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and Silvia González Soutelo

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Archaeology & pilgrimage. Studies around the rurAllure European project

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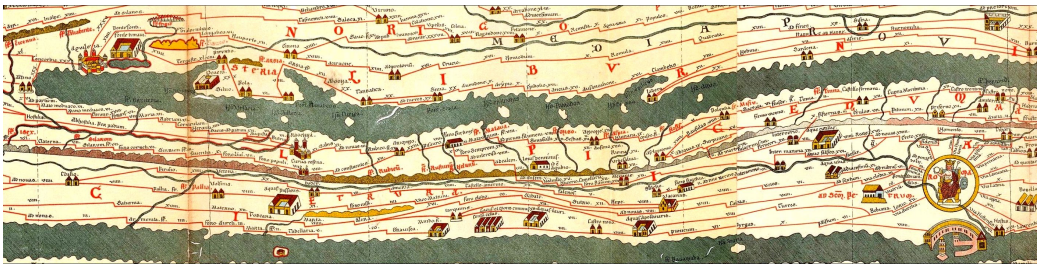
edited by Maddalena Bassani, Maria Bergamo, and Silvia González Soutelo



Medieval copy of the ancient *Tabula Peuntingeriana* (Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, *Codex Vindobonensis* 324), representing the late Antiquity Roman streetsystem. In this fragment is visible the Italian peninsula from Aquileia to Rome.

From the earliest times, certain places have been favored as travel destinations, either for reasons related to the very sacredness of their contexts, or because they were located at a transit point along routes where people, objects, and imaginaries travel. In and around these places, which are characterized by special phenomena such as natural thermalism, and are often pervaded by a sacral aura connected to various cults to pagan deities and Christian saints, sites of worship have been built, alongside lodgings for travelers, shops selling objects to be used on site or along the way, as well as places for productive activities. In addition, during the Roman, Medieval and Modern ages, some human settlements linked to these routes were in charge of adapting and maintaining the paths mostly used by pilgrims and wayfarers, while in other cases some routes were abandoned in favor of new routes and new destinations. In other cases, it was the routes that encouraged the creation of new settlements that provided services to walkers, becoming thus a key point in the territory.

It was precisely around the common thread of traditional pilgrimage that the European project *rurAllure. Promotion of rural museums and heritage sites in the vicinity of European pilgrimage routes* https://rurallure.eu has been organized and promoted: the objectives, methods and results are presented in the two contributes of the first section of this issue, both written by the people in charge of the main project: the article by Martín Lopez *et alii*, *The Horizon 2020 project rurAllure: studying pilgrimage as slow tourism, territorial development,*

In the *Tabula Peuntingeriana* there are 52 icons marking the *aquae,* the spa or thermal sites along the Roman roads.

social cohesion, and the one written by Alessia Mariotti, who is responsible for the Italian pilot, *Thermal heritage on the ways to Rome. The role of knowledge for enriching tourism experiences along three Italian pilgrimage ways.*

The project, which involved several European institutions that have been collaborating since January 2021 until December 2023, has allowed an in-depth study of some topics on the sidelines of rurAllure's objectives, bringing together scholars from different and interdisciplinary perspectives to examine such a complex phenomenon as the pilgrimage together with the exploitation and use of territories over centuries. The second section of the issue, in fact, opens with a contribution by Paola Zanovello and Andrea Meleri *Paesaggi d'acqua. Il fenomeno del termalismo nel comprensorio euganeo tra antichità ed età moderna*: it is an interesting reconstruction of the history of the settlement around the Euganean area in the Veneto region, and its exploitation, during the ancient, Medieval and Modern times. This includes a particular consideration of the region around the Euganean Hills which is better-known for the towns of Montegrotto and Abano Terme, but where other sites that have received little attention due to the limited evidence of ancient remains, hold instead a potential and cultural richness. Maddalena Bassani's article follows with a study devoted to two ancient contexts of sacred nature located near the Via Romea Francigena and the Via Romea Strata in northern Italy, *Pilgrimages to mineral springs between Antiquity and Middle Ages*. Through the analysis of structural, material and epigraphic traces, the contribution outlines the cultic and cultural horizon in which the presence of pilgrims and travelers should be considered, including some reflections about continuity and discontinuity of cults and rituals, that is to say the ways in which pilgrims arrived and stayed in contexts linked to sacredness through mineral water.

In *The Roman centuriations of Patavium and Altinum: a water management system in the central Venetian plain* Jacopo Turchetto expands on the problem of water management in the ancient territories of the Roman cities of *Patavium* and *Altinum* in the Veneto region, offering a reflection about the centuriation and the cultural possibilities of the exploitation by the inhabitants of those plots of land delimited with gromatic precision. In fact, from the centuriation derived wealth for the owners and widespread community welfare that contributed to the development of the St. Anthony road and the pilgrimage to holy sites.

Two articles devoted to two particular contexts close the second section of this issue. The first is the contribution by Silvia González Soutelo, Miguel Gómez-Heras and Laura García Juan, *Thermal heritage on the Via Francigena in Tuscany: a diachronical overview from the*

rurAllure
reach out!

European rurAllure project, which focuses on the reconstruction of the settlement and moving patterns of the Bagno Vignoni thermo-mineral site close to the Via Romea Francigena. Here, aspects related to mineral waters and their curative potential are outlined, as well as some considerations about the productive and industrial exploitation attested in the Modern age around the mineral springs. The second article, *Ancient history for tourism development. Building content for meaningful travel itineraries* authored by Alessia Mariotti and Mattia Vitelli Casella, proposes a pragmatic example for a plan of a cycling tourism experience in the site of Argenta, starting from the official itinerary of the Via Romea Germanica in the Po Delta River area.

The third and final section consider the latest scientific research panorama related to pilgrimages and archaeology between ancient and contemporary times. Ludovico Rebaudo's contribution *Un pellegrinaggio 'archeologico' di fine Quattrocento. Bernardo Michelozzi e Bonsignore Bonsignori in Anatolia e nell'arcipelago (1497-1498)* offers an interesting insight about documented discoveries and reports reports of ancient artifacts in Anatolia, compiled in the late XV century by antiquarians like Bernardo Michelozzi and Buonsignore Buonsignori. Finally, Jacopo Tabolli's article *Digging into a Display: the 'Voices' of the Bronzes from San Casciano dei Bagni* closes the issue with a presentation of the exhibition at the Quirinal Presidential Palace in Rome, which displays the objects left by pilgrims who went, between the Republican and Imperial ages, to the mineral springs of San Casciano ai Bagni (Siena).

Therefore, this issue published in the Summer holydays is an opportunity to delve into the subject of travelling, whether this is guided by health, faith or simple curiosity: it is a *viaticum* along the routes of travelers from ancient to contemporary times.

Abstract

Engramma 204 collects researches and findings of several Italian and European scholars who have dealt with aspects related to ancient, Medieval and Modern pilgrimage along the main three European Routes (Via Romea Francigena, Via Romea Strata, Via Romea Germanica), or along other routes to the Holy Land. The issue is divided into three sections. The first one is dedicated to the European project rurAllure by Martín López Nores, José Juan Pazos Arias, Susana Reboreda Morillo, Óscar Penín Romero, which focuses on the enhancement of minor sites along the pilgrimage routes of Europe, and it is accompanied by an overview on the development of promotional activities for some Italian cases supervised by Alessia Mariotti. The second section presents a series of studies related to some contexts that are close to min-

eral springs or important waterways and were frequented by pilgrims throughout the centuries: these are articles by Paola Zanovello and Andrea Meleri's on the Euganean Hills (Padua), by Maddalena Bassani's on the sanctuary of Minerva Medica in Val Trebbia (Piacenza) and that at Timavo's Sources (Monfalcone), by Jacopo Turchetto on the centuriation between Padua and Altino. Furthermore, the articles by Silvia González Soutelo, Miguel Gómez-Heras, and Laura García Juan on the Bagno Vignoni area (Siena), and by Alessia Mariotti and Mattia Vitelli Casella on the Argenta site (Po Delta). In the third and final section one can read two important contributions, the first by Ludovico Rebaudo, devoted to the study of manuscript evidences recorded during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land about archaeological remains in Anatolia; the second by Jacopo Tabolli, who presents an exhibition on votive bronzes left by pilgrims in the sanctuary at the 'Sorgenti di San Casciano ai Bagni' (Siena) that recently opened at the Palazzo del Quirinale in Rome.

keywords | Slow Tourism; Pilgrimage; Ancient History; Archaelogy.

All contributions to this issue of Engramma have followed invited submission and have been reviewed by the editorial board and scientific committee of the journal.

The Horizon 2020 project rurAllure

Studying pilgrimage as slow tourism, territorial development, social cohesion

Martín López Nores, José Juan Pazos Arias, Susana Reboreda Morillo, and Óscar Penín Romero

Introduction

A pilgrimage to religious and spiritual sites is a timeless tradition that transcends cultures and religions. It involves embarking on a journey, which often covers long distances, and reaches destinations of great significance. In recent years, this practice has gained a renewed interest, not only from a spiritual perspective but also from the standpoint of tourism and rural development, with remarkable implications from the economic, social, and cultural dimensions (Azevedo, 2021). Europe, in particular, boasts numerous worship places such as Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Rome (Italy), Trondheim (Norway), Csíksomlyó/Șumuleu Ciuc (Romania), Częstochowa (Poland), Lindau and Trier (Germany), Lourdes and Mont Saint-Michel (France), Assisi (Italy), etc. The growth experienced since the 1990s with the revival of the Way of Saint James / Camino de Santiago has stimulated initiatives to consolidate pilgrimage routes all over the continent (Moscarelli 2021; Liro 2020).

In terms of economic impact, a pilgrimage has the potential to generate significant benefits for both pilgrims and local communities along the routes. As individuals undertake their spiritual quests, they require various facilities such as accommodation, food, transportation, and guides. Local businesses catering to these needs experienced an increase of demand, leading to new job creation and income generation. This surge in economic activity helps diversifying rural economies, reducing dependency on agriculture and creating alternative livelihood opportunities (Hilpert, 2018). Furthermore, the pilgrimage routes often traverse rural land-

scapes, allowing pilgrims to engage with local crafts, products, and traditions. This interaction stimulates local entrepreneurship, encourages the production of handicrafts, and promotes the sale of regional goods. The infusion of tourism revenue into these communities facilitates infrastructure development, enhances public services, and improves the overall quality of life for the residents of the area.

With regard to social impact, a pilgrimage fosters a sense of community and connection among individuals from diverse backgrounds. As pilgrims embark on their journey, they often form bonds with fellow travelers, engaging in conversations, sharing stories, and supporting one another along the way. These communal experiences create opportunities for intercultural exchanges and promote a sense of unity beyond religious or spiritual affiliations. Moreover, the convergence of pilgrims in rural areas allows for meaningful interactions between visitors and locals. These encounters facilitate cross-cultural understanding, challenge stereotypes, and bridge gaps between urban and rural populations (Notarstefano & Gristina, 2021). Such interactions can lead to a greater appreciation for the rural way of life and cultural heritage, helping to preserve local traditions and customs that might otherwise fade away (Mariotti, Camerada, Lampreu, Carrus 2021).

Pilgrimage routes, traditionally centered around religious and spiritual sites, often traverse rural landscapes that have been overlooked by mainstream tourism (Trono, Castronuovo 2021). As foot pilgrims make their way through these regions, they can contribute to the revival and revitalization of rural areas. Investments in infrastructure, such as lodging, dining, and public facilities, are needed to accommodate the growing number of visitors. This, in turn, encourages the growth of local businesses and stimulates the development of tourism-related services. The possibilities extend beyond economic factors, though. Pilgrimage routes provide an impetus for environmental conservation, as pristine landscapes and natural resources become focal points of the journey. Communities are motivated to protect their surroundings, preserving biodiversity and adopting sustainable practices to ensure the long-term viability of their regions. This emphasis on environmental stewardship not only benefits the pilgrimage experience but also safeguards the natural beauty and resources for future generations.

