

6 DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

XV to XVIII Centuries

Ángel Benigno GONZÁLEZ AVILÉS (Ed.)



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Drawings and archive documents of Hierosolomytan Castles in Southern Italy

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Abstract

Starting from outcomes of the project Programma ARCHIMED - “Mapping of historical migration and preservation of their traces within the Mediterranean area” (MiBAC- ES, 2001) for “Archimed Programme. Action 3.2 – Central and Eastern Mediterranean” - where is a catalogue of fortified sites with 26 castles or towers and residences – to propose in this abstract a new aspects of archival research. In the archive fund “Cassa di Ammortizzazione. Cabrei, Ordine di Malta” (in Archives State of Naples) there are many news and important updates emerged respect to project indicated above.

From inventory results dependency property of the Knights naturally connected to most important architectures in the territory that formed defensive system in Italian Tyrrhenian.

There is a testimony of the massive presence in Southern Italy of the Knights of Malta in the modern age too. And in this context it's important to remember that the Italian castles offer an ample and varied range of buildings both as regards the epoch in which they were founded and their subsequent transformations from Aragonese era to the Spanish Viceroy. As well as the changes made in adapting th buildings to new uses in the nineteenth century and in more recent times.

Keywords: Castles, Knights of Malta, Southern Italy.

1. Introduction

The study of the presence and the traces of the Knights of Malta in modern age in the Mediterranean represents a theme of great interest and with a vast historiography. A fascinating subject that brings at the same time a considerable complexity.

The Jerusalemite presence - with residences and fortified structures scattered throughout the territory and with churches of reference, located between hinterland and coast, nearby or within the historical centres- is also a particular aspect of the study of the fortified architectures of southern Italy.

This transnational religious-knightly institution, dedicated to the defense of the Holy Sepulchre, since the Middle Ages and renewed from the first half of the sixteenth century- is the owner of a specific architectural heritage, conceived

precisely for the natural functions of assistance and support developed on the territory.

But it deserves to be observed, as it has been reported several times, that the history of so many churches and castles of the Knights of Malta belongs however to the various historical-political contexts and its general characters. This heritage is part of the periodizations that in the architectural context define the stratifications and the evolutions of the centres of artistic production and cultural peripheries. In this case it is possible to assert that there is no a unique Jerusalemite architecture model but rather elaborations and structures of reference that are the expression of the time and the artistic context. These are design models that interpret aspects and themes of the different locations of the order and, in many cases in the territory of

the Italian peninsula, also represent certain *topoi* of the military architecture connected to the development of the historical centres. (Rossi, 2006).

Places and structures that, over the centuries, have undergone changes of use and significant readjustments of the original condition.

From the foregoing it is possible to say that the analysis and study of the typologies of the Knights of Malta is clearly linked to the history of the same urban contexts. And often the structure of reference is rather adherent to an idea or a building type that generally interpreted the need of the client and the temporal moment. Moreover, in the hierarchy and spatial planning, it should be remembered that the supranational places governed by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta were divided into Priors, Commanderies and Bailiwicks, according to a specific division and hierarchy that corresponded to the presence of more or less important buildings located right near the coastal centres.

In this regard, it is recalled that the headquarters of the Grand Priori in southern Italy were established in Barletta, Capua and Messina, while other various dependencies were linked to smaller centres, as evidenced by the study of many documentary findings kept at the State Archives of Naples (NOTE 1).

2. ARCHIMED Program. A project of fruition of the territory

This topic was the subject of a research project (financed by the European Community) aiming at the valorisation of the sites and the development of tourist itineraries in order to enhance the fortified architecture of the Jerusalemite property, between Italy and Greece. Presences and architectures of the Knights of Malta existing in the mirror of the Mediterranean area, albeit limited to specific geographical contexts. This is what it has been accomplished by the project in the title ARCHIMED Program. "Mapping of historical migrations and preservation of their traces within the Mediterranean area", di cui sono disponibili esiti a stampa (NOTE 2). For this work a documentary 'Data base' has been created that proposes a list of Jerusalemite dependencies, starting from the results of the archive surveys and the comparison between places or territories characterized by the presence of fortified architectures and/or castles.

