the actual reality was and how the collective awareness on correct maintenance and restoration of historical buildings was completely absent. This brought me to conduct a reconnaissance activity in the town ten years after the first one I had done<sup>2</sup>, to verify the state of

<sup>2</sup> A first survey on the town and its territory was conducted by the author for her Masters dissertation for University La Sapienza in Rome; a second one for her doctoral thesis.



Figure 4. A view of the Lake from the Genzano ancient city centre. On the other bank, the little town of Nemi.

buildings and the existing regulations eventually made by the town administration for the conservation of this settlement, so important for the history of settlement patterns around the Nemi Lake (Fig. 4). The verification of these elements highlighted once again how the lack of dialog between research and the institutions in charge of conservation caused the almost complete loss of the structures that had survived to many destructions and transformations of the town<sup>3</sup> (Lilli 2009; Melaranci 1997, 2001). This happened, as we will see, not only for the reasons just above explained, but also for the atrocious choice in time to preserve only a specific period of the history of the city, the Baroque one. This period was definitely important, but it should not have obliterated the previous history. In order to better clarify my considerations, a section of the present paper is dedicated to the context of the town and to the analysis of the elements still visible; a second section includes the conservation and restoration choices made and their related consequences.

<sup>3</sup> The scarcity of buildings preserved especially in the centre of town should be tied, rather than to the natural and expected execution of the urban planning, the earthquake in the nineteenth century and enormous war destructions, also to the series of transformations *ex fundamentis* of the urban context: during the seventeenth century obviously with the creation of the "Olmate" (elm-lined roads), including also minor works such as the enlargement of the square facing the church of Santa Maria della Cima and the creation of the road towards the Annunziata, the so called "Sorbinì" area and the palace carrying the same name (later known as Palazzo Meta); later, with the demolition of the seventeenth century church of S. Sebastiano and of the eighteenth century monastery of the Maestre Pie for the construction of the square of T. Frasconi. On this matter, a photograph of the housing between 1944 and 1946 is indicative, in BSR, Ward Perkins Collection, War Damage Series, Genano. San Tommaso da Villanova.

## THE CONTEXT

The medieval town of Genzano di Roma stands directly on top of the Nemi Lake, one of the most important lakes in the area of the Colli Albani (Fig. 5). These mountains, especially in the section included between the *Via Latina* and the Appian Way, present an historical complex articulation: in medieval times they were subject to interesting settlement patterns that are still mostly unstudied. Rather than examining this topic exhaustively, I will consider a certain set of problems of the medieval period by analysing specific case studies, in order to identify the context studied in the present paper. Despite the small number of studies on the understanding of settlement patterns in the Middle Ages, a combination of information collected from the consistent documentary and archaeological records appears symptomatic<sup>4</sup> (Giannini 2015, in press).

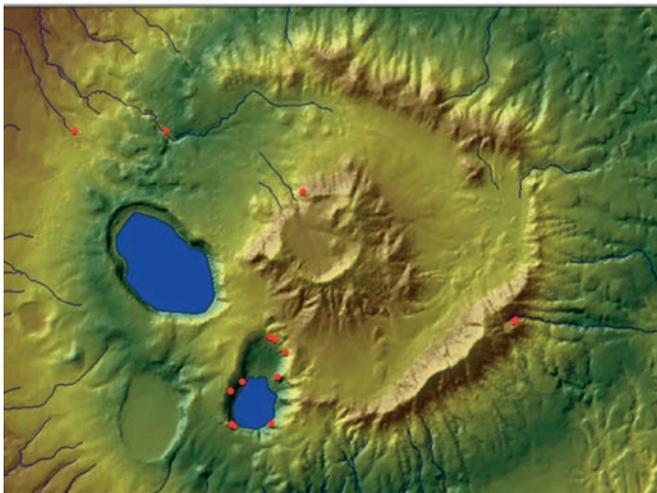


Figure 5. An overview of the context with the two lake of Nemi and Albano.

The lack of information in documentary sources on the medieval inhabitation of the area has been long interpreted as the symptom of a total abandonment. Recent surveys allow, however, the identification of historical nodes of an articulated and diverse pattern.

A careful reinterpretation of archaeological data coming from the large housing sections of the *Nemus* questions for example the role of villas in the inhabitation pattern of the very first centuries of the medieval period, an area that, well known since ancient times, is famous for its residential function. An interesting case study, for the topics examined in

this context, is certainly the villa in the area of S. Maria along the shores of the Nemi Lake. Archaeological investigations conducted here by the Northern Institutes between 1998 and 2002 have for instance interpreted the use of the site as a necropolis (Moltesen and Poulsen 2010; Braconi *et al.* 2014).

After all, another quite extensive burial area was found towards the end of the nineteenth century on the shore of the lake, in the area of Orti S. Nicola, in connection to the reoccupation of other thermal structures. Despite the fact that the presence of bodies is a clear sign of people living there, the site was scarcely studied and examined in depth up to no more than ten years ago (Brandt *et al.* 2000).

After investigations in recent years, the site assumed a completely different meaning for the discovery of a significant presence of cave settlements, which can be dated across a wide chronological range between the sixth-seventh and tenth-eleventh centuries. These are distributed in several spots along the lake bed and along a secondary road network which was fundamental for the life around the lake, certainly in connection with the first inhabitation phase of the hermitage on this site (Giannini 2008, 2010, 2011, 2015).

This interpretation appears remarkably interesting. It was enlightenment much in the last decades on the rural settlements in the territory close to Rome, paying particular attention to the scattered occupation through villas and isolated farms and on agricultural estates (De Francesco 2004). However, the same cannot be said for villages distributed in the Lazio countryside, minor scattered settlements that seem to represent a simple and efficient response to the housing needs of a spread population devoted to agriculture (De Francesco 2014; Giannini 2011). These investigations allowed the proposal of new hypotheses on the internal layout of the *Massa Nemus*, known in documentary sources since the fourth century, but not previously analysed to suggest its inhabitation pattern. Research on cave settlements allowed to propose an interpretation on the social classes responsible for the demic cave inhabitation in the early medieval period and on the functioning and organization of the farming system tied to the large estate divisions<sup>5</sup> (Giannini 2006, 2008,

<sup>4</sup> The paper will reference only a selection of publications useful for the reconstruction proposed.

<sup>5</sup> What appears to be missing in these settlements and to be completely in contrast with the demic use is the total absence of archaeological evidence related to stables, warehouses, storage rooms and structures for farming activities, that is all those artifacts connected to the ones defined as “production means” necessarily tied to these forms of inhabitation. In this setting, an important role is certainly assumed by the preexisting structures and road and water networks. The area of Colli Albani is a territory characterized by the presence of impressive hydraulic structures with the function of guaranteeing the use of soil, so much that they represent almost a *unicum* for richness, reuse and network arrangement of these artifacts.