The Horizon 2020 project rurAllure: Motivation and main

The rurAllure project started to take shape in 2019, aiming to assess the potential impact of the pilgrimage phenomenon for rural development as explained above. Specifically, its motivation built upon the fact that, even if some pilgrimage routes are traversed by thousands every year, their impact is almost exclusively perceived in the places located directly on the paths, rarely permeating into the surrounding rural areas. Thus, entire provinces and regions of a predominantly rural nature – which are facing significant economic and demographic challenges all over Europe – become passive witnesses of the flows of pilgrims, even if they could add much content and value to the experiences. The opportunity for the project was reinforced by the aim to set the basis for rural communities to develop relevant and cohesive tourist products that might help facing the economic challenges arising with the COVID-19 crisis, con-

sidering that the EU should put strong focus in the future into domestic tourism and well as outdoor activities.

The goal of rurAllure, then, was to study ways to overcome the aforementioned situation through the allure of the cultural heritage found in the rural environment, and thus unleash the full potential of pilgrimage as a sustainable phenomenon. The Consortium saw opportunities in the fact that pilgrimage trips are usually planned with some flexibility regarding dates, distances travelled in successive journeys, places to rest, etc. Many pilgrims are amenable to serendipitous findings, too. This makes pilgrimage different from other types of cultural and touristic experiences, opening possibilities to increase the numbers of visitors in less-known heritage sites by (1) assembling meaningful cultural experiences with resources found in the rural environment; (2) mobilizing transportation, accommodation and dining resources; (3) offering the whole packs to the pilgrims through tailor-made means of promotion.

The intended effect was that some pilgrims would decide to take a break or a detour, and spend some time in a nearby town or village. By designing, implementing and testing technological tools and promotional strategies, the project sought to generalize such effect and, thereby, contribute to generate economic activity and also reinforcing a more diversified employment, to help preserve cultural heritage at risk (professions, customs, rural architecture, art and music, etc.) as well as to fight the rural exodus that is leading to a worrying spiral of loss of population and services.

The key concept put forward by rurAllure was to initiate a network of cultural institutions (museums, libraries, natural heritage sites, civil associations, etc.) that could benefit from the flows of people along pilgrimage routes nearby. Those institutions would work together towards the creation of multimedia contents to be offered to the pilgrims before, during and after their travels, and towards the design of means of promotion suited to the specifics of the region. Their collaboration would be facilitated by a technological platform with specialized content management facilities, as well as mobile apps that would cohesively present the heritage of the regions traversed over several days or weeks, featuring functionalities to (i) discover the most interesting resources and experiences for each individual or group; (ii) facilitate transportation to the towns and villages and, if needed, back to the main route; (iii) find suitable accommodation and dining possibilities in the rural environment.

The goals of rurAllure were stated to the European Commission as follows:

♦ **1.** To establish a network of institutions to work on the promotion of cultural venues and heritage sites from the rural environments of Europe, in the vicinity of pilgrimage routes.
♦ **2.** To develop studies from historical, cultural, sociological and economic perspectives, to understand and exploit the opportunities linked to the promotion of rural heritage as an added value to enrich the pilgrimage experiences.
♦ **3.** To analyze the role that urban cultural and touristic institutions can play in the network, deriving visitors to the nearby rural environment.

♦ **4.** To assess the strategies and recommendations derived from the aforementioned studies in pilot studies, conducted in regions of Europe traversed by different transnational pilgrimage routes, and focusing on different facets of cultural heritage relevant to regional development.
♦ **5.** To create a comprehensive geolocative open database and an interactive map of European rural venues and heritage sites, in different levels of proximity to the main pilgrimage paths, and a directory of relevant stakeholders active in the promotion of culture and tourism: public authorities, tourism stakeholders, cultural and creative sectors, etc.
♦ **6.** To exchange best practices and lessons learnt in the pilots all over Europe, by publishing reports on strategies and results, and by organizing events to inform regional, national and international policymakers.
♦ **7.** To develop mobile apps to help the pilgrims discover cultural venues and heritage sites – found along the routes or reached by feasible detours – that could enrich their experiences, considering their specific interests, preferences and needs, and to cohesively present the heritage of the regions traversed over several days or weeks (rather than hours as it happens in classical museum visits), using mainly audio narrations to go along with the pilgrim as they walk or ride, and pointing to additional multimedia contents during the resting stops.
♦ **8.** To assemble and deploy a content management system, offering features to innovate around the new possibilities created by digital media:

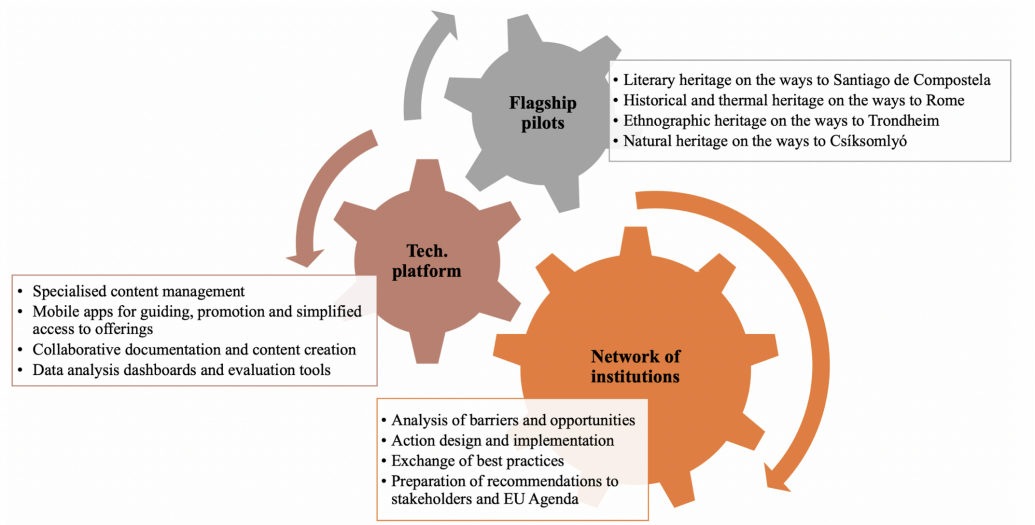
> **a.** Collaboration among institutions to create, manage and curate a Cultural Heritage knowledge base that aggregates the digital cultural assets of the cultural venues and heritage sites of rural Europe.
> **b.** Co-creation and curation of the pilgrim guides – informed by theories of interactive and non-interactive storytelling –, bringing together pieces of digital content from the knowledge base into cohesive sequences that present nearby places of cultural interest over successive days of a pilgrimage experience.
> **c.** Specific web positioning strategies, to have strong online presence during the stage when people are planning their trips.
> **d.** Benchmarking and analysis of aggregated data to allow monitoring the effectiveness of the promotion and mobilization mechanisms to achieve the intended effects.

♦ **9.** To define an agenda with key research and innovation challenges for the decade.

The rurAllure Consortium brought together all the necessary expertises in cult, territorial development, heritage studies, sociology, information systems, economy and marketing to ensure achievement of these objectives. Since the project officially started in January 2021, a network of more than 100 associated partners was consolidated, each of which took part in the pilot actions and became the main agents to attain the expected impact.

The rurAllure pilots: Strategy and gathering

The work in rurAllure, as mentioned above, has been driven by pilot studies conducted in different regions of Europe, traversed by transnational pilgrimage routes at different stages of



The key concepts of rurAllure.

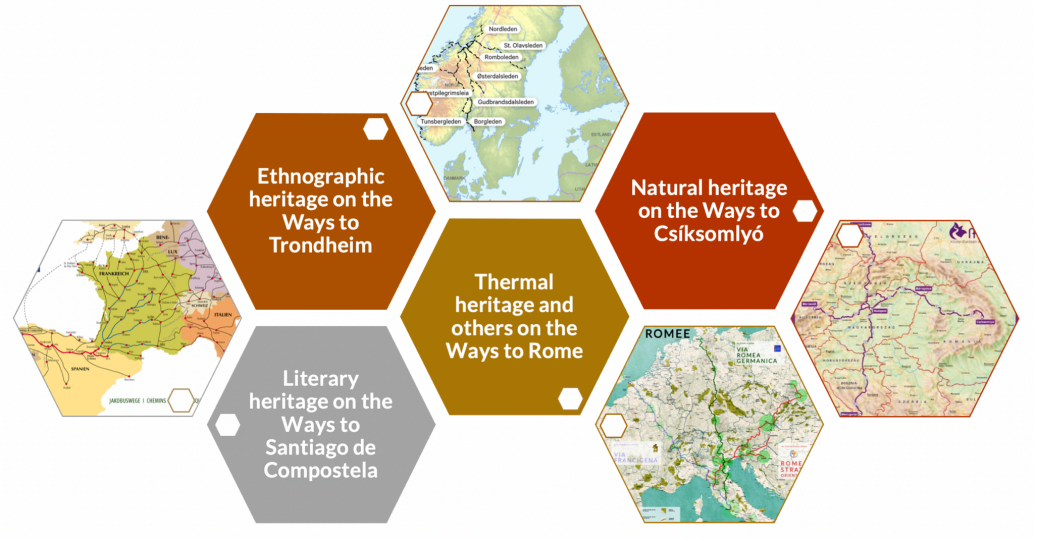
development and promotion, focusing on different facets of cultural heritage relevant to regional development:

♦ Literary heritage on the ways to Santiago de Compostela (Spain).
♦ Thermal heritage and others on the ways to Rome (Italy).
♦ Ethnographic heritage on the ways to Trondheim (Norway).
♦ Natural heritage on the ways to Csíksomlyó / Şumuleu Ciuc (Romania).

During 2021, the pilots were developed in a largely autonomous fashion, given the different characteristics of the target territories in relation to demography, relief, level of development of the respective pilgrimage routes, etc. From 2022 onwards, the Consortium worked to progressively give way to a catalogue of action types, categorizing previous, ongoing and future actions along a number of different axes. The findings of this process of harmonization allowed to foster the exchangeability of the observations, outcomes and recommendations.

The evaluation system proposed in order to identify best practices was constituted by an exhaustive and agreed list of performance indicators, taking into account the recommendations of the World Tourism Organization, the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) and the Global Council of Sustainable Tourism, among others. The Consortium considered six large areas of analysis: (1) relation with the tourists, (2) infrastructures and equipment, (3) territory enhancement, (4) digitization level, (5) internal management, and (6) sustainability level.

Once the total group of indicators were selected, the community of pilgrims was involved in a profiling process consisting of interviews, forum analyses and user experience (wayfinding) methods. The research was structured according to the following facets:



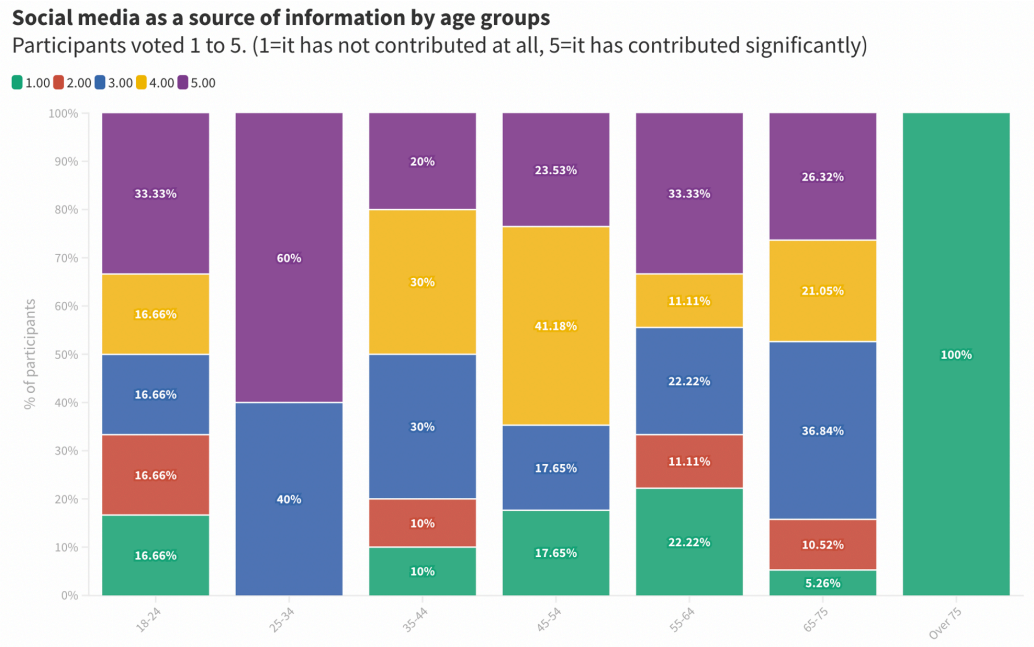
The four rurAllure pilots.