A methodological approach based on an effective comparison of bibliography, documentary sources and state of the places, allowed the definition of a mapping of castles and fortresses scattered in southern Italy, owned or used by the Order (Fig. 1). From this study emerges a total list of 26 castles, with particular structures that appear of great interest; Architectures that, remodeled over time, adapted and transformed, are now museum sites or private residences, and still, in other cases abandoned buildings. Another important aspect is that some of these castles are for history and transformations, often linked to religious dependencies, mainly Benedictines, or to hospitals that offered service to the noble warriors who returned from the war campaigns in defense of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (NOTE 3).

For the study of the heritage of the Italian castles refer to the bibliography on the margins of this short and concise contribution, with the necessary premise that the analysis represents only an essential trace of the extensive bibliography available for themes and places in Southern Italy. In this context it is also useful to consider that the heritage of fortified architecture represents the outcome of an extraordinary historical and architectural stratification that starts from the foundation of the structure, in medieval or modern times, and which develops through centuries of history in which the different dominations have succeeded in sequence (Norman-Swabian, Angevin, Aragonese up to the Spanish Viceregnale). Power passages that have determined incisive restructuring until the most recent events determined by nineteenth century restorations and contemporary maintenance. (ES srl, 2001). Among these structures deserve particular mention: The bastion of the Knights of Malta in St. Euphemia, near the relative Tyrrhenian coast and, on the other side, the castle in Santo Stefano in Monopoli. Both sites constitute the permanence of settlements to defend the territory that still today are part of an extraordinary heritage of widespread fortified architecture existing throughout southern Italy. These are two different cases: the first, in Calabria, is now a tower abandoned in a vast flat territory that underwent remodeling following a devastating earthquake of 1638; while the castle of Santo Stefano, in Puglia, is currently a private residence near the seaside resorts. Finally,

among the structures of dependence of the Knights of Malta is to be pointed out also the castle of Grassano, in Basilicata, placed in the hinterland of the peninsula; an internal headquarter on the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic coasts. The latter will also lose function and trim from the beginning of the nineteenth century and

then be transformed into a church in the historical centre.

The three examples are significant for the history of stratifications and new functions determined by the reuse that takes place mainly in the nineteenth century. They are also the only testimonies of castles or fortifications that bear the name belonging to the Jerusalemite order.



Fig. 1- Programma ARCHIMED. “Mapping of historical migration and preservation of their traces within the Mediterranean area”. A thematic map of coastal Hierosolomytan fortifications in some regions of southern Italy, ES-Progetti e Sistemi srl, 2001.

3. Sant’Eufemia, the Bastion of the Knights of Malta in Calabria

The tower o Bastion of Malta was built in the first half of the 16th century as part of the plan of fortification of the southern coasts against attack by the Turks. This plan was conceived by the viceroy don Pedro de Toledo and carried out by a team of engineers and men of arms, directed by Fabrizio Pignatelli di Cerchiara, formerly Presiding Magistrate and Governor of Calabria.

The bastion, constructed according to the type with square towers on a scarp podium and attic equipped with artillery, was located near the coast (which is now more distant owing to the process of alluvial sedimentation) to guard river landings at the mouth of the Angitola, and to defend the ancient Benedictine Abbey nearby, which then passed to the Friars Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem.

The bastin, tied to the existence of the Command Post of Sant’Eufemia, remained functional down to the end of the 17th century.

In 1619 Signorino Gattinara di Pavia, General Prefect of the triremes, having been appointed Commander (Bali) of Sant'Eufemia, had the first catastral area and property (Cabreo) extended, and in 1634 he fortified and equipped the bastion with artillery pieces, as recorded by a tombstone and family coat of arms placed in the niche above the entrance portal.