2014). This setting appears closely connected to the phenomenon of fortifying<sup>6</sup>, and therefore to the appearance of fortified centres at the feet of the lake<sup>7</sup>. Interesting aspects emerge, for example, from the reinterpretation of the *castra* of Nemi and Genzano<sup>8</sup> (Giannini in press; Cardulli 2014). Regarding the latter, first news are recorded from 1183, when the «*Costae Montis qui dicitur Genzano, et Canapinae et Lapidinarum quae sunt in eadem costa*» is mentioned for the first time in the Papal Bull of Lucius III on April 2, when the Pope confirms the properties to the monks of S. Anastasio *ad Aquas Salvias*<sup>9</sup>. There is also a document dated to 1191, in which the *Castrum quo dicitur Nemo e un fundum Genzani* are newly assigned to the monks<sup>10</sup>. In this period, Genzano is not yet remembered as a castle, by contrast to Nemi. It is however possible that on the side of the lake, where the fortified centre will rise, a tower must have existed, since, in a document dated January 4, 1217, the Gandolfi lords of Castelgandolfo gave up their claims of the area and accepted a symbolic refund for a tower “*de Gentiano nobis deruta*”<sup>11</sup>. An important change appears in documentary sources during the thirteenth century, since in the Bull by Alexander IV of February 18, 1255, Genzano is mentioned for the first time as *Castrum*<sup>12</sup>. This document witnesses a completed phase of fortifying process in a period when, after all, the presence of castles in the

Roman countryside increases<sup>13</sup>. In the following period, the record describes the different events of the town under the domain of the Orsini family (1378), then of the monastery of Tre Fontane, of the Colonna family and of Buccio Savelli (1393)<sup>14</sup>. After several vicissitudes, the domain was again under the Colonna family from 1423 to 1480, when it was then handed to Cardinal D’Estouville, and then occupied again by the Colonna family from 1485 to 1563. From this moment onwards, the control passed on to the hands of the Cesarini family, meaning this in a certain way the end of medieval Genzano (Ratti 1797: 21-38; Moroni 1844; Previtali *et al.* 1930; Nibby 1848, I: 107-111; Dell’Arco 1965: 45; Tomassetti 1975: 293-305; Bernardi Salvetti 1977: 48-51; EAD, 1978: 149-154; Russo Bonadonna 1978: 44-45; Apa 1982: 30-31; Melaranci 2001: 181; Severini 2001: 58).

The presence of this family brought to a strong transformation of the city, so much that around the half of the seventeenth century or a bit earlier a first expansion outside of the defensive walls can be identified. This expansion was followed by the large urban addition of factories along the long straight roads and, as a result, of a well-studied project on a launched urban scale, from 1675 also by the Cesarini and later on from 1564 to 1828 by the Sforza-Cesarini, lords of Genzano. These activities involved in the planning of new urban installations and buildings with architectural backdrops important artists of the Roman architectural panorama, such as Giovanni Antonio De Rossi (1616-1695), Carlo Fontana and Tommaso Mattei (1652-1726)<sup>15</sup>.

## TRACES OF THE MEDIEVAL CASTRUM

If the process just described allows to easily understand the growth of the city, in light of both the documentary sources and the surviving urban setting and monuments, the little information on the town, even if clear, does not find corresponding physical evidence. If the town, despite the several destructions in the past century, is still perfectly identifiable in its urban

<sup>6</sup> Studies on fortifying in the last years clearly showed how cave inhabitation is an integrative part of settlement patterns in the Lazio region during the early medieval period at least until the twelfth century; see De Minicis 2011: 17-23. If this is more evident in southern Tuscany, this relationship is absolutely unstudied in the area of the Roman countryside, where only the studies conducted by the author with P. Dalmiglio tried to highlight the role of cave housing in medieval settlement patterns. See Giannini 2011: 11-16.

<sup>7</sup> In the Roman countryside the process of fortifying is well visible under a monumental point of view already in the tenth century, so much that the documentary record often mentions *castra* as settlements well established in their territory, P. Toubert 1995: 44-98. As also underlined by Toubert, whose studies remain an essential starting point for the understanding of this phenomenon in the Lazio region. «l’incastellamento del X secolo ha significato una profonda rottura nelle forme del popolamento e nella struttura agraria» (cfr. ID, p. 67.).

<sup>8</sup> These dynamics allow the insertion in this already complex frame of the role played by monasteries and abbeys- for instance, the Cistercian monks of S. Anastasio *ad Aquas Salvias* from the first half of the twelfth century.

<sup>9</sup> Ratti 1797.

<sup>10</sup> This expression is in the Bull by Celestine III, also published in Ratti 1797.

<sup>11</sup> Le Liber censuum de l’Eglise Romaine 1889-1952, I, 1905, pp. 255-256, XII. The document is published in Ratti 1797: 99-102.

<sup>12</sup> This is the Bull *Regularem vitam eligentibus* published by Ratti 1797: 102-104; there is also a previous Bull by Alexander IV written a short time earlier (January 12, 1255), the Bull *Congrua nos oportet*, published by Ughelli 1717, coll. 53-55, where one can read the expression *fundum Censam*, interpreted by most as a transcription error of Ughelli and to read instead as *fundum Genzani*. Also Cardulli supports this reading in his recent work, attributing its description to the town of Genzano (see Cardulli 2014: 49).

<sup>13</sup> S. Carocci and M. Venditelli on the Roman Countryside, brought definitely to the comprehension of this phenomenon, as well as all the recent studies by C. Whickam.

<sup>14</sup> It is actually in relation to a request of help to the Holy Seat by the Massari of Genzano, oppressed by Buccio Savelli lord of Ariccia, that the church of S. Maria della Cima is mentioned for the first time.

<sup>15</sup> This is a particularly important factor to consider in understanding the value given to the transformation of the town that marked its growth so much.