♦Sociodemographic characteristics;
♦Pilgrims' behaviors: organization of the trip, type of transport used, flexibility in terms of dates and number of stages, planned expenditures, motivations, etc;
♦Information sources used to prepare the pilgrimage trip;
♦Impact of COVID-19.

Eventually, by June 2023, the research work led to the publication of a Manual of transfer of good practices and a White book of recommendations:
♦On the one hand, the Manual collects information from the selected case studies and a system of indicators that will allow other institutions to assess their own situation, as well as to learn about other experiences that facilitate the replication of best/good practices;
♦On the other hand, the White book aims to identify and propose specific recommendations and guidelines regarding how the best/good practices can be implemented by other project routes but also by other territories and contexts beyond rurAllure.

These outputs, echoing the wealth of evidence gathered in the pilots, reveal that, while a pilgrimage presents numerous opportunities for tourism and rural development, it is necessary to address several challenges and considerations. Infrastructure development, including the provision of lodging, sanitation, and transportation, is crucial to ensure the safety and comfort of pilgrims. Local communities and authorities need to collaborate to create an enabling environment that supports the needs of both visitors and residents.

Sustainability should also be a core focus. Pilgrimage routes must be designed and managed in a manner that respects the carrying capacity of the surrounding environment and preserves



A snapshot of statistics from the polls conducted among pilgrims.

the integrity of the natural and cultural heritage. Balancing the desire for economic growth with the need for environmental conservation requires careful planning, monitoring, and regulation.

Additionally, inclusivity should be prioritized to ensure that pilgrimage remains accessible to all individuals, regardless of their physical abilities, socioeconomic status, or cultural backgrounds. Efforts should be made to provide adequate facilities for individuals with disabilities and to promote cultural diversity by celebrating different traditions and faiths along the pilgrimage routes.

Conclusion

A pilgrimage to religious and spiritual sites offers a unique intersection between tourism and rural development. The economic benefits derived from increased tourism flow stimulate rural economies, generate employment, and enhance infrastructure. Socially, pilgrimage fosters connections and understanding, promoting cultural exchange and preserving local traditions. Meanwhile, rural areas experience renewed interest and investment, leading to sustainable development and environmental conservation. As pilgrimage continues to captivate the imagination of individuals seeking spiritual and transformative experiences, it is essential to approach its growth and development with a holistic perspective. By addressing the challenges and considerations, harnessing the potential economic and social benefits, and fostering inclusivity and sustainability, pilgrimage on foot can truly become a catalyst for

Consortium

tourism and rural development, paving the way for shared prosperity and intercultural understanding.

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Abstract

This article presents the motivations, key ideas and main outputs of the Horizon 2020 project rurAllure, carried out between January 2021 and December 2023 with the participation of 16 partners from 6 European countries. This endeavour has grown to become a network of more than 100 associated partners interested in promoting rural development and sustainable tourism by harnessing the heritage of the regions traversed by historical pilgrimage routes.

keywords | International Cooperation; Pilgrimage; Slow Tourism; Italian Cultural Heritage.

All contributions to this issue of Engramma have followed invited submission and have been reviewed by the editorial board and scientific committee of the journal.

Thermal heritage on the ways to Rome

The role of knowledge for enriching tourism experiences along three Italian pilgrimage ways

Alessia Mariotti*

Introduction to the research context and the main players of the Italian Pilot

As already described by Martin Lopez Nores in this journal issue, the aim of the rurAllure project is ambitious: to support rural development through networking and experience exchanges among small heritage sites along European pilgrimage routes. Based on the different development phases of each pilgrimage way involved in the project, multiple themes and related actions have been selected. The themes (literary heritage along St. James Way, ethnographic heritage along St. Olav, natural heritage along Maria Ut, and thermal heritage along the ways to Rome) have been used as analytics to develop studies from historical, archaeological, cultural, sociological, and economic perspectives with the aim of understanding and exploiting the opportunities linked to the promotion of rural heritage as an added value to enrich the experiences of pilgrims on the road.

The great success of the St. James Way in Galicia has pushed grassroots organizations and administrations across Europe to develop recovery actions of several mainly Medieval itineraries. A great infrastructure development effort has been made to rediscover walkable paths

1 | Ancient and modern Pilgrims.

far from the dangers of nowadays heavy traffic roads, to provide guides and signage for pilgrims and hikers, and to ensure water supply and accommodation services along these newly established tourism products. Tourism is certainly not solely a global industry. It is by definition first and foremost a human activity. In its modern forms, it has been persistently shaped by distinctive patterns of consumption deriving from specific lifestyles and cultures in return. The possibility of practicing any form of tourism has been strictly dependent on 3 key factors: first the availability of time to spare, then a certain level of affluence, and third the freedom to move, more or less freely, across borders. Over the past 30 years, tourism consumption patterns have evolved. Consumer choices have changed mainly based on time and wealth, but recently the pandemic has pushed forward the growth in consumption of some specific products and pilgrimage is surely one of them. Due to high levels of uncertainty, people have traveled close to home; due to mounting economic difficulties unpopular or obsolete peripheral destinations located in rural areas have experienced a steep increase in tourism demand; forgotten family holiday homes have been rediscovered thus bringing back parts of the population from larger urban centers to rural areas and small villages (generating issues, on the other hand, with overcrowding and deficiencies of essential services). With people forced to practice proximity tourism, there has been a rediscovery of an often overlooked and unmanaged natural and cultural heritage (the one outside historical city centers) whose role as a contributor to social and cultural capital, as well as to informal education, is still regrettably underestimated and untapped. Nevertheless, the demand for popularizing outdoor activities across space, including for example hiking and cycling along established pilgrimage and long-run walking routes and trails, more than ever highlights the crucial managerial role played by cooperation and networking. Concerted and participatory regional efforts are therefore required, providing services for polarized, smaller groups with higher added value and revenue impacts within a complex tourism value chain.

It is within this specific framework of changing tourism consumption patterns that rurAllure has focused its activities on creating meaningful contents for pilgrims, based on the rich thermal heritage that is available along three transnational pilgrimage ways crossing Italy: Via Francigena, Via Romea Strata, and Via Romea Germanica, the latter being an associate part-

ner to the project. These three transnational pilgrimage ways have different histories and development paths and are therefore in different phases of their lifecycle: Via Francigena has been recognized as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe over 20 years ago and is based on a wide network of public entities (municipalities and regions); Via Romea Germanica activities started informally a decade ago and gained the recognition of the Council of Europe in 2020, its network is also including NGOs and walkers associations; Via Romea Strata has been developed thanks to the direct involvement of religious bodies and public administrations and is in the process of developing its certification dossier for the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe label. In order for readers to better understand the context, we will shortly recall the main features of each pilgrimage way involved in the pilot activities in Italy.

The Via Francigena is an ancient pilgrimage route whose first references date back to the VII century. The route served as a principal connection between Northern and Southern Europe and allowed transportation of goods, trade, armies, and pilgrims and facilitated travel. The word Francigena in Latin means "originated from France", which in Medieval times meant the area of current France, the Rhein Valley, and the Netherlands. The route connected Canterbury to Rome and continued along the more ancient Roman routes to the harbors of the Mediterranean Sea in Italian Apulia, on the tip of the heel of the Italian peninsula. The route greatly contributed to the spread of ideas, techniques, religious beliefs, and goods in Europe, as well as facilitated urbanization – towns, and villages were founded along the way as stopovers and trading centers. It stretches 2.240,5 km from Canterbury (United Kingdom) to Rome and 900 km from Rome to Santa Maria di Leuca along the Via Francigena of the South. It crosses 657 municipalities and 17 regions in 5 countries (United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Italy, and the Vatican City State) and mostly traverses rural areas and small communities. More than 70% of the EAVF (European Association of the Via Francigena, a rurAllure partner) members are small villages and communities of villages, especially in France and Switzerland, in Italy the route crosses small towns and provinces uniting towns and villages. The Via Francigena benefited from the rediscovery and flourishing of the Way of St. James in the 1970s and 1980s, and so it also began to be studied and reopened to modern pilgrimages as a tool for sustainable development in the territories across the route and in 1994 it was declared a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. Via Francigena is managed by the EAVF. This is a non-profit organization created in 2001, which currently represents 200 entities, including municipalities, provinces, and regions. A wide accommodation offer is available, including pilgrims' hostels and private facilities. The EAVF pilgrim's passport provides advantages and discounts for accommodations and services along the path. The communities along the Via Francigena depend on agricultural activities and have a visible decrease in population because of internal migration, mostly in the mountainous areas. Pilgrimage along the Via Francigena generates significant economic benefits to local communities in terms of the creation of SMEs, provision of services, and socio-cultural exchange.

Since the IV century AD the Romea Strata has been one of the most important road arteries to lead pilgrims from Eastern Europe to Jerusalem and in the following centuries to Rome and

Santiago de Compostela. The route has been known since the XVI century BC, as a commercial path for the transport of amber, that was extracted on the areas bordering the Baltic Sea and transported to southern Mediterranean region (Cellarosi *et alii* 2016). Later, with the Roman Empire, the itinerary nowadays identified with the Romea Strata was used for transport of salt and minerals, thus becoming an artery of communication, trade but also of military campaigns. It is only with the edict of Constantine of 313 AD, opening to religious freedom, that the Romea Strata becomes a pilgrimage route to the Holy Land. Nowadays the Romea Strata is also important in fostering inter-religious ecumenical dialogue between Protestants (the main religion throughout Northern Europe), Jews, who are an important presence both in Vilnius (Lithuania) and in Poland, and the Catholic world. In Italy, the Romea Strata follows the ancient system of roads that led from northeast Italy to Rome. It involves five Italian regions, for over 1300 km. It is a crossroad of transit for pilgrims coming from Austria and the East through Aquileia (in Friuli Venezia Giulia) who continue later towards Jerusalem, or Rome through the Postumia way or towards Santiago proceeding on the Emilia way.

The revitalizing initiative of this pilgrimage trail was conceived and promoted by the Homo Viator Foundation of Vicenza (Italy) which is currently the owner and coordinator of the project at the national level. The network that supports the Foundation in developing the itinerary involves regions, municipalities, universities, dioceses, and several associations and experts on the rediscovery of ancient pilgrimage routes. At a European level, the Via Romea Strata is managed by the European Association Romea Strata (AERS). AERS was founded in 2018 by 30 founding members coming from the countries crossed by the route: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, and Italy. The members work together to promote pilgrimage along the route and to create awareness of its historical context, the places of faith and spirituality located along the itinerary, the cultural and religious heritage that characterizes it, and the beauty of the natural landscape. AERS has currently over 50 members: LAGs (Local Activities Groups), municipalities, associations of walkers, dioceses, foundations, Universities, and tourism organizations.

The Via Romea Germanica was the most important connection between Rome and the Germanic empires for many centuries. Its itinerary represents the most important historical 'monument' of Germany from Stade through Austria to Northern Italy and the 'Eternal City', Rome. It is an international pilgrimage route on the same level as the Via Francigena and the Camino de Santiago, an additional opportunity for all walkers from northern Europe and beyond. From a historical point of view, the itinerary of the Via Romea Germanica is the journey described in his *Annales* by Abbot Albert from Stade (Maeck 2001). He was a man of literature and wrote mainly on religious themes. Among his writings, there is a fictional dialogue between two monks (Tirri and Firri), regarding the best pilgrimage routes to Rome. In this dialogue, told as a story, as it was customary in the Middle Ages, the abbot suggests various routes with precise information on places and distances to be covered, on the conditions of roads, and the length of the various stages in German miles. The proposed trip was called by Abt Albert as the "Melior Via" for northern travelers to Rome. The Stade itinerary describes two alternative routes for the outward journey: one entering France, and following the footsteps

of Via Francigena, and another running along the Rhine valley. All this confirms the fact that the Via Romea, like the Via Francigena and the Way of St. James, consisted of a network of routes. Nowadays the Via Romea Germanica comprises a linear path across 2.200 km: 1.092 km in Germany, 83 km in Austria, and 1.046 through six Italian regions, crossing a total of 119 municipalities. It is managed by a confederation of national associations and its transnational seat is in Germany.