The terrible earthquake of 1638 that almost completely destroyed the nearby Abbey was the origin of the decline of the administrative and military organization of the Command Post of the Knights of Malta, and led to the castle's gradual abandonment.

In the case of the Calabrian coast, connected from the beginning to the events of reconstruction and renovation that follow from the Aragonese period, it is good to note that it is a large system that developed from Naples to the extreme of the southern peninsula. Moreover, the coastal fortification system, along the Tyrrhenian side, was marked since the 13th century by a constellation of fortresses and ramparts, which allowed the defence of the territory from Saracen raids. And this is what emerges from the archive records (NOTA 4) referring to an eighteenth-century reconstruction project, a signature of the architect Ermenegildo Sintesi, who creates a series of drawings of the state of the towers that needed renovations and/or maintenance (Fig. 4), (Amirante, Pessolano, 2008).

In the archive file, the architect also proposes project drawings of new square-plan structures that would have to host the *torrieri* and the military in charge of the protection and defence of the territory. (Zinzi, 1974; Valente 1996).



Fig. 2- Sant'Eufemia, near Lamezia Terme (Calabria), Bastion of the Knights of Malta., Photographic Archive, ES-Progetti e Sistemi srl, Roma).

4. Santo Stefano, the Castle of the Knights of Malta in Puglia

St. Stephen's Castle of the Knights of Malta, containing within it the annexed Abbey dedicated to the same saint, is situated in the locality of Capitolo in the municipal territory of Monopoli, along the Adriatic coast on a peninsula surrounded on the three sides by the sea, as is depicted in a drawing (NOTA 3) of the end of the XVIIIth century found in Naples State Archives (Fig. 3). The fortified building (quadrangular in plan with bastions towards the sea and a turret emerging from inside the courtyard with embrasures attached) offered hospitality to princes and crusaders waiting to embark for the Holy Land to defend the Holy Sepulchre. The historical importance of this site is shown by Pope Alexander III's concession, in 1175, of the use of a bishop's mitre and ring to Abbot of St. Stephen's, who indeed had episcopal rights over the nearby churches of Putignano, Casaboli, Castro and Fasano as well as over the churches of the Benedictine monks within the dioceses of Monopoli and Conversano. The Castle, with the abbey complex inside it (the remains of a prothyrum and an elegant portal of the Xith century are still visible), passed to the Hierosolymite Order in 1313, and it was subsequently elevated to become a Command Post in 1435.

The fortified building was restructured in the middle of the XVIIIth century by order of the Knight Commander Fabrizio Francone, and confiscated because of the suppression of feudalism in the Napoleonic era in August 1806.



Fig. 3 Anonimus, *Castello di Santo Stefano*, first half of XVIIIth century. Naples, Archivio di Stato.

St. Stephen's Castle, in which vestiges of the past are still visible, is today a private property, adapted to be a residence with a beach and camping ground also called St. Stephen's attached. At Monopoli, the town nearest to the Castle of the Knights of Malta there is another important coastal castle. (Filomena, 2000).

5. Grassano, the Castle of the Knights of Malta in Basilicata

The remains of the Castle of the Commendam of the Knights of Malta in Grassano are situated on the summit of the old town centre, in a position dominating both the entire inhabited area and the surrounding territory, in which plateaus alternate with hills as far as neighbouring Puglia nearby. At Grassano the Commendam of the Knights of Malta, abolished and suppressed during the Napoleonic age (1806-1815), owned almost the whole town and its territory, exercising civil, and for a certain period also spiritual, jurisdiction over it. On the ancient site of the

Castle -of which only the parts of the first level of the original structure can be seen- there now stands the first church of Grassano dedicated to St. Innocence (patron of the city), but once bearing the names of Saints John and Mark, patrons of the Hierosolymite Order.

The remains of the palace of the "Baronial Commendam", which is how it is referred to in a document held in the Naples Archive State (it is called "Grassano Castle" in files of correspondence), were already in a precarious condition from 1825 on.