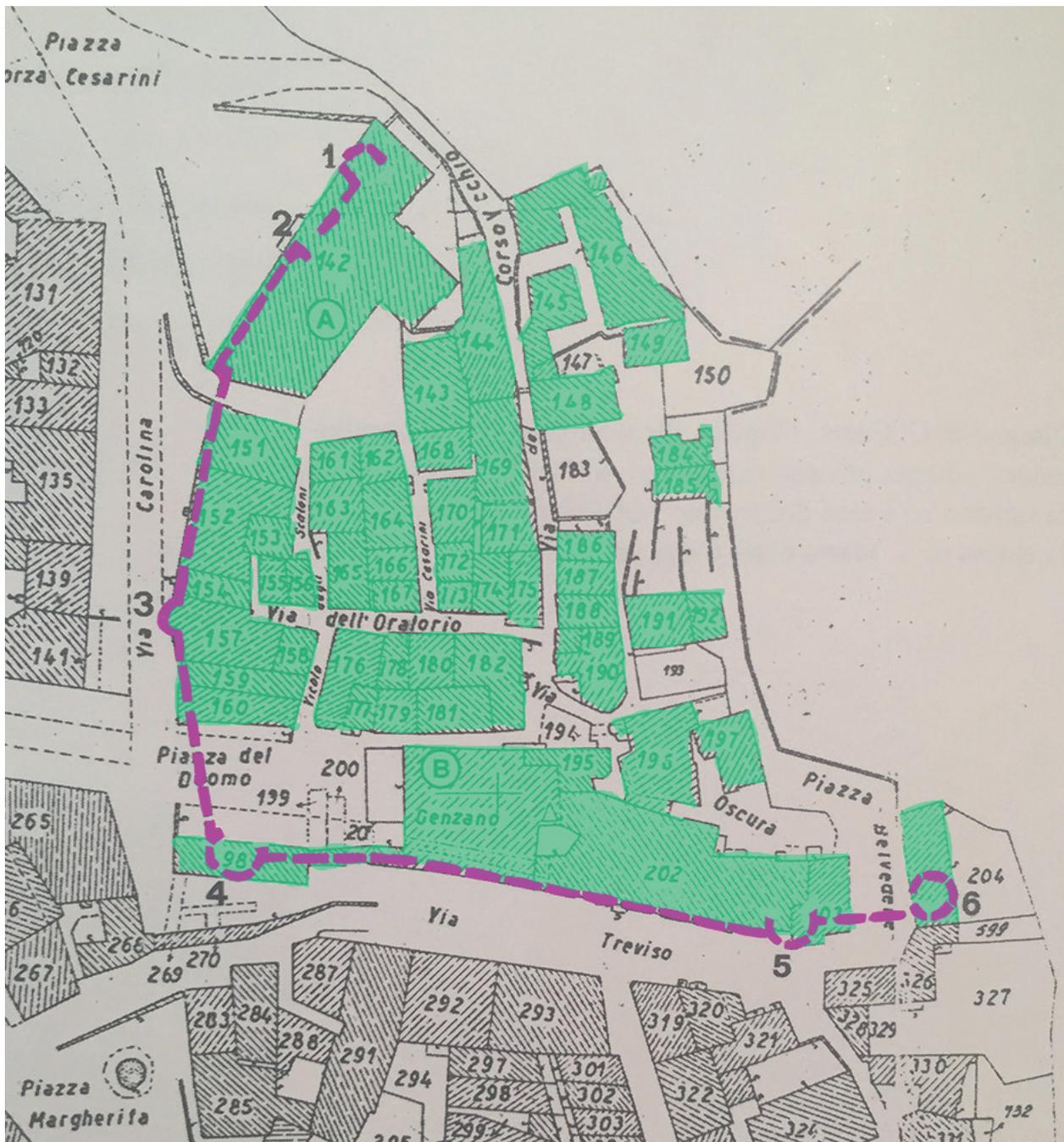


Figure 6. A reconstruction of the city wall (graphic layout Author).

stratifications characterizing its current expansion and organization<sup>16</sup> (Lampe 1985; Feliciani 1994; Melaranci 1997; Bassanelli 1829), it is hard to find the traces

of its original setting. What is now known as “Genzano Vecchio”, is a triangular shaped inhabited area, sided from north-west to south-east by the Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini and via Annarumi, south by via Guidobaldi and on the third side by the cliff directly over the lake (Fig. 6). Of the ancient fortified nucleus there are remaining parts of the defensive walls. It was built in square tufa blocks, distributed on quite regular and tidy courses, visible along almost all of via Annarumi

<sup>16</sup> Genzano, just like the other fortified centres of the area (Albano, Ariccia, Castel Gandolfo, Nemi, Lanuvio, Velletri) was seriously damaged during the bombing of the Second World War, but their original setting can be reconstructed hypothetically thanks to the surviving material evidence and graphic and documentary sources. It was calculated that in this period 70% of the Genzano housing was destroyed or condemned.

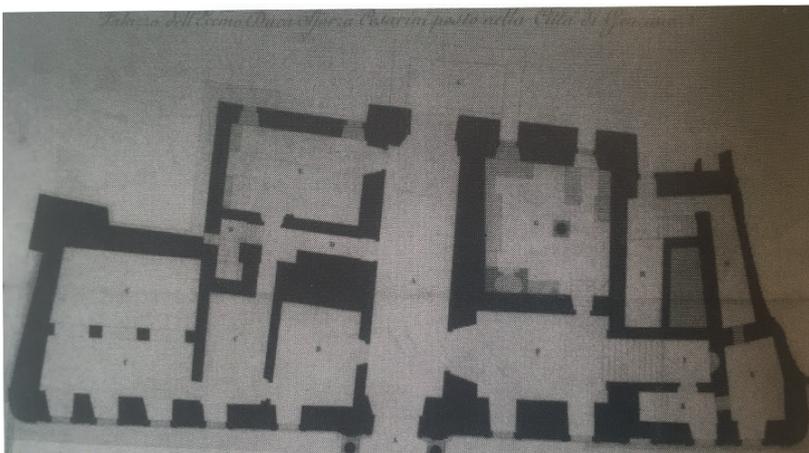


Figure 8. On the left, Palazzo Cesarini view and planning; on the right, an historical view of palazzo Sorbini.



Figure 7. Palazzo Sorbini-Meta.

and in piazza Marconi and in a further portion engulfed within the buildings of via Guidobaldi (Fig. 7). This portion must have included towers, probably located in strategic points of the fortification. Of these towers remain the tower in via Annarumi, in a good state of conservation and the ruins of a possible tower identified in the moulded base of the palace forming a corner with piazza Marconi, now plastered and no longer visible. Traces of the defensive circuit can also be seen on maps by looking at the thickness of walls in the moulded batters of Palazzo Meta<sup>17</sup> (Dionisi 1977, 1978; Melaranci 2001) and Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 8). Finally, it is possible to identify one last tower

<sup>17</sup> The palace can be dated between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century.

<sup>18</sup> *Infra*.