Even though generally competing on the pilgrimage and walking tourism market, in September 2021 the three routes signed a memorandum of understanding to join forces and better coordinate the efforts in terms of promotion, development of service standards, and recognition towards the key stakeholders in Rome, whose involvement and role in pilgrimage management once in the Holy Land still shows some critical aspects. Along with the difficulties in getting church authorities formally involved, the main weakness of the organizational model of these routes is the fragmented and factual management of independent not-for-profit organizations, while spatial planning (relevant for walking infrastructures and signage) remains the responsibility of public administrations, thus adding complexity in the coordination of bodies with different competencies. The regions crossed by the three pilgrimage trails in Italy are rich in cultural heritage, but to promote peer-to-peer coaching and best practices exchanges among the routes and local stakeholders involved in the pilot, specific attention has been paid to thermal and water-related heritage, which is attested in various ways, from rituals to architecture, from antiquity to the current era. The new contents developed thanks to the project on thermal heritage and water management (some of the main results could be found throughout this special issue) will supplement the routes' ongoing promotion with the added value provided by the vast heritage treasured by the traversed rural areas. As will be better explained in the following pages, water-related heritage is a key asset throughout the itineraries of the routes, allowing the development of new narratives and interpretations of the rural environment pilgrims are crossing by walking, biking, or horse riding, thus enriching their experience.

Summary of main activities for each area involved in the pilot

As any European funded project, rurAllure is organized around nearly autonomous, even though co-related, numbered sections called work packages. Each work package has specific objectives and a list of tasks to be fulfilled by the partners. In the specific case of this project, a total of four project sections (work packages: WPs) have been devoted to test pilot actions in selected stretches of the targeted pilgrimage ways.

Work Package/WP 5 is the result of the coordinated contribution of six different partners of rurAllure: University of Bologna/UNIBO (WP leader), University of Padua/UNIPD, Università Iuav di Venezia/Iuav, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid/UAM, Fondazione Homo Viator/FHV (managing body of the Via Romea Strata), EAVF (the international managing body of the Via Francigena cultural route). To maximize the professional and expertise contribution of each partner to the goals set by rurAllure (produce new narratives for pilgrims, support networking of institutions, and populate the platform with new attractive contents to promote rural

2 | The three roads to Rome (Source: AEVF, EAVRG, FHV 2021).

areas along pilgrimage trails), the responsibility for actions have been divided among the six partners also based on the specific geographical area of the three routes targeted. Hence, to test rural development strategies, slow mobility facilities, and stakeholder engagement, as well as new cultural tourism products development, the WP5 partners have identified three different pilot areas where to deliver actions, one per pilgrimage way: the Euganean Hills and Montegrotto Terme along the Via Romea Strata, Bagno Vignoni, and Gambassi Terme along the Via Francigena and the Municipality of Argenta along the Via Romea Germanica. Based on the expertise and role of each partner within the project. the working tasks were distributed as follows: coordination of work package actions to reach the goals set by the project deliverables was under the responsibility of UNIBO; UNIPD and Iuav have led the narratives and contents development of the pilots along the Via Romea Strata; UAM has given knowledge support for the development of accessible tourism contents along the Via Francigena; UNIBO has organized stakeholders networking and narratives development along Via Romea Germanica; Fondazione Homo Viator and Via Francigena have worked as facilitators for the

cooperation and networking activities involving both, tourists and local stakeholders in the selected areas.

At the end of the second year of project development, WP5 partners were able to complete nearly 10 actions engaging pilgrims and tourists, 15 actions and events targeting stakeholders, to create 5 blocks of narratives transformed into podcasts and available for tourists, and create 7 featured trips and related quality Points of Interest (POIs) descriptions for the project platform. This relevant number of activities was possible thanks to the willingness of all involved partners in coordinating and exchanging experiences in multiple and subsequent meetings, allowing the partnership to keep track of the results and difficulties encountered by everyone, thus increasing mutual help and understanding between practical partners (the managing bodies of pilgrimage ways) academic ones (the universities). As a result, the coordination of actions and the balance in activities targeting the project goals has been improved. Altogether the partners involved in WP5 have developed a massive amount of work testing approaches and proposing methodologies also usable by other project partners. The constant sharing of pilot results and updates has led to two internal seminars: one devoted to sharing a possible methodology for the marketing and communication analysis to be performed to integrate the pilot results in the already existing actions at the local level, the second one open to the whole consortium about universal design. The greater synergy between the three roads to Rome has led to a wider promotion of heritage and hidden gems scattered along them as well as to adequate responses to the growing flow of walkers, providing them with a high-quality welcome from technical, logistical, and spiritual points of view. Before rurAllure, the three routes have commonly pursued similar goals in isolation, while the project and work performed in each pilot area have set common foundations for facing common challenges, such as signage, safety and security, service standards, but also narratives and experiences for pilgrims and travelers. Spatial planning remains the responsibility of public administrations, therefore the WP5 pilot segments have paid particular attention to both, stakeholders' engagement (to harmonize their interventions across borders) and pilgrim's experience, with the aim of better-coordinating accommodation, mobility, and services.

Main pilot results

To give a glimpse of the different types of actions produced within the pilot and targeting specifically thermal and water-related heritage, we will shortly summarise here some selected examples (one/two per route), with (when applicable) its operational effect on the rurAllure app on the ways to Rome. While writing this article some activities are still ongoing and will be concluded before the end of the project in December 2023. Furthermore, because of space constraints, if possible we will refer to external websites and links where the reader will find full references to the given action or its result (in the large majority of cases, the narratives).

Thanks to the expertise provided by Iuav, UNIPD, and UAM partners, specialized in thermal heritage, a targeted event promoting this specific aspect of the areas crossed by the Via

Francigena in Tuscany has been organized. The format of the event, called I Love Francigena Thermal, was replicated from previous hiking events organized by EAVF, but with a specific focus on the rich thermal heritage available just few steps away from the main Francigena path. This was exactly one of the main points raised by rurAllure: these pilgrimage paths should be transformed from passers-by to proper crossroads allowing the pilgrims to discover what lies in the surrounding of the main stops. This first thermal-themed edition, adapted to the objectives of rurAllure's WP5 was preceded by an institutional roundtable discussion in Florence with all event partners (stakeholders and local authorities) to maximize the connection among local authorities and associations, as well as residents. The themed hike included a two-day walking along the Francigena itinerary from San Quirico to Castiglione d'Orcia and from San Giminiano to Gambassi Terme. The first hike followed the official Via Francigena route, while in the second a 2,5 km detour to visit the Bollori Natural Park was added to the official route. This detour is included as a featured trip in the rurAllure platform, thus allowing pilgrims to appreciate the thermal heritage of the region they are crossing. The involvement of local stakeholders and local guides sharing their knowledge about the geological features of the area has later led to the development, thanks to the expertise provided by UAM, of a specific event aiming at enhancing the expertise on the universal design of tourism enterprises. An accessibility workshop was conducted for the visually impaired with a special focus on the enhancement of sensory skills to experience the Via Francigena and its thermal heritage. Following the philosophy of "nothing for us, without us" people with different disabilities were invited to be active creators of content and not mere receivers. This workshop aimed to integrate and develop experiences and content for all kinds of people based on the design of inclusive dissemination materials and gather feedback from end-users with visual impairment on preliminary accessible designs of materials and narratives of the thermal heritage of Bagno Vignoni. The participants of the workshop, the Siena section of the Italian visually impaired association, were provided with urban maps and 3D models of the topography designed by the UAM team and the Italian geologist Riccardo Rocca, which allowed the participants to understand the geographic formation and geological composition of this area, including differences in height and indications in Braille; a street map and geological section drawn at the Geology and Geochemistry department of UAM and printed in relief by Ilunion UAM, including text in Braille. The workshop was not a merely guided tour, but an itinerant and active laboratory, where the attendants were able to give feedback on the materials and ideas for their improvement, such as: generating bigger-size 3D models; clarifying captions and legends in 3D printed tactile material. The event was highly praised by the local authorities and provided a great impulse to the development of accessible tourism along the selected stretch of the route. Data and feedback collected on the models and materials created are meant to facilitate access for the visually impaired to the thermal and geological heritage along the Via Francigena and cultural heritage in general.

The value of the cooperation between practical and academic partners is even more evident in the case of Via Romea Strata. UNIPD and Iuav research team members have indeed widely

3 | Events on the Francigena Route; 3D printing and braille map for Bagno Vignoni along the Via Francigena (photo by Miguel Gómez Heras).

explored the cultural heritage in the areas of Montegrotto Terme and the more in general the area covered by the Local Action Group (LAG) Patavino, one of the main stakeholders ensuring activities and promotion as well as signage along the Via Romea Strata itinerary. The large amount of available knowledge and materials developed in previous projects has allowed the academic partners to focus on narratives development related to thermal heritage and of possible interest for pilgrims crossing the area. The Museum dedicated to ancient thermal heritage recently established in Montergotto itself, where people can discover the history of the thermae and the related phenomena in the Euganean area, is the outcome of several research activities carried out by UNIPD and Iuav staff. Starting from these research activities and to enhance the cultural promotion actions, the staff of UNIPD and Iuav, in collaboration with the staff of the Romea Strata, have developed some examples of templates to describe archaeological and natural sites, with suggestions on the type of dataset (text and images) that have been later included in the platform. The template for narratives developed by Iuav and UNIPD have set the basis for the inclusion and adaptation of the already available contents in the rurAllure platform. The style used for narratives creation as well as the specific themes chosen for the six narratives created (Life at Baths, Divine Waters, Thermalism and Hydrogeo, Ancient literary, Pipes and Stove, Ancient and modern pilgrims), are meant to attract pilgrims to know more about the area, also thanks to the related featured plans (Thermal & Archeo Tour). The idea is to avoid simplification, but at the same time to ensure the pilgrims and walking tourists with easy-to-access information about the places they are crossing. Even though the conceptual scheme behind the narratives is a 'well-educated' one, the narratives are thought to be read separately and linked to the general theme of 'thermalism' aiming at linking the POIs already proposed in the Euganean area, within the specific theme of the narratives, thus encouraging the discovery of the 'cultural proposal' that the storytelling is offering.

As far as the Via Romea Germanica pilot area (the municipality of Argenta), is concerned, the focus was on the relationship between humankind and water. This century-long endeavor has shaped the landscape of the area and the infrastructures on which the pilgrims are walking. Within the municipality of Argenta, the Via Romea Germanica path follows the itinerary of the

4 | Arquà Petrarca along the Via Romea Strata (photo by Aleksandra Grbic); the Euganean Hills; an ancient Roman relief in the Museum of Thermalism at Montegrotto Terme (CC).

so-called Po di Primaro, over the Reno riverbanks and along the Argenta marshes, a complex system of artificial basins, channels, and land reclaiming infrastructures. The UNIBO research team has focused on enhancing the relationship among the academy and local stakeholders to co-create narratives on the history of this water-related land also involving master's degree students in a mutual interaction with local experts and tourism professionals. As a result, six podcasts have been developed, covering different aspects of the Po Delta area and the Argenta Municipality. Some focus on the historical facts, some more on the naturalistic aspects, but the common element is water and its management in a territory that was previously a marsh. The transformation of this territory by humans over the centuries has allowed economic activities and settlements in this area. The landscape has greatly changed due to this constant land reclamation work, but this work has also allowed the formation of artificial lakes (the water that is kept as a reserve by the water-pumping plants) that made it possible for birds and wild animals to re-settle. Hence, the narratives tell the story of the territory in creative ways and from different points of view. One perspective is that of university students and how they perceived the landscapes; another is that of local stakeholders (people from the Marsh Museum, a tour guide, a photographer and ex-worker from the Renana water pumping plant, etc.), who interacted with students during the study visit. Moreover, the storytellers in the Master's students podcasts vary from local inhabitants to non-human actors, such as a kingfisher, the water, the land, and the city of Argenta itself which shares its story. Hence, they all offer visitors different points of view on the territory, so that they can appreciate all the transformations it has undergone, and they can have an idea of how the entire Padana Plain (today quite an industrialized area) used to be centuries ago. The aim also is to raise awareness among visitors on the effect of climate change and the risks for this territory that has always dealt with water excess/ water scarcity, effects that are being more extreme lately due to climate change. The final goal with the narratives is, of course, to motivate these pilgrims, cyclists, and tourists, to stay longer in this area, to step out of the main path and discover Argenta and its waterways, therefore the stories prompt visitor's curiosity to visit the Marsh Museum, the Land Reclamation Museum and so on, spreading the benefits of pilgrimage along wider rural areas.