They were sold to the clergy in 1832 for the sum of 250 ducats. The new first church of Grassano therefore stands upon the space once occupied by the Commendam Castle, of which some areas have been demolished (see the space in front of the west face of the church), while some areas of the part underneath the ancient fortress have been incorporated.

The extension of the church building is in fact recorded in a marble coat of arms with the date 1860 on the stairway that leads to the church entrance. (Pellettieri, 2001).



Fig. 4 Ermenegildo Sintès, Drawing of the *Torre di Zambronia* and of the *Torre di S. Maria Lagnone*, half of XVIIIth century. Naples, Archivio di Stato.

6. Conclusion

From this study and the peculiar characterization of the places investigated in the various regional areas, albeit defined in a limited context, emerges the character and the presence of an institution that has played a marked role to

defend the territory throughout the Mediterranean area. The proposed case studies represent the split of a process of stratification of the fortified architecture. At the same time, these three examples show the consistency of a cultural heritage to be valued and promoted for the reading of the territory and to safeguard the

identity and history of the minor historical centres.

The verification of the condition of these complexes, still existing but radically modified, also represents the confirmation that the projects of foundation of the structures and the artistic expressions that derive from it, are the result of a normal and natural path in the history of architecture. And decisive for the reading of the sites and the territorial context is also the account of the ownership of the owners, the role of the client.

In the vast area of southern Italy that represents a fundamental logistical support area within the Mediterranean routes, they establish themselves from the 11th century, castles, bastions and churches with service hospitals for the Knights who departed or returned from the battles in the Holy Land. These are propulsion religious and political places that at the same time also represented outposts and bulwarks of defence of the territory in a wide-ranging transregional (in particular the Adriatic coastal area) that will often become theatre of war both in medieval and modern times.

But as often happened, these plants of medieval foundation, conceived in the Norman-Swabian era, over the centuries have undergone inevitable as decisive trasformazioni until the original configuration.

This is what has happened for some castles that, in order to defend the places at the behest of Federico II of Swabia, have had an evolution both in Angevin age and later in the Aragonese. And during the Spanish Viceroyalty the transformations will be even more incisive, both for the introduction of new war machines and for the outcomes of the Renaissance treatises, they concern, as well as the theory and practice for the construction of fortified cities and/or for the adaptation of urban centres.

The architectural stratification is therefore, as repeated, one of the invariants for the study of the fortresses. Suffice it to cite in this context many emblematic cases such as the Apulian castles of Barlett, Bari, Conversano, Lecce, Mola di Bari, Monopoli, Trani, Vieste, and many others, that from the eighteenth century and until the end of the nineteenth centuries are totally changed by extensions, additions and restorations in style. This aspect confirms the importance of the role of these structures, which is often linked to the main sacred architectures (churches and cathedrals) of the site.

The study of castles owned by the Knights of Malta is therefore indicative of a specific aspect of the study of fortified architecture. It follows the lines of general artistic-cultural development but it is part of a history of knights and nobility, which develops for centuries, with a transnational character.

There is probably no Jerusalemite architecture because there is no Jerusalemite state in fact. It reproduces stories and usual models, artistic elaborations and projects that are the representation of cultural contamination, different from place to place. It is the confirmation of the dialectical relationship between "centres and suburbs".

Castles and ecclesiastical complexes of service and function are at the centre of the stories of the Knights of Malta. Although settled in different places and contexts, they represent the outcome of a choral "mission" of the order, governed by the needs of the client. A theme of the history of fortified architecture, still little investigated, but rich and stratified, strongly recognizable in the landscape of Southern Italy.