Figure 9. The city centre in an engraving of Henrick Van Cleef (1587) (Melaranci 2011).

in the southern side of the walls towards the lake (Bilancia 1985: 27), while the one on the southern side of Palazzo Sorbini, documented by several iconographic sources<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 9), that could be seen up to the half of the nineteenth century, is currently lost. Even if in certain points the renewal of mortar during a restoration in 1990 makes the vertical analysis impossible, in the areas where it is still visible the masonry appears characterized by squared blocks of Alban tufa and sporadic yellow tufa blocks<sup>20</sup> of relatively regular dimensions<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> The tower can be recognized in the Castasto Gregoriano (Archivio di Stato, Fondo Catasto Gregoriano, comarca 4, Genzano, mappe (1819), in an engraving by Smith of 1796, in a drawing by Corot of 1843 and in an engraving by Maina.

<sup>20</sup> In some cases, the masonry presents sporadic inserts of flint in both fragments or in actual entire blocks which appear to be reused. These blocks show completely different dimensions and appear more as rectangular (8-9 × 13-15 cm). There are also sporadic elements of brick reused.

<sup>21</sup> The blocks present a length of 20-30 cm and a height between 15 and 20 cm. The presence of several layers of mortar, probably due to different remakings across time, makes the analysis of the wall courses hard, which appear of variable heights and often determined by the presence of irregular elements not perfectly aligned.

The described wall circuit appears to correspond to the reconstruction proposed after that some traces were identified (Fig. 10). Inside, the town is organized along a path, identifiable in part with via del Corso Vecchio; this path currently starts from the left side of Palazzo Cesarini. This palace was built in its current form by Giuliano Cesarini at the half of the seventeenth century by reusing preexisting structures. Before the construction of this building, the layout of the palace and of the road network must have been very different: the palace was likely located on the right of the current portal (Fig. 11). This theory is supported both by a panel by Domenico Jacovacci<sup>22</sup> and by the layout analysis of the palace today. The southern section, after all, is characterized by an irregular plan and a completely different thickness of walls from those in the northern section, confirming what it can be seen in the panel (Fig. 12). In the panel, a tower can be also seen, which brings to the hypothesis, together with the thickness of walls, that the structure englobed within the current palace was connected to the defensive circuit walls previously described and that one of the ancient gateways of the town must have been located between this preexisting structure and the tower<sup>23</sup>. The other town gateway was probably in proximity of the current Palazzo Sorbini. Since the descriptive cadastres of the seventeenth century name the area outside of it “Piazza di Fuori” (square on the outside; Melaranci 2001). The historical reconstruction of the town entrances in these positions and, in particular, the identification of one of the gateways close to the present entrance to Palazzo Sforza Cesarini allow to suggest that the main itinerary was developed from the gateway along the opening of via Scaloni behind the palace. From there, this itinerary joined the current via Corso Vecchio in correspondence of Palazzo Dave<sup>24</sup>, reaching then the church of S. Maria della Cima and then the other gateway near Palazzo Sorbini

<sup>22</sup> The panel dated to 1658 is kept with the original manuscript in the library of Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia.

<sup>23</sup> This seems to be confirmed also by the fact that when the “new” palace was built, the community of Genzano obtained Transit rights (Archivio di Stato di Roma, fondo Sforza Cesarini, parte I, 985, nr. 9).

<sup>24</sup> This is a structure dating back to the seventeenth century. It presents quite refined building features compared to its context and constitutes an interesting example of seventeenth century building transformation of a previous medieval unit. The palace, with a main entrance now on via del Corso Vecchio, is peculiar for its likely back entrance through a narrow street close to the intersection between the opening in via Scaloni and via dei Cesarini. This small street, being on a much higher walking level than the front of the building, allows direct access to the second floor and is closely tied to the distribution of the englobed medieval house units and to the urban setting previous to the town transformations of the seventeenth century.



Figure 10. An hypothesis of the city centre in Catasto Gregoriano (graphic layout Author).

(Fig. 13). The main city road was therefore characterized by both important architectural complexes, the ducal palace and the church of S. Maria della Cima. If we can read very little of the former<sup>25</sup>, incorporated within the modern Palazzo Cesarini, the latter still shows quite weak traces of the medieval layout after a very bad restoration conducted in the '80s<sup>26</sup>. The building now presents the main entrance facing piazza

Guglielmo Marconi and via Italo Belardi, but it is the result of a seventeenth century rotation of the building. The original building was actually completely rotated by 90 degrees and was therefore facing the town and Corso Vecchio<sup>27</sup> (Melaranci 2001; Corsi 2017). It was characterized by a different plan and smaller dimensions (Fig. 14). The original masonry visible before the restoration included several *spolia* and rectangular

<sup>25</sup> As previously mentioned, the original nucleus of the palace was probably a simple articulation of the fortified walls, without an actual distinctiveness as an inhabited area of a certain level.

<sup>26</sup> The works started in 1981 by the Soprintendenza brought to the conclusion that the church had been built over a preexisting ancient Roman structure. Actually at the base of the original façade facing the town, near one of the portals now walled up, fragments of architectural elements from the Classical period were found.

<sup>27</sup> This rotation should be considered in relation to a new development phase of the town, that included during the seventeenth century the construction of important buildings and the expansion downhill of the centre. This expansion marked in a certain way the end of the circuit walls intended as a borderline for the settlement. This transformation is closely tied to an important urban project that saw the creation in the half of the seventeenth century of the famous Olmate, a trident of roads used to connect Genzano to Ariccia.

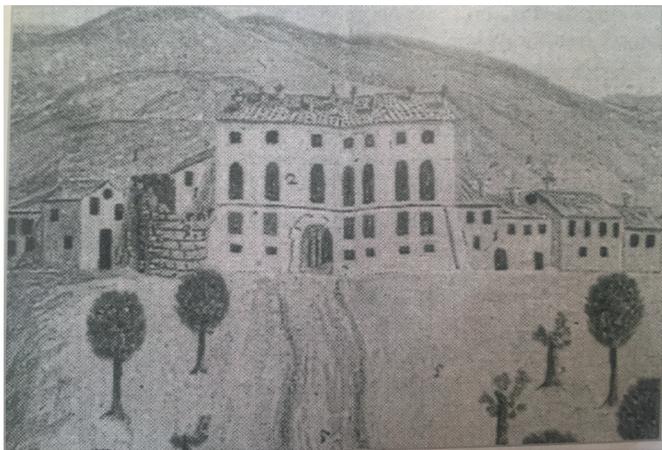


Figure 11. Detail of the panel of Domenico Jacovacci (1658) (Melaranci 2011).



Figure 12. Analysis of the wall thickness (Melaranci 2011- graphic layout Author).