5 | Example of journey plan along the Via Germanica in the rurAllure website; Hydraulic drenage pumps in the Land Reclamation Museum of Argenta; view over the Argenta marshes (CC).

Concluding remarks

In recent years, multidisciplinary research has nearly been banned from Italian universities due to national rules for the evaluation of research quality. Individual researchers are evaluated based on their publications in monodisciplinary academic journals. This has progressively led to narrowing research efforts on crosscutting themes or fields of study such as heritage-based tourism. Luckily enough, European projects have maintained their multidisciplinary perspective, allowing, as in the case of rurAllure, academic exchanges among experts in different disciplines, thus enhancing knowledge transfer and impact on civil society. Being a coordination and support action, rurAllure focuses on the cooperation between experts in many different academic fields for the benefit of the cultural tourism sector as a tool for rural development. In work package 5 of the project, the academic knowledge around archaeology, thermal heritage, and tourism has been coupled with the need of using it for the wider public, of pilgrims and walking tourists. Pilgrimage and walking tourism are an increasing phenomenon, testifying of the changing patterns of holiday consumption, but some general characteristics of the average pilgrim/walking tourist are like the ones the pilgrims had in the past: well-educated people, in their middle age and with average to a high salary. This specific profile calls for meaningful contents and experiences opening opportunities for regions to expand their cultural offerings also through cultural digital contents. Content production implies investing in research, which might be expensive for local authorities or DMOs. Therefore the added value of European projects also resides in the contribution their transversal multidisciplinary approach can give to civil society, supporting the outreach of up-to-date academic knowledge and leading, as in the case of rurAllure's WP5, three pilgrimage routes heading to Rome, supported by three Italian universities and a Spanish one, to join forces to test and experiment new meaningful contents on thermal and water-related heritage to enrich the educational potential of walking tourism.

*Even though the structure and argumentation of this paper are the responsibility of Alessia Mariotti, part of the descriptive contents here included have been taken from the deliverables D5.1 (rurAllure project 2020), D5.2 (rurAllure project 2021a), and D2.8 (rurAllure project 2021b and 2022) of the rurAllure project. For this reason, Alessia Mariotti, acting as work package leader is a "rapporteur" and editor of a collective effort made by (in alphabetical order): Maddalena Bassani, Patrizia Battilani, Maria Bergamo, Elena Dubinina, Maria Laura Gasparini, Viola Gaudiano, Silvia González Soutelo, Miguel Gòmez Heras, Aleksandra Grbic, Andrea Meleri, Simona Spinola, Jacopo Turchetto, and Paola Zanovello.

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Abstract

Pilgrimage is nowadays gaining in popularity as a new form of slow tourism, combining outdoor exercises with spiritual and cultural experiences along established transnational and transregional itineraries. Pilgrimage ways have great potential as territorial development tools, enabling new economic activities and enterprises mainly in peripheral rural areas. Within the rurAllure H2020 project aiming at the promotion of rural museums and heritage sites in the vicinity of European pilgrimage routes, three pilgrimage routes leading to Rome, supported by three Italian universities and a Spanish one, have joined forces to test and experiment new meaningful contents on thermal and water-related heritage to enrich the educational potential of walking tourism. After a short research context introduction, the present contribution summarises the activities carried out in each pilot area, while in the conclusions we will underline the main takeaways as well as potential further research lines that have emerged from the cooperation between experts in archaeology and thermal heritage, tourism and the civil society here represented by municipalities, the managing bodies of the pilgrimage trails and the pilgrims themselves.

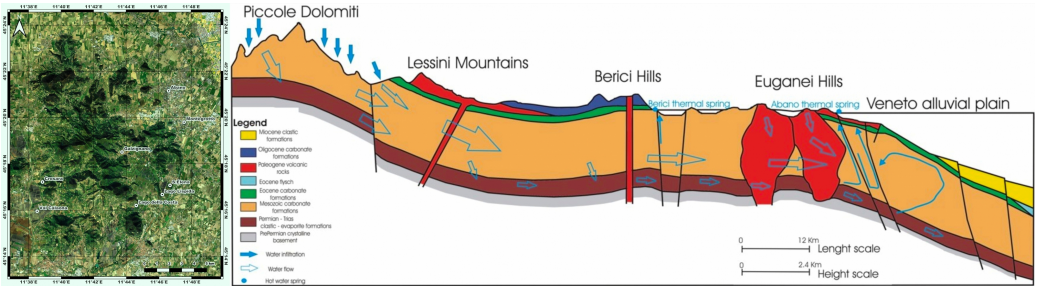
keywords | Thermal Heritage; Pilgrimage; Tourism; Argenta Marshes.

All contributions to this issue of Engramma have followed invited submission and have been reviewed by the editorial board and scientific committee of the journal.

Water Landscapes

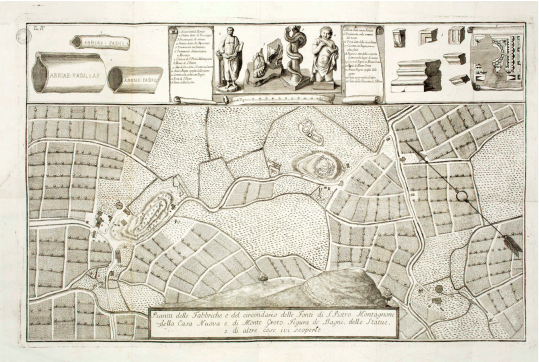
The phenomenon of Thermalism in the Euganean District between Antiquity and the Modern Age

Paola Zanovello, Andrea Meleri



1 | Thermal manifestations in the Euganean Hills (elaborated from Google Maps by A. Meleri).
2 | The geothermal phenomenon in the Euganean area (from Fabbri 2023).

The Euganean territory is located in a unique geographical position, rising as an autonomous and isolated hilly complex in the heart of the Po Valley and bordered, in ancient times, by two of the great Venetian rivers: Adige and Bacchiglione. Due to its peculiar geo-topographical and climatic characteristics, it has always been of interest to humans, witnessing continuous settlements since prehistoric times. Its abundant resources, such as stone, water, timber, cultivable land, and pastures, made it one of the most popular places, especially during the most significant historical phases from the Iron Age to the Roman period, and this interest continued consistently throughout subsequent periods, from the Middle Ages to modern times (Selmin 2005). Particularly during the Roman occupation, which superseded the rich civilization of the ancient Veneti in the management of the territory, the two hilly slopes were officially divided between the main urban centers – Venetian first and now Roman –, of Ateste and Patavium. This intervention, prompted by a dispute between the two cities, took place in 141 B.C., marked by the placement of boundary stones that unequivocally defined the areas of jurisdiction for each settlement. The conflict of interests must have arisen from the abundant resources of the hilly territory, from which urban communities derived profits and development opportunities (Zanovello 2005, 104-108).



3 | The area of *Aquae Patavinae* in the fourth plate of Salvatore Mandruzzato (1804).
4 | Thermal facilities in Abano in an engraving by Francesco Bertelli (early 17th century).

One of these resources was undoubtedly the thermal one, a phenomenon of ancient volcanic origin and widespread in the Euganean territory [Fig. 1]: an area where waters emerged from the pre-Alpine arc. After a long journey at great depths, these waters were pushed to the surface with very high temperatures and a peculiar richness of chemical and physical components with healing properties (Fabbri 2011) [Fig. 2]. In the ancient world, the thermal phenomenon was perceived as directly connected to divine entities, through whose intervention or mediation, humans could obtain healing, health, and well-being (Annibaletto, Bassani, Ghedini 2014).

The Northeastern Slope and the *Patavini Fontes* or *Aquae Patavinae*

The Euganean area was known in Latin literary sources, which in Roman times associated it with the god *Aponus*, whose name, according to some, meant "without pain" (*a-ponos*), while according to others, it referred to the essence of water itself (from the Indo-European root *ap-* which indicates flowing water). In the *Aponense* area, known in antiquity as *Aquae Patavinae* and today as *Terme Euganee,* the Romans established a renowned resort and healing station on the site of an ancient protohistoric sanctuary, equally famous as other important thermal areas, such as Baia in the Campania region, a typical example of the ancient authors' perception and exploitation of thermalism, which they referred to as "otium baianum": a place of well-being, vacation, and relaxation, away from the rules and obligations of daily life (Zanovello 2011).

In the territory of present-day Montegrotto Terme, where the lake sacred to *Aponus* was also located, a considerable number of structures dedicated to the exploitation of thermalism and accommodation of visitors were concentrated: pools, basins, and hydraulic systems were distributed in the area, and were almost certainly related to the thermal springs that naturally gushed up to the surface at that time [Fig. 3]. Grandiose houses and villas, perhaps even imperial properties, were built in the immediate vicinity. The materials recovered during various excavation activities, carried out from the late 18th century until today, bear witness both to

a widespread frequentation and a display of luxury and wealth by the owners and the visitors themselves (*Aquae Patavinae* 2011; 2012; *Aquae Salutiferae* 2013).

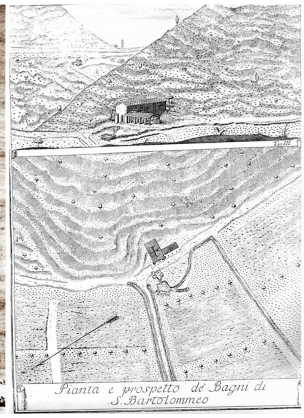
In the neighboring territory of present-day Abano, which derives its name from the ancient Latin deity, archaeological documentation shows a predominantly rural occupation, although there are also cultic testimonies related to the thermal phenomenon: here the healing waters only naturally gushed to the surface in the area of Montirone, but they were widely present underground and thus accessible through pumping. This is evidenced by the continuity of life in curative and hospitality structures between the Middle Ages and the modern and contemporary eras. During this period, the area of Abano, especially under the rule of Venice, became much more important and frequented compared to Montegrotto (Grandis 2005, 217-221; Zanovello 2012; Bressan, Bonini 2012). Rich iconographic documentation [Fig. 4] and descriptions testify to the fame of the place and its frequentation by various social classes: free medical treatments for the less affluent, who could freely access the basins filled with beneficial water, but also a place of well-being and leisure, especially for Venetian and Paduan nobles who often built their luxurious summer residences in the area (Rippa Bonati 2013; Dal Pozzolo 2013).

It should also be noted that until the First World War, a significant portion of the thermal area in the eastern sector of the Euganean Hills was administered as a single entity: 1918 saw the separation of S.Pietro Montagnon, present-day Montegrotto, from the Municipality of Battaglia, while the territory of Abano remained dependent on Padua and known as Abano Bagni until 1924.

The Southeastern Slope

Euganean thermalism is not however limited solely to the *Aponense area*: water sources with similar characteristics are also found in the nearby broad valley, now occupied by the modern thermal centers of Galzignano and Battaglia. Other thermal phenomena are recorded in the Monselice area with “laghetto di Lispida” (Lispida pond), and in the nearby Arquà Petrarca with “laghetto della Costa” (Costa pond), also known for having been the site of a Bronze Age pile-dwelling village (Bianchin Citton, Zerbinati 1994).