Notes

NOTE 1 - Archivio di Stato di Napoli, *Cassa di Ammortizzazione, Ordine di Malta, Cabrei*. To consult "General Inventory" and archive volumes: fascio 205, fasc. 4613; fascio 226, fasc. 5907; fascio 226, fasc. 5907; fascio 3542, fasc. 166. Is possible study another documents in Archivio di Stato di Napoli, in the 'fondo' Cassa di Ammortizzazione, Ordine di Malta, Cabrei (Inventario n. 123/II, at consultation room) in list are the territorial property of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. In the 1808 by Decree of Gioacchino Murat these possessions were confiscated. In alphabetical order indicated the towns: Barletta, Bosnio, Buccino, Cannatello, Capua, Casal Trinità, Cicciano, Conversano, Cosenza, Ferendino, Fezino, Foggia, Grassano, Grotta Castagnara, Marsala, Martina, Matina, Mazzara [sic], Melicuccio [sic], Monopoli, Ostuni, Pascarola, Putignano, Roccella, Rodio e S. Mauro, S. Clemente in Morrone, S. Eufemia, S. Ferdinando, S. Giovanni di Buccino, S. Maria di Sovereto [sic], S. Silvestro in Bagnara, Trinità e Maddalena di Tricarico, Troia, Venafro, Venosa.

NOTE 2 - “Programma Archimed. Azione 3.2. Mediterraneo Centrale e Orientale. Azione pilota di cooperazione transnazionale nell’ambito dell’assetto del territorio ai sensi dell’art. 10 del FESR (Prot. 4388/26) is a project financing by EU, finished in 2001, and realized by Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Istituto Centrale per il Restauro, Hellenic Ministry of Culture; concessionario ES srl Progetti e Sistemi – Roma. For Italy there were four regions (Ob.1): Puglia, Calabria, Basilicata e Sicilia. Coordinatore ICR – Istituto Centrale per il Restauro: Alessandro Bianchi; Project Manager: Vincenzo Sommella; Scientific Responsible: Pasquale Rossi; Operations Manager: Ciro Perrella.

In the final work are identified 26 castles in use of Order of Malta, divided into three categories::

1. Castles of Sovereign Order Military of Malta (SMOM) for name and use.

2. Castles in areas of property of Sovereign Order Military of Malta

3. Important Castles in the territory near Jerusalem property

This is the list of 26 castles, divided for region, town and province related map in fig. 1:

Puglia:

1. Castello di Acaia, Acaia (Lecce).
2. Castello Svevo, Barletta (Bari).
3. Forte a Mare, Brindisi (Brindisi).
4. Castello di Conversano, Conversano (Bari).
5. Castello di Copertino, Copertino (Lecce).
6. Castello di Gallipoli, Gallipoli (Lecce).
7. Castello di Carlo V, Lecce (Lecce).
8. Castello di Mola, Mola di Bari (Bari).

9. Castello di Santo Stefano, Monopoli (Bari).

10. Castello di Otranto, Otranto (Lecce).

Basilicata:

11. Castello della Commenda dei Cavalieri di Malta, Grassano (Matera).

12. Castello del Balzo, Venosa (Potenza).

Calabria:

13. Castello aragonese, Castrovillari (Cosenza).

14. Castello Svevo, Cosenza (Cosenza).

15. Fortezza di Le Castella, Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone).

16. Castello di Melicuccà, Melicuccà (Reggio Calabria).

17. Castello di Roccella, Roccella Jonica (Reggio Calabria).

18. Bastione dei Cavalieri di Malta, Sant’Eufemia – Lamezia Terme (Catanzaro).

Sicilia:

19. Castello di Augusta, Augusta (Siracusa).

20. Castello Ursino, Catania (Catania).

21. Castello di Lombardia, Enna (Enna).

22. Castello di Mazara, Mazara del Vallo (Trapani).

23. Castello di Messina, Messina (Messina).

24. Castello di Milazzo, Milazzo (Messina).

25. Castello Aragonese, Piazza Armerina (Enna).

26. Castello Maniace, Siracusa (Siracusa).

NOTE 3 – Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Cassa di Ammortizzazione, Cabrei, Ordine di Malta, vol. 3540, fasc. 164. NOTE 4 – Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Giunta di Corrispondenza di Cassa Sacra; vol. 207.

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