Figure 13. The topographic position on Palazzo Sorbini and the possible position of the second medieval city gate (Magistri 1992, graphic layout Author).

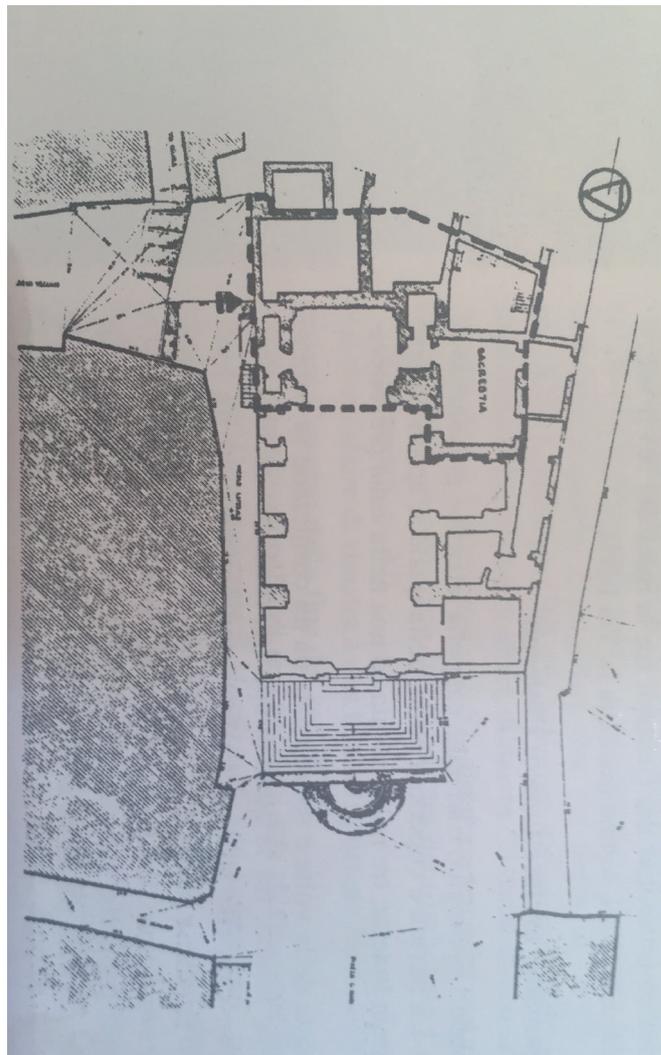


Figure 14. The church of S. Maria della Cima. Plan with the reconstruction of the original building (Magistri 1992).

blocks of Alban peperino stone, not only in some portions of the perimeter walls, but also in the bell tower. It appears now impossible to analyse the original walls of the bell tower, where the only elements still visible are a group of double-arched windows and one of the belt courses, characterized by a peculiar zigzag decoration or upside-down “V” found in few other medieval Roman bell towers built during the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth centuries (Fig. 15). The visible double-arched windows belong to a type made with marble colonnades and trapezoid capitals, while the belfry presents arched windows (Apa 1982). It is possible to see within the town, among the several anomalous accretions that keep on being added to the housing, many well preserved portals and windows of peperino stone, datable to between the fourteenth and



Figure 15. The Bell Tower of S. Maria della Cima.

fifteenth centuries. These can still be observed on different buildings of the small fortified centre (Fig. 16).

By considering what it was just described together with the written record, it is possible to reconstruct historically some of the development phases of the small centre, in relation to different historical events. Based on the little visible architectural evidence, we can identify very few elements of the period between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The visible double-arched windows and belt course can be compared to structures in Rome dating to this same period. It is not possible to obtain information from the masonry analysis of the bell tower, which can be only hypothetically dated to the same period of the church, if one accepts the little information published on the subject. The church masonry is described as having rectangular blocks of Alban peperino stone. These recall the “tuffelli” technique, largely spread across the Roman rural landscape between the end of the twelfth century and the first decades of the fourteenth century<sup>28</sup> (Magistri

1992). Furthermore, we know that the building was seriously damaged by a fire that had damaged a large part of the town in 1402. In 1633 it results once again to be in ruins, so much that in 1633 the use of one of its two aisles and relative altars was suspended, a situation that brought to the decision of a reconstruction. It is significantly relevant to follow the phases of this reconstruction in order to understand some important elements in the transformation of the town. From the *nota de' denari* received by Mastro Gio Battista for the worksite of the church of Genzano and from other manuscripts, we know that the works were commissioned to Giovanni Antonio De Rossi, a young Roman architect assisted by his teacher Francesco Peperelli<sup>29</sup>. The works costed 1587 ecus and lasted about fifteen years, ending up in a complete transformation of the original layout (Fig. 17). The façade was completely rotated towards the valley, which implicated the enlargement of the square facing the church, corresponding to the

<sup>28</sup> The only written source referring to the restoration and excavation activities in this occasion stresses that “the church and Romanesque bell tower showed reused masonry with ancient Roman marbles in certain sections and the archaeological survey brought to light several sherds of ancient Roman pottery” (see Magistri 1992, p. 88), and continues by informing that “before

the addition of new plaster on walls in 1981, precious portions of perimeter walls in rectangular peperino blocks belonging to the old church and bell tower could still be seen” (see Magistri 1992: 89).

<sup>29</sup> Archivio di Stato, Fondo Ospedale della SS. Consolazione, Busta n. 147 “Nota de' Denari, che ha avuto mastro Gio. Batta Sabbaino a conto della fabbrica della chiesa di Genzano”.



Figure 16. Some portals and windows in the city centre.

current Largo Guglielmo Marconi<sup>30</sup>, and the demolition of a part of the walls and of some houses overlooking the new façade of the church<sup>31</sup>. This façade, however, was practically made in connection to the previous building, a structure with a different orientation and completely different shape and size, and englobed only a small part of it. A building was thus constructed with a lengthened plan compared to the previous one, allowing to create a single-aisle building characterized by

a strongly highlighted presbyterial area<sup>32</sup>. The church transformation marked, for the urban setting, the opening of the housing area towards the valley and the end of the defensive function of the circuit wall, which was demolished to allow also a visual link between the church and the part of the city that largely grew in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries period<sup>33</sup>. The changes in the church also allow to examine the urban evolution of the town and therefore to better understand the weak traces preexisting these transformations. The material data on the church and bell tower, dated to a time

<sup>30</sup> The facade rotation and destruction of a part of the defensive walls facing the church were the starting point for the creation of a road axis between S. Maria della Cima and the church of S. Sebastiano (no longer existing), the Strada Livia built between 1671 and 1697 by will of Livia Cesarini.