Today many of these areas are unfortunately hardly recognizable. The entire plain between Battaglia (with its “hanging canal” built between 1189 and 1201), Monselice, and Este underwent careful marsh reclamation by Venice around the mid-16th century. As in some 16th century maps, the plain surrounding the southeastern sector of the Euganean Hills was a vast swamp fed by various springs, including thermal ones, mainly because of poor regulation of river waters [Fig. 5]. Following economic difficulties caused by the war ended with the Treaty of Cambrai, a new magistracy called “Provveditori sopra i Beni Inculti” (magistrates of uncultivated properties) was created in 1556, with the objective of restoring lands that were unproductive due to water stagnation. The following year, the project known as “Retratto di Monselice” was initiated, envisioning the “retratto” (reclamation) of lands comprised “from Battaglia to Este, bordering the river or Moncelese canal, and the surrounding hills around



5 | A detail from the large map of the Paduan territory, drawn by Nicolò dal Cortivo in 1534, showing the valleys and swamps in the area between Galzignano, Battaglia, Lispida, and Monselice. On the left of Battaglia, the hill of S.Elena owned by the Selvatico family is visible.
6 | The thermal area of S.Bartolomeo in the third plate of Salvatore Mandruzzato (1804).

the valleys of Galzignano, Valsanzibio, Arquà, and Baon" (Archivio di Stato di Padova (ASP), Certosa di Padova, b. 16, fasc. 6, proclamation in print dated August 6, 1557; Grandis 2005; Grandis 2016). The project involved direct financing by the landowners, who were not always in a position to undertake financial commitments. Among those who participated in the project were Bartolomeo Selvatico, with a portion of land in the Lispida area, Antonio Saviolo in the Regazzoni area in Galzignano, near the Bagni di S.Bartolomeo, and Giovanni and Andrea Placca coming from contrada della Costa of Arquà.

The modern centers of Galzignano and Battaglia occupy the valley between two extensions of the Euganean hill district: Monte Gallo, Orbieso, Calbarina to the west, and Monte delle Valli, Cimisella, Ceva to the east. Also in this area springs emerged, the exploitation of which dates back, at least, to the medieval period, when they were mentioned with denominations linked to Christianity. This should not be surprising, since the healing qualities of water continued to be placed under divine protection through various saintly figures. Especially in the early Christian world, water was perceived as a means of salvation, and as a symbol of purification. Likewise, thermal water maintained its fundamental role as an instrument of healing and health (Scorrano 2020). For this reason, both spring and thermal waters are always associated with saintly figures. Just as the saints Peter and Eliseo were connected to Montegrotto (S.Pietro in the central area of Montegrotto, where the tradition of the pagan temple remained, and S.Eliseo in the area of the Neronian Baths), tradition recalls the sources of Saint Bartholomew in Galzignano (at the border with Montegrotto's territory) or the grotto springs dedicated to S.Eliseo and S.Elena in Battaglia. Testimonies of these connections can be found primarily in the rich archival and bibliographical documentation from the medieval and modern eras. The caves of S.Elena are mentioned in documents dating back to the 12th century, while the thermal places linked to S.Bartolomeo are mentioned in writings from the 15th century and

are also depicted graphically in the plates attached to Salvatore Mandruzzato's monumental work *Dei Bagni di Abano*, published in three volumes between the late 18th century and the early 19th century.

At the sources of S.Bartolomeo, which Mandruzzato places "within the ancient borders of Montegrotto to the west", the Aponian physician devoted only a few pages, along with a large illustration [Fig. 6] depicting both plan and elevation of the area (Mandruzzato 1804, 95-99, tav. III; 113-119). Two highlighted springs, depicted as small pools, are connected to a larger irregularly shaped basin, enclosed by a fence and linked to a series of canals, undoubtedly designed for draining the surrounding countryside. Directly opposite, across a road, there was a church, and, perpendicular to it, a 'rustic house' with a porch facing the road. According to the author, the springs were among the "most famous and tested in the Paduan Territory". However, during Mandruzzato's time, the church dedicated to S.Bartolomeo was in a state of abandonment. "If we believe Savonarola, the noble Paduan family of Leoni built the church long before his time and also constructed a hospital to accommodate the poor"; Mandruzzato reports, but he points out that this information is absent from the descriptions of Bartolomeo Montagnana, who operated, like Savonarola, in the first half of the 15th century. In the description of the Paduan physician Michele Savonarola, included in his work De Balneis et Thermis naturalibus omnibus Italiae, "a large pool not built with stones, like all the other Paduan Baths, with a muddy, greasy, blackish, and very soft bottom, in which the bathers must necessarily immerse themselves: so if they don't support themselves on beams that cross that pit, sometimes they would sink to a dangerous depth" (Mandruzzato 1804, 98). Mandruzzato notes that the bath was now disused but returned to be used on the day commemorating the Saint. Additionally, he adds that both the church and the thermal area belonged to an Abbey of the Obizzi family, which at that time was in the hands of Marchese Tommaso, "a gentleman of recognized talent and genius, and from whom the Baths of S.Bartolomeo would obtain greater splendor than all the other Aponian baths if the situation did not present an insurmountable obstacle" (Mandruzzato 1804, 99).

The reputation of these baths in the 15th century was undeniable, as they became the destination of illustrious figures and attracted the scientific interest of physicians in subsequent centuries, due to the unique characteristics of both water and mud. However, in the mid-16th century, Gabriele Falloppio reported their state of neglect, the absence of a place to accommodate the sick, and even "the adulteration of the mud with filthy mixture" (Mandruzzato 1804, 97).

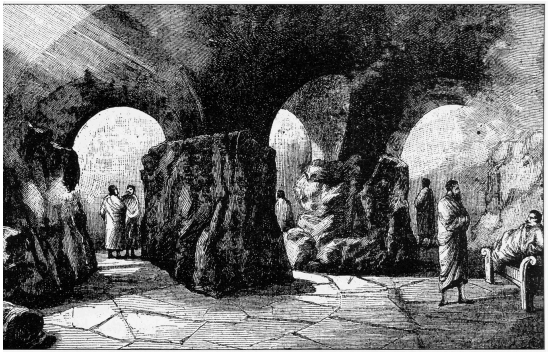
According to Galliano Migliolaro, a local Aponian artist and historian, the church, "of late Romanesque style [...] with a single nave with frescoed walls and a facade flanked by two bell towers", dates back to the 11th century. It underwent several renovations and was eventually transformed into a residential structure following the Royal Decree of July 7, 1866, no. 3036, which established the suppression of religious orders and corporations (Migliolaro 1956, 136;

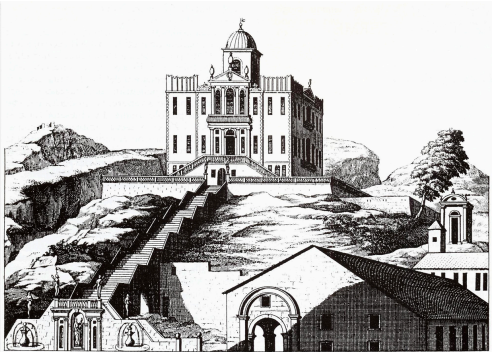
7 | The area of Villa Selvatico with the thermal park (Google Maps).

Italia Nostra 2021). The source of S.Bartolomeo, a reference in popular tradition for skin diseases, remained in use until the 1960s.

Today, only a small pool remains amidst the countryside, situated on private property and adjacent to a medieval building that has undergone extensive transformations. The cult's testimony to the saint is preserved in a 15th-century statue within a small wayside shrine built near the spring.

In the neighboring Battaglia, several thermal lakes still exist, now part of the private property of Villa Selvatico, which only recently has been opened to the public [Fig. 7]. The earliest records of a settlement around the S.Elena hill date back to the 11th and 12th centuries. Ancient chronicles significantly refer to this hill as the 'Monte della Stufa' (Mount of the Stove) undoubtedly alluding to the presence of caves where steam baths were practiced (Mandruzzato 1804, 1-14, tav. I; 111-113; Menegazzi 1804) [Fig. 8]. The first thermal bath documented, around the mid-12th century, was dedicated to S.Eliseo, with an adjacent oratory in his honor, as in nearby Montegrotto. A few years later, a small church dedicated to the saint was built on the remains of the oratory, and alongside it S.Elena's veneration. This specific worship became so increasingly significant that both the bath and the hill remained increasingly associated with the figure of S.Elena. In 1199, a noblewoman named Speronella Delesmanini, in a testament concerning a plot of land atop the hill, left a substantial sum of money to the Bishop of Padua to build a hospice for the poor and pilgrims near the thermal caves. In the Paduan Statutes of 1235, there is a record of an intervention carried out by the Municipality of Padua in this thermal area. Further mentions of this 'hospice' and the small church appear in subsequent centuries. In the first half of the 16th century, the hill came under the ownership of the Selvatico family, who already owned extensive estates between Galzignano, Battaglia,





8 | The sudoriferous caves of the baths of S.Elena in an engraving from the late 19th century (https://battagliatermestoria.altervista.org/il-fango-termale-di-battaglia/).
9 | Villa Selvatico in an engraving by Montalegre (1714), with the chapel dedicated to S.Elena on the right (https://battagliatermestoria.altervista.org/villa-selvatico-a-battaglia-terme/).

Lispida, and Arquà. Thereupon, a single large property extended over the southeastern sector of the Euganean Hills. At the summit of the S.Elena hill, the main house stood, surrounded by "fabricis ruinosis" (ruined buildings) and "balneis tectis et apertis" (covered and open baths). On November 13, 1580, Michel de Montaigne was recorded as being present here: he was seeking the thermal source used for the baths which in the same days saw the presence of Cardinal d'Este for the treatment of his gout (Pezzolo 1883; Cattani 1925, 35-52; Zanetti 1989).

In the early 17th century, the restructuring of the house atop the hill began; a project that spanned several decades and involved both local and external craftsmen for architectural, decorative, painting, and sculptural interventions. A veritable palace, with an already monumental external staircase as its focus element, was completed in the mid-17th century, and a new small church dedicated to S.Elena was built by the archdeacon Luigi Selvatico, to be used as the family chapel [Fig. 9].

Several interventions followed in the following centuries until the property, consisting of "two buildings for mineral baths, three rental houses, a holiday home with an orchard, a private oratory, and mineral springs" was sold in 1814 to Agostino Meneghini. He immediately commissioned Giuseppe Jappelli to reorganize and renovate both the villa and the large surrounding park, including the thermal lakes and bathing structures. Jappelli's intervention is today still noticeable in the imposing structure of the villa, nestled in its splendid landscape. The property passed to the Von Wimpffen counts in 1842 and later to the Emo Capodilista family in the early 20th century (Fantelli 1989); several changes in ownership followed until the present day.

A different fate awaited a portion of the park and the hotel structure, which was also extensively renovated. In the 1930s, they were acquired by Cassa Nazionale delle Assicurazioni Sociali

10 | The territory of Lispida, with the area around Villa Italia and the thermal pond (Google Maps).

(National Social Insurance Fund), and in 1936, a new reception complex was built on the remains of the previous one, known as the 'Terme dei Lavoratori' (Worker's Thermal Baths) or the 'Stabilimento dell'Istituto Nazionale Fascista della Previdenza Sociale' (Building of the National Fascist Social Security Institute, later INPS). This new establishment joined the existing hotels in the area: the Grand Hotel Terme, the Albergo S.Elena, and the Albergo Italia, all located along the Battaglia Canal, the main communication route with Padua and Venice. In the early 1960s, a new S.Elena Thermal Pavilion was constructed on the same site as the previous building, which was demolished.

The caves – or stoves – of St. Elena still exist today as are a regional property precluded from any intervention and public visit. The thermal waters are sourced from a great depth exclusively for the neighboring hotels and public baths between the towns of Battaglia and Galzignano.

A little further to the west, in the territory of Monselice, near the small elevation of Monte Lispida and the thermal ponds of Battaglia, lies another thermal site, recognizable as a small body of water within a vast private property that also houses an important historical building known as the Castle of Lispida or Villa Italia [Fig. 10]. The first records of the site date back to the 13th century when a monastery of the Order of S.Augustine was established, along with a church dedicated to S.Maria di Ispida. During the rule of the Serenissima Republic of Venice, the property was confiscated by Doge Giovanni Mocenigo, and in the late 18th century it was acquired by the Corinaldi counts, who built the imposing villa that still stands today within an extensive vineyard estate (Callegari [1931] 1973, 59-60). In the estate, there is still a thermal lake with hot springs, used for the extraction of therapeutic mud that, after maturation, is employed in the nearby Euganean thermal area. This place, preserved in its natural and almost wild state, has given rise to a legend connected to the presence of a mermaid: Manfredo, Count of Monticelli, suffered from a painful leg ailment that led him to desire death. On the night of Saint John the Baptist, he approached the shores of the lake intending to end his sufferings when a beautiful girl, half-woman and half-fish, appeared before him with a melodious song, willing to help him. She descended into the depths of the lake, bringing him hot mud with which he was healed. In the following nights, he returned to the lake but never saw the

11-11a| Lago della Costa, now a UNESCO site, in the territory of Arquà Petrarca (Google Maps).
12 | The temple designed by G. Jappelli (reconstructed in 1938 by Adolfo Callegari) nearby the Raineriana Spring in the locality of Costa di Arquà Petrarca.

girl again. According to tradition, on the night of Saint John, the spirits of the count and the maiden still meet, and those passing nearby might hear the enchanting song of the mermaid emanating from the lake's depths (Rodella 1959, 97-109).