<sup>31</sup> These activities must have certainly caused a geomorphic transformation, by reducing the natural slope through excavation and backfilling. Evidence of these can be found also in the large step pedestal connecting the interior floor level with the outside square and in the transformation of several house entrances into large stairways.

<sup>32</sup> Similar solutions were adopted by De Rossi also in S. Maria in Publicolis (1640-43) and S. Maria Porta Paradisi (1643-45) in Rome.

<sup>33</sup> After the beginning of works in the church, followed the remaking of the façade of Palazzo Cesarini (1637), the construction of the convent and church of the Capuchines (inaugurated in 1643), the beginning of works to elaborate the Olmate project (1643) which, together with the trident road of via Livia, via Sforza and via dei Cappuccini, determined the entire transformation of the town.

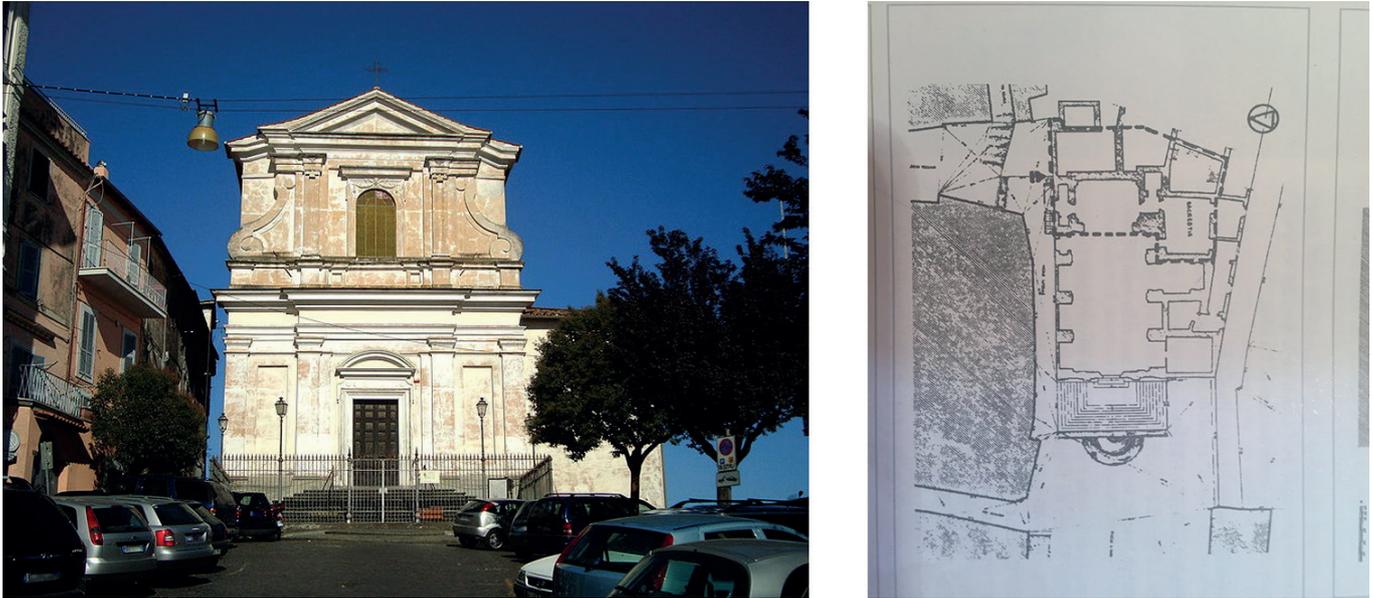


Figure 17. The church façade and the transformation after the restoration.

that cannot precede the period between the end of the twelfth century and the first half of the thirteenth century, appear to confirm the information provided by documentary sources. According to these, it was in this period that the real evolution in the organization took place, since the Bull by Alexander IV on February 18, 1255 finally mentions Genzano as *castrum*<sup>34</sup>. We know very little of this *castrum*<sup>35</sup>. It is perhaps possible to connect it to the sections of wall englobed within Palazzo Cesarini and other artifacts found during its restoration. After the purchase of the town in 1564 by the Cesarini family, the baronial palace, who had been occupying only the current southern wing, was completely reshaped into the present building, after further interventions. The original palace was completely incorporated together with some adjacent houses purchased for the occasion. Inside the small town, on the contrary of what it had happened for the centres of Lanuvio and Albano, housing related to this phase is not visible, being this therefore still quite evanescent under the point of view of settlement types and materiality. However, it is possible to highlight that, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the

town was not fortified like many authors suggest<sup>36</sup>, but rather the *Castrum* corresponding to the palace was built<sup>37</sup>. This data appears to perfectly align to the settlement dynamics of the Nemi Lake between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. They make possible to propose the presence of inhabitation spread around the lake, followed in the full medieval period by the creation of *castra* as fortified nodes controlling the lake<sup>38</sup> and by the fortified town in a second moment (Giannini 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013,

<sup>34</sup> See reference n.16

<sup>35</sup> Cardulli has a diverging opinion and dates in his recent publication on the encastellation process along the Appian Way and on the remaining walls of the fortification ascribed to this chronological period. He believes that the hypothesis proposed by the author of the present paper is completely wrong both for her analysis of the structures and for the comparisons used to support her theory, in his opinion completely unrelated to the structures examined and to Roman building techniques (cfr. Cardulli 2014: 50 and notes 42 and 63).

<sup>36</sup> On the medieval foundation of Genzano wrote Raggi 1844: 270-276; Nibby 1848, I: 108; De Fonseca 1904: 70; Martinori 1933-1934, I: 256-257; Calandro 1973: 63, who attributes to the Cistercians the fortification of a field; Cenciari and Ciaccaglia 1982: 160-161; Tomassetti 1975: 289. Bettini and Lampe 1985: 18, agree in considering Genzano founded towards the half of the thirteenth century. In Carocci and Venditelli 2004, the authors date instead the fortification of the town to between the end of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century and attribute it to the Cistercians. A Cistercian origin of the town is also supported by Alemi *et al.* 1986: 18, while an original hypothesis on the foundation is in Bernardi Salvetti 1977; EAD 1978: 143-148. The author connects the foundation of Genzano to the Saracenic invasions of the ninth century, a theory on which Magistri agrees (Magistri 1992), by putting in relation a first fortification of the town with the same invasions and suggesting that Genzano “became an actual *castrum* by englobing the Saracenic towers and the housing circuit with new fortified structures in the thirteenth century” (see Magistri 1992-1993: 89; 10, note 4). This theory was picked up by Severini (see Severini 2001: 58) and Melaranci, who believes that Genzano was an inhabited centre in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, later fortified by Cistercians (Melaranci 1997: 45, 2001: 181).