Not far away, towards the southwest in the territory of Arquà Petrarca, we find Lago della Costa (Callegari [1931] 1973, 279-280), recognized since 2011 as part of the UNESCO site 'Prehistoric Pile dwellings around the Alps' which houses a prehistoric pile dwelling village dating back to the Bronze Age (Bianchin Citton, Zerbinati 1994). Once again, it is a natural lake fed by a thermal spring, which was formerly exploited for mud extraction [Fig. 11].

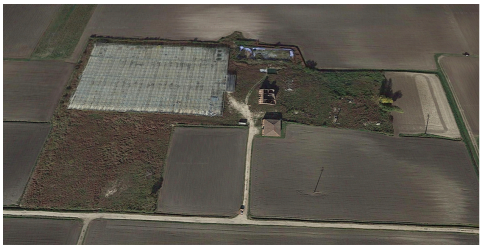
Today, the area is difficult to access, enclosed within private property. Not far from there, in the same locality of Costa, another thermal spring can be found, known as Fonte Raineriana, named after Archduke Ranieri of Austria, who had a temple-like structure built there in 1829 [Fig. 12]. This neoclassical-style structure was also designed by Giuseppe Jappelli. Although it was demolished in 1932, it was later faithfully reconstructed based on a preserved drawing from the Jappelli iconographic collection at the Civic Library of Padua by Adolfo Callegari, the director of the Archaeological Museum of Atestino at that time. An inscription on the facade commemorates the archduke, who also funded studies on the sulfuric water of the spring to verify its therapeutic benefits (Callegari [1931] 1973, 280-283).

The western slope

The thermal phenomenon is also present on the western side of the Euganean Hills, particularly in the area of Val Calaona [Fig. 13], a large basin nestled between the Mounts Cero, Cinto, and Lozzo, known to have been inhabited since prehistoric times (Callegari [1931] 1973, 155).

Gaetano Nuvolato, in his *Storia di Este e del suo territorio*, wrote about the thermal waters:

> "Only two sources exist in our territory, those in the valley known as Calaona, and in lesser quantities at Fontanafredda. The former spring from peaty ground, with qualities similar to those of Abano, though slightly less hot, reaching a maximum temperature of 31 degrees Reaumur, equivalent to 38,75 degrees Celsius. Just over half a century ago, the baths began there, highly beneficial to the human body, and it is worth remembering a villager named Marin di Calaona, who was the first to introduce the use of baths in the area. Baths continue there during the sum-



13 | The sector of Val Calaona where the thermal springs are located, recently used for greenhouse cultivation (Google Maps).
14 | Advertisement poster from 1904 promoting the Terme della Val Calaona.
15 | Remains of the ancient thermal and accommodation structures in Val Calaona.

> mer, but due to the lack of a suitable establishment for the affluent classes, this sulfuric valley may have remained somewhat less renowned compared to the thermal baths of Abano and S.Elena, and other locations in the Euganean region. In our times, when public hygiene is so valued, one should take advantage of what provident nature offers, and either a company or the Municipality of Calaona, being the owner, should establish an establishment there which, close to the hills, could prove delightful and offer modern conveniences to both local and foreign visitors, leading to certain benefits for both that locality and the nearby city of Este" (Nuvolato [1851] 1969, 638-639).

The first documents mentioning the area date back to 1682, when it was freely accessible as part of Este territory. At that time, there were probably only pools and basins without any form of protection. It was only in the early 19th century, likely after an inspection by the Provincial Delegation of Padua, that some structures were built to enhance the enjoyment and reception of visitors, including a building and a common pool (Monselesan 1872). However, the management problem remained unresolved; documents from the second half of the 19th century, when the area fell under the jurisdiction of Baone, referred to the pool as an "infernal muddle" since "the water is never renewed, there are no changing rooms or separate rooms for men and women, and the stirring of the muddy bottom makes the appearance of the water repulsive." In 1895, the provincial physician ordered its closure.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Municipality of Baone launched a new project to exploit and promote the thermal phenomenon, both by constructing suitable bath and hotel facilities and through effective advertising campaigns [Fig. 14]. An article in the Paduan newspaper "La libertà" on July 10, 1904, reports: "we can assert that the Administration has spared no effort to make it a place of true moral and physical comfort." Unfortunately, the events of World War I had their tragic consequences here too: the facilities were immediately used to house numerous refugees and quickly fell into a state of neglect within a few years; in 1921, the establishment was once again closed (Comune di Baone, *Le terme di Val Calaona*).

A new interest seemed to arise in the 1970s when scientific research was conducted on the waters and their qualities, but the economic commitment appeared too burdensome.

16 | Fontanafredda, locality Crosara with the thermal spring and the structures built over the years for productive activities (Google Maps).
17 | Crosara di Fontanafredda. The mill and the thermal tank after a recent restoration.

The thermal pools continued to be freely frequented, but the thermal phenomenon was also exploited in another way: a Cooperative built greenhouses on an area of 11,500 m2 with permission from the Municipality of Baone, transforming the site into a productive zone for several years. The company later went bankrupt in 2013, and despite other attempts at recovery by the Municipality, the vast area remains in total decay [Fig. 15].

Not far away we find other thermal springs, such as the one mentioned by Nuvolato: in the locality of Crosara di Fontanafredda [Fig. 16], in the territory of Cinto Euganeo, a complex of tanks that collect water gushing at 27 °C has been recently restored. According to local tradition, before the earthquake of 1976, the mildly sulfuric water reached a temperature of over 40 °C and flowed from several points across the plain. Documented at least since the 12th century (Casarin 1976, 191, 313-314), its presence also favored productive activities: the Coppedello mill dates back to 1300 (Grandis 2001; Grandis 2005, 237-239), still preserved next to the main tank. The structure building was originally linked to flour production, while more recently the tank was used for macerating hemp, benefiting from the water's temperature and chemical-physical composition [Fig. 17]. Today, a private intervention (Fontanafredda webpage) has led to the recovery and restoration of the structures, including the tanks, where the spontaneous gushing of water can still be witnessed on the surface. Despite some initiatives aimed at promoting its identity, few people are aware of the site, which, on the contrary, deserves proper enhancement for its historical and landscape significance.

The thermal phenomenon is thus very well present in the Euganean territory, although the fame and continuity of life of the Abano and Montegrotto areas have concentrated attention and interest primarily in their areas. The various historical events that these places have experienced have determined a development (or lack thereof) that has certainly influenced their evolution. From a historical-cultural perspective, it is noteworthy that in the less known and frequented places by international and local tourism, the thermal identity has remained more evident and perceivable, conserving its value and original appearance more faithfully. Today,

18 | The heavily urbanized territory between Montegrotto and Abano Terme (Google Maps).

thermalism still presents itself as a widespread and diverse water landscape, no longer visible in the territory of Montegrotto and Abano, where urbanization and extensive tourist visitation have radically transformed the landscape [Fig. 18]. For this reason, the "minor" sites, equally rich in history and culture, should be valorised in order to make current visitors to modern thermal centers more aware of a long historical and social past.

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English abstract

Thermalism in the Euganean area has been known and exploited for millennia. Today, however, the economic, cultural and touristic interest seems to be mainly focused in the area between Abano and Montegrotto Terme, where there are important remains from the Roman era. Yet, the phenomenon extends beyond these two well-known locations, which is why the surrounding territory also deserves adequate valorisation; especially because in the less known and frequented areas, the thermal water landscape better preserves its original characteristics and lends itself to tourist and cultural promotion actions.

keywords | Thermalism; Euganean Hills; Water Landscapes.

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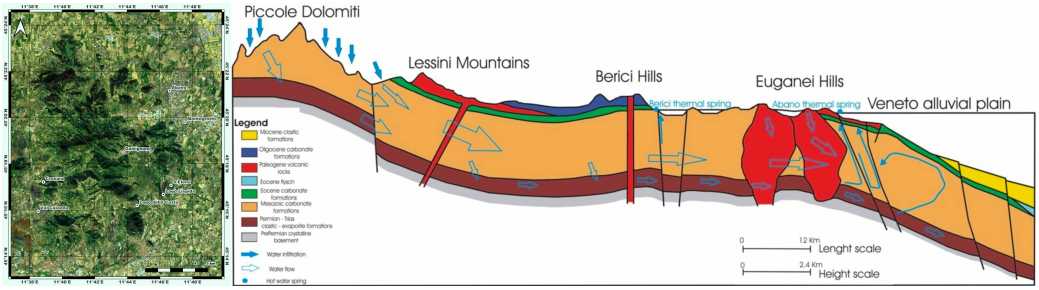
Paesaggi d'acqua

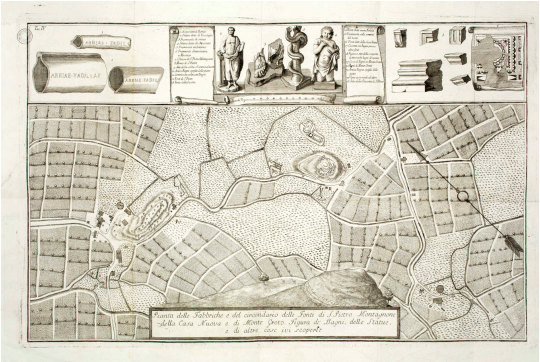
Il fenomeno del termalismo nel comprensorio euganeo tra antichità ed età moderna

Paola Zanovello, Andrea Meleri



1 | Le manifestazioni termali nei Colli Euganei (elaborazione da Google Maps di A. Meleri).
2 | Il fenomeno geotermale euganeo (Fabbri 2023).

Il territorio euganeo si colloca in una posizione geografica particolare, ergendosi come complesso collinare autonomo e isolato nel cuore della Pianura Padana e lambito, in epoca antica, da due dei grandi fiumi veneti: l'Adige e il Bacchiglione. Per le sue peculiari caratteristiche geo-topografiche, ma anche climatiche, fu sempre oggetto d'interesse da parte dell'uomo, manifestando una presenza insediativa ininterrotta fin dalla preistoria. Le molte risorse, quali pietra, acque, legname, terreni coltivabili e pascoli, ne fecero uno dei luoghi più ambiti, soprattutto nelle fasi storiche più importanti tra l'Età del Ferro e l'epoca romana, ma con continuità anche nelle fasi successive, dal Medioevo fino all'epoca contemporanea (Selmin 2005). In particolare durante l'occupazione romana, che si sovrappose alla ricca civiltà dei Veneti antichi nella gestione del territorio, furono ufficialmente ripartiti i due versanti collinari tra i poli urbani principali, prima veneti e poi romani, di *Ateste* e *Patavium*. L'intervento, richiesto a seguito di un contenzioso sorto tra le due città, avvenne nel 141 a.C., sancito con il posizionamento di alcuni cippi confinari che definirono in maniera inequivocabile le aree di pertinenza di ciascun insediamento. È chiaro che alla base del conflitto d'interessi dovevano trovarsi le ricche risorse del territorio collinare, dalle quali le comunità urbane traevano profitti e opportunità di sviluppo (Zanovello 2005, 104-108).



3 | L'area delle *Aquae Patavinae* nella tavola IV di S. Mandruzzato 1804.
4 | Gli apprestamenti termali di Abano in un'incisione di Francesco Bertelli (inizio XVII secolo).

Una di queste era certamente il fenomeno termale, ampiamente diffuso nel territorio euganeo [Fig. 1], di antichissima origine vulcanica ma soprattutto sede di emersione delle acque provenienti dall'arco prealpino; queste, dopo un lungo percorso a grande profondità, venivano spinte verso la superficie con altissime temperature e peculiare ricchezza di componenti chimico-fisiche con proprietà salutifere (Fabbri 2011) [Fig. 2]. Nel mondo antico il fenomeno termale era percepito come direttamente connesso ad entità divine, attraverso il cui intervento, o mediazione, l'uomo poteva ottenere guarigione, salute, benessere (Annibaletto, Bassani, Ghedini 2014).