<sup>37</sup> After all, this seems to be in line with what happened in the close by *Castrum Nemo* (Nemi) where it wasn't the town to be fortified, but rather a castle was built close to the current Palazzo Ruspoli, which englobed parts of its ruins.

<sup>38</sup> None of the scholars studying medieval Genzano ever tied its evolution to the settlement patterns of the Lake area close to it.

2015). Although publications recall a fortified circuit in the thirteenth century, described only in one case as a double circuit wall with solid crenelated walls, nothing of the existing walls can be connected to this specific period. What it remains, on the contrary, besides not showing any evidence of eventual preexisting fortifications, appears to be built in one single phase. The circuit wall, built as previously said in square tufa and peperino blocks displayed on quite regular courses with sporadic bricks and reused “tufelli”, can be compared to several fortified structures on the Colli Albani and in the rural landscape of Rome and dated to the end of the fourteenth century and the fifteenth century. This chronology appears compatible with a construction under the Colonna lords and could be compared to the circuit walls of Marino and Lanuvio (Giannini and Garofalo in press).

## RESEARCH, CONSERVATION AND CIRCULATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The present paper highlighted the situation of a historical centre among many others, which appears however of particular interest for the inhabitation patterns of the lake area and in particular for the understanding of the transition from a spreading occupation of the lake to the *castra* surrounding it<sup>39</sup>. In the same years, that inhabitation studies opened the way towards new interesting inhabitation interpretations, the city of Genzano continued an important recovery and restoration of Palazzo Cesarini and Parco Cesarini. This monumental complex, closely related to the transformations of Genzano from the seventeenth century onwards, was purchased by the city administration in 1998, after the bankruptcy of the previous owner, together with the attached park covering the area up to the shores of the Nemi lake. In 2001 as a winner of a province competition<sup>40</sup>, the city launched an important restoration and recovery program of both monuments, which started from that moment to be rightly considered the most significant for the city. This happened

not only for the architectural values that they represent and that show considerable appeal for the history of Roman architecture in the eighteenth century, but also because they played a fundamental role in the development of this urban centre in the Castelli Romani territory. During these restoration works, several fragments from the history of the palace<sup>41</sup> and park, previous to the seventeenth century, emerged, although they were not given the same attention and promotion by the competent institutions, even if they were at the centre of important discoveries for scholars<sup>42</sup>. This brought to the complete absence of attention to these elements during the recovery of the monumental complex, so much that they are not mentioned in the academic publications, nor in the descriptive panels nor in the visiting itineraries created inside the park and palace<sup>43</sup>. This oblivion operation, also caused by the institutions in charge of the monument conservation, originated however by the choice of the administration conducting the laborious restoration to consider Genzano a city founded in the seventeenth century, causing a significant gap between the urban transformations and the diachronic history of evolution of the territory. In my opinion, by misrepresenting the territory, this vision brought also to disastrous consequences for the preservation and conservation of the medieval town, left for years in decline and subject to transformations disrespecting its innate nature. Even if it is to be a historical centre according to city building regulations, there is not such thing as conservation restrictions within these same regulations conceived for the medieval and Renaissance heritage. In 2004, the

<sup>41</sup> Regarding the excavated buildings, for instance, a research project run by Fondazione Terre Latine and the author allowed the creation of a touristic museum itinerary carried out by the city administration through a resolution of the town council. This itinerary has yet to be actually made, as well as the preservation, conservation and restoration operations of these buildings uncovered, kept in neglect and oblivion among the properties of the administration.

<sup>42</sup> During the restoration works in the park and in particular between 2006 and 2008, the reopening of some pathways brought to light the presence of several cave units, which, once cleaned, showed numerous connections to the information found about the rest of the lake area, underlining as well the presence of a road network previous to the nineteenth century garden datable because of these caves at least to the early medieval period. During the restorations of the palace, a garbage pit and walls suggesting the existence of a small englobed path were found in the wing corresponding to the medieval baronial palace.

<sup>43</sup> Some of the rock cave settlements identified within the park, for example, part of the scattered early medieval settlement are in complete state of neglect, others incorporated during the project of the English garden in a monumental caves fountain are devoid of any reference and attention to their original plant.

<sup>39</sup> The research in the last ten years looked at different aspects of this transition, focusing both on the organization of early medieval inhabitation of the area, which seems at least in part constituted by different sporadic cave settlements along the shores, and on the evolution of fortified settlement forms.

<sup>40</sup> Province Competition of 2001 –Piano Restauri– the city administration of Genzano, participating in the same competition with a preliminary project, classified in third position, winning therefore the funding. The amount for the works was of € 1.549.370,69 (£ 3.000.000.000).

“Piano per il restauro e per il colore dei fronti edilizi dell’insediamento storico del Comune di Genzano di Roma” (*Plan for the restoration and painting of housing in the historical settlement of the City of Genzano di Roma*) was launched in the context of the program “Programma per la formazione di interventi integrati di valorizzazione e sviluppo degli insediamenti storici della Provincia di Roma - PRO.V.I.S” (*Program for the elaboration of conservation and development operations for the historical settlements in the province of Rome*) started by the Assessorato alle Politiche del Territorio della Provincia di Roma in 2004<sup>44</sup>. This plan was thought to “regulate and guide the project and building activities related to restorations and regular and special maintenance operations conducted on buildings of the historical settlement of the city, providing to the administration offices and private organizations the guidelines for the evaluation and execution of these kind of interventions”. The aim was therefore to integrate the forming city Building Regulations with a specific legislation that could not only guide in the choice of colours to apply to the buildings of the historical settlement. It was also aimed to systematically and exhaustively solve the problems of preserving the architectural surfaces of peculiar historical and architectural value, not only within the so called *centro storico* (historical centre)- a definition formulated and consolidated<sup>45</sup>. This plan also received a positive feedback by the former Soprintendenza per il Paesaggio e per i Beni Architettonici del Lazio, which however underlined the “need, given the lack of specific universal regulations, for an architect conservator to read and critically interpret the colors and quality of buildings and for the works to be assigned to workers specialized in the treatment of surfaces”. All these worthy and interesting regulations were however targeted towards Baroque Genzano, determining a continuous oblivion operation in the conservation and preservation of the small town, which, despite being included in the building plan and town planning within the historical centre, was not subject to specific conservation regulations. As mentioned above, the will to promote and enhance Genzano as

a city founded in the seventeenth century brought to forget completely the history previous to the urban transformations, so much that also on the tourist information website little and old-fashioned information is dedicated to the town. This absence of promotion and enhancement shows a significant consequence on the perception of the town by its community. The town is indeed considered the nucleus of the settlement, but according to a knowledge distorted by common beliefs and the spread of out-of-date interpretations, supported also by those who should worry thoroughly about conservation and promotion. A meaningful example is precisely the tower in via Annarumi, considered to be from the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, but actually later, still classified in 2018 by the city institutions and local conservation experts as “Saracenic tower”, fostering in this way a spread historiographic mistake also connected to an incorrect reading of the history and urban and architectural development of the artifact<sup>46</sup>.

The restoration and preservation of the medieval house units inside the town are indeed completely delegated to the awareness of owners and the technicians involved (surveyors and architects). This caused the loss of original belt courses, the obliteration of windows and gothic portals, the transformation of interiors and of the original stone facades, often covered by horrible paint and restoration plaster. This happens both on secular and religious buildings, so that nothing was done to recover the glory of the medieval bell tower of S. Maria della Cima. This building, after the 1980’s restoration, remains hidden behind the ugly grey plaster, making it look completely anonymous in the perspective view of the town, in contrast with how it would have peculiarly emerged given its position. Another emblematic case is the rediscovery of the original masonry in via degli Scaloni emerged only after an accidental fall of plaster. This brought to light both the perfect conservation of the medieval and Renaissance *facies* under the paint and also the absence of urge in the administration to recover the original façade of the complex after this accidental fall. All these elements, considered together with the

<sup>44</sup> The competition for the funding of the projects was based on three main interventions. The 3c axis included the presentation of funding projects for the “editing of documents for the urban planning” and in particular of Color guides as one of the possible kind of projects to include within the funding.

<sup>45</sup> A further and not secondary feature was added to this plan, that is the one related to fixing the street furniture and in particular shop signage, technical system and signage in order to avoid disfiguring interferences, either visual or built, on the preexisting architecture.

<sup>46</sup> Despite the fact that this expression is now considered as widely outdated and classified by scholars as a spread historiographic mistake, it is still used not only to continue the tradition but also to tie it to a Saracenic presence in the area, referring to old-fashioned traditions and distorted notions without paying any attention to the artefact and its physical structure. If this is understandable within the knowledge of a community- which shows however the complete lack of will by the institutions to promote its local history- it is worse when these mistakes appear in official documents, works by professional conservators or council members for the cultural heritage.

date here summarized regarding the history of the town and its territory, highlight the following facts. Despite vertical archaeology has obtained considerable results, there are still examples of how the absence of interaction between different research (archaeology, architecture, conservation) together with the lack of liberation of local institutions from a certain way of living the territory and its architectural heritage, seriously harm the conservation of the town's history as a stratified city, both under and on top of the ground. A real preservation of the city cannot absolutely focus on one single development phase, in this case the Baroque period, because this target generates not only a dangerous fabrication of history but also the complete damaging oblivion of all that has happened before<sup>47</sup>.

It is suitable to ask what kind of memory archaeology (vertical archaeology in this case) may bring back to the surface from architecture and history. All that happened in the small town so far underlines how the projecting role of recovery went missing and the *status questionis* both under a physical and anthropological point of view brings to the question: what to do to recover this fundamental connection with the cultural heritage (the medieval town)? It would be better to ask ourselves what urban memories represent and what the best tools to objectively bring into the light these memories are. In order to get this, we need an illuminate policy of promotion and therefore of preservation and conservation. What happened in Genzano in the last twenty years has indeed highlighted how good intentions of recovery and promotion of a single monumental complex have generated the choice to enhance and preserve only and exclusively a specific period in the history of the city. A follow-up on what it happened allows to reaffirm how the methods chosen to put in the spotlight certain urban memories are fundamental because on these methods depend the content, accuracy and exposure of the memories themselves and as a consequence also the kind of conservation and use. In order to avoid neglecting certain memories, it is necessary to think archaeologically both about the city

and its complexity, with studies that look at global archaeology both for the cultural heritage considered and the research tools adopted. As T. Mannoni reminded us in one of his many admirable lectures: "vertical analyses, both aerial and punctual, in the city, allow to find: what cannot be found in existing buildings underground;... the aware and appropriate use of global archaeology methods highlights a large number of memories still physically existing, without immediately giving a larger or smaller importance to certain categories depending on their period, function or aesthetic value, even if these characteristics were object of knowledge and critical analysis" (Mannoni 2002: 39-58). In the case of Genzano, it's clear that the restoration of the monumental complex and the choice of conservation of the Baroque setting as the main feature to preserve avoided completely the diachronic reconstruction of the history and evolution of the town. It created instead a kind of conservation that in a certain way completely detached that same Baroque phase, isolating it from the rest of the landscape history of which it is part. The question is not only "what is the object of memory? How? Why?" But also, given a scientific research that can enlarge and enrich the history of a city, "how to make the results of that research into collective readings of urban memories? And can these memories be accepted also as part of a cultural heritage to be used for conservation and urban planning choices?" Once again, the words by T. Mannoni can help us: "The best results on the conservation of memories can be obtained if interpretations are really tied to real life in general and to the life of the old city in particular", also bearing in mind that what it must be preserved and known is not only the object in itself, but especially the informative potential of that object and of the context it recalls<sup>48</sup>.

## SOURCES

Archivio di Stato, Fondo Catasto Gregoriano, comarca 4, Genzano, mappe.  
Archivio di Stato di Roma, fondo Sforza Cesarini.

<sup>47</sup> And this in the specific case is valid not only for the medieval and Baroque *facies* but also for the ancient one, so much that under the perspective of conservation and promotion nothing was done for all those archaeological artifacts spread in the urban context, englobed in many cases within private properties and commercial buildings. Despite the fact that the city administration provided itself with an Archaeological Map specific for its territory in 2007, elaborated by the author on commission of the city administration and acquired exactly from the Technical Office, this was never included among the attachments and functional tools of the town planning and building regulations.

<sup>48</sup> On this line, for example, the "Genzano Sotterranea" project was carried by the writer together with the Terre Latine Foundation. This project, which then led to the municipal resolution that established the tourist museum circuit "Genzano Sotterranea", was not then followed by the administration that in the figure of the councilor for culture, deputed to the enhancement and development of these activities, did not recognize in this set of artifacts such historical value as to be valued for the good of the community. As of today, the circuit is in disuse and the artifacts included in it are not the object of protection or maintenance.

BSR, Ward Perkins Collection, War Damage Series, Genzano. San Tommaso da Villanova.

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