Il versante nord-orientale e i *Patavini Fontes* o *Aquae Patavinae*

L'area euganea era nota nelle fonti letterarie latine, che in epoca romana la collegavano al dio *Aponus*, il cui nome secondo alcuni significava "senza dolore" (*a-ponos*), mentre secondo altri richiamerebbe l'essenza stessa dell'acqua (dalla radice indoeuropea *ap-* che indica l'acqua che scorre). Nella zona aponense, conosciuta nell'antichità come *Aquae Patavinae*, le odierne Terme Euganee, i Romani stabilirono, nei luoghi di un antico santuario protostorico, una rinomata stazione di cura e soggiorno, nota al pari di altre importanti zone termali, come ad esempio la campana Baia, tipico esempio di quel modo di percepire e sfruttare il termalismo che gli autori antichi ricordavano come "*otium baianum*": luogo di benessere, vacanza e relax, lontano dalle regole e dagli impegni della quotidianità (Zanovello 2011).

Nel territorio dell'odierna Montegrotto Terme, dove si trovava anche il laghetto sacro ad Apono, si concentravano le strutture dedicate allo sfruttamento del termalismo e all'alloggio dei frequentatori: piscine, vasche, impianti idraulici si distribuivano nell'area, certamente in relazione alla presenza delle sorgenti termali che all'epoca scaturivano spontaneamente in superficie [Fig. 3]; *domus* e ville grandiose, forse anche di proprietà imperiale, sorsero nelle immediate vicinanze. I materiali emersi durante le diverse attività di scavo, realizzate dagli ultimi anni del XVIII secolo fino a oggi, testimoniano una frequentazione diffusa e in molti casi

anche esibizione di lusso e ricchezza da parte dei proprietari e dei visitatori (*Aquae Patavinae* 2011; 2012; *Aquae Salutiferae* 2013).

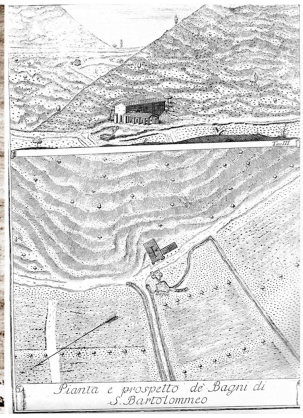
Nel confinante territorio dell'odierna Abano, che deriva il suo nome dall'antica divinità latina, la documentazione archeologica mostra invece una predominante occupazione di tipo rurale, anche se non mancano le testimonianze cultuali connesse al fenomeno del termalismo: qui le acque salutifere sgorgavano naturalmente in superficie solo nella zona del Montirone, ma erano ampiamente presenti nel sottosuolo e quindi fruibili attraverso l'emungimento, come dimostra la continuità di vita delle strutture curative e alberghiere tra Medioevo ed età moderna e contemporanea; in questo periodo proprio la zona di Abano, in particolare sotto il governo della Serenissima, divenne molto più importante e frequentata rispetto a quella di Montegrotto (Grandis 2005, 217-221; Zanovello 2012; Bressan, Bonini 2012). Una ricca documentazione iconografica [Fig. 4] e descrittiva testimonia la notorietà del luogo e la sua frequentazione da parte delle diverse categorie sociali: medicina gratuita per i meno abbienti, che potevano liberamente accedere alle vasche colme di acqua benefica, ma anche luogo di benessere e svago soprattutto per i nobili veneziani e padovani, che spesso costruivano nel territorio le loro lussuose residenze estive (Rippa Bonati 2013; Dal Pozzolo 2013).

Va ricordato inoltre che fino alla prima guerra mondiale buona parte dell'area termale nel settore orientale degli Euganei era costituita da un'unica entità amministrativa: nel 1918 si registra il distacco di San Pietro Montagnon, l'attuale Montegrotto, dal Comune di Battaglia, mentre il territorio di Abano era dipendente da Padova e noto come Abano Bagni fino al 1924.

Il versante sud-orientale

Il termalismo euganeo non è però limitato alla sola area aponense: emergenze idriche, con caratteristiche simili, si trovano anche nella vicina ampia valle, occupata oggi dai moderni centri termali di Galzignano e Battaglia; altri fenomeni termali sono registrati nella zona di Monselice, con il laghetto di Lispida e nella vicina Arquà Petrarca, con il laghetto della Costa, noto per essere stato anche la sede di un villaggio palafitticolo dell'Età del Bronzo (Bianchin Citton, Zerbinati 1994).

Oggi purtroppo molte di queste aree sono poco riconoscibili; tutta la piana compresa tra Battaglia (con il suo canale pensile realizzato tra 1189 e 1201), Monselice ed Este fu oggetto di attenta bonifica ad opera della Serenissima intorno alla metà del XVI secolo: come si vede in alcune mappe cinquecentesche, la pianura che circondava il settore sud-orientale dei Colli era un vasto acquitrino alimentato da polle anche termali, ma soprattutto derivante dalla scarsa attenzione alla regimazione delle acque fluviali [Fig. 5]. A seguito delle difficoltà economiche causate dalle guerre concluse con il trattato di Cambrai, nel 1556 fu creata una nuova magistratura dei Provveditori sopra i Beni Inculti, con l'obiettivo di restituire all'agricoltura terreni impraticabili per il ristagno idrico; nacque l'anno successivo il progetto noto come "Retratto di Monselice" che prevedeva la bonifica o "retratto" delle terre comprese "dalla Battaglia fino a Este, che confinano con il fiume, over canal de Moncelese, et con li Monti intorno delle Valli de Garzignan de Val S. Zibio de Arquà et di Baon" (Archivio di Stato di Pado-



5 | Un particolare della grande carta del territorio padovano, disegnata nel 1534 da Nicolò dal Cortivo: con le valli e le paludi presenti nel territorio tra Galzignano, Battaglia, Lispida e Monselice. A sinistra di Battaglia si vede il colle di Sant'Elena di proprietà della famiglia Selvatico.
6 | L'area termale di S. Bartolomeo nella tavola III di S. Mandruzzato 1804.

va (ASP), *Certosa di Padova*, b. 16, fasc. 6 (proclama a stampa del 6 agosto 1557); Grandis 2005; Grandis 2016). Il progetto prevedeva un finanziamento diretto da parte dei proprietari, che non sempre però erano nelle condizioni di esporsi finanziariamente. Tra coloro che avevano aderito al progetto si registrano Bartolomeo Selvatico, con una porzione di terreni nella zona di Lispida, Antonio Saviolo in zona Regazzoni a Galzignano, a ridosso dei Bagni di S. Bartolomeo, Giovanni e Andrea Placca ad Arquà nella contrada della Costa.

I moderni centri di Galzignano e Battaglia occupano la vallata compresa tra due propaggini del comprensorio collinare euganeo: Monte Gallo, Orbieso, Calbarina a ovest, Monte delle Valli, Cimisella, Ceva a est. Anche in quest'area scaturivano sorgenti, del cui sfruttamento si ha notizia almeno a partire dall'epoca medievale, quando vengono menzionate con denominazioni legate alla sfera della sacralità cristiana: ciò non deve stupire, poiché le qualità salutifere dell'acqua continuano ad essere poste sotto la tutela divina, attraverso diverse figure di santi. Soprattutto nel mondo cristiano delle origini l'acqua è percepita come mezzo di salvezza, anche simbolica, quale simbolo di purificazione; allo stesso modo anche l'acqua termale manteneva il ruolo fondamentale di strumento di guarigione e di salute (Scorrano 2020). Per questo motivo sia le acque di sorgente sia quelle termali sono sempre collegate a figure di santi: come per i santi Pietro ed Eliseo a Montegrotto (San Pietro nell'area centrale di Montegrotto dove rimaneva viva la tradizione del tempio pagano, S. Eliseo nella zona delle Terme Neroniane), la tradizione ricorda le fonti di S. Bartolomeo a Galzignano (al confine con il territorio di Montegrotto) o le sorgenti in grotta dedicate a S. Eliseo e S. Elena a Battaglia. Ne rimangono testimonianze soprattutto nella ricca documentazione archivistica e bibliografica di epoca medievale e moderna. Le grotte di S. Elena sono infatti menzionate già in documenti del XII secolo, mentre i luoghi termali legati a S. Bartolomeo sono ricordati in scritti del XV secolo e rappresentati anche graficamente nelle tavole allegate all'imponente opera su "I bagni

di Abano", in tre volumi, di Salvatore Mandruzzato, pubblicata tra la fine del Settecento e i primi anni dell'Ottocento.

Alle fonti di S. Bartolomeo, che Mandruzzato pone "Dentro gli antichi confini di Montegroto a Ponente", il medico aponense dedicò poche pagine, oltre ad una grande tavola [Fig. 6] in cui sono riportati pianta e prospetto dell'area (Mandruzzato 1804, 95-99, tav. III; 113-119): a due polle evidenziate come piccole pozze, si connette un bacino più ampio, di forma irregolare e recintato da uno steccato, connesso ad una serie di canali, tracciati con regolarità certamente per drenare la campagna circostante. Giusto di fronte, oltre una strada, era presente una chiesa, con accanto, a 90° rispetto all'asse dell'edificio sacro, una 'casetta rusticale', con affaccio a portico verso la strada. Secondo l'autore le sorgenti erano tra le più "famose e sperimentate del Territorio Padovano", ma al suo tempo la chiesa dedicata a S. Bartolomeo era in stato d'abbandono. "Se crediamo al Savonarola fu molto prima dell'età sua fabbricata quella Chiesa dalla Nob. Famiglia Padovana de' Leoni, e fu insieme costrutto un Ospitale per accogliere i Poveri", riferisce il Mandruzzato, che sottolinea però l'assenza di questa informazione nelle descrizioni di Bartolomeo Montagnana, operante come il Savonarola nella prima metà del Quattrocento. Nella descrizione del medico padovano Michele Savonarola, compresa nel suo *De Balneis et Thermis naturalibus omnibus Italiae*, era indicata "una gran piscina non costrutta di pietre, come tutti gli altri Bagni Padovani, di un fondo fangoso, grasso, nerastro e molle assai, nel quale necessariamente devono immergersi i bagnanti: talché s'eglino non si sostenessero a travi che attraversano quella fossa, qualche volta vi affonderebbero ad una profondità pericolosa" (Mandruzzato 1804, 98). Mandruzzato rileva che ormai il bagno era in disuso, ma tornava ad essere frequentato nel giorno che ricorda il Santo; inoltre aggiunge che sia la chiesa che l'area termale appartenevano ad un'Abbazia della famiglia degli Obizzi, in quegli anni in mano al Marchese Tommaso, "gentiluomo di genio e di talenti conosciutissimo, e da cui i Bagni di S. Bartolommeo otterrebbero di essere portati a maggior splendore di tutti gli altri Aponesi, se la situazione non gli opponesse un ostacolo insuperabile" (Mandruzzato 1804, 99).

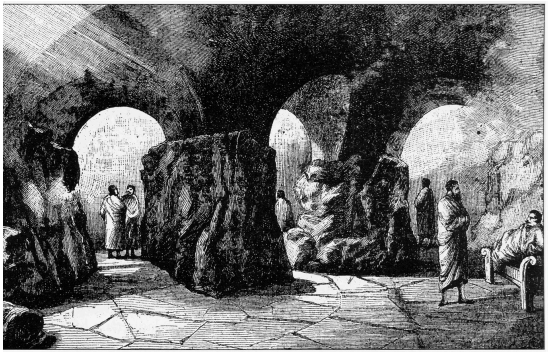
Certa era però la fama che questi bagni ebbero nel XV secolo, quando furono meta di visita di personaggi illustri, ma anche d'interesse scientifico da parte dei medici, come nei secoli successivi, per le caratteristiche proprie dell'acqua e dei fanghi. A metà del XVI secolo Gabriele Falloppio ne denuncia invece lo stato di abbandono, la mancanza di un luogo di accoglienza per i malati e addirittura "adulterato il fango con sozze mescolanze" (Mandruzzato 1804, 97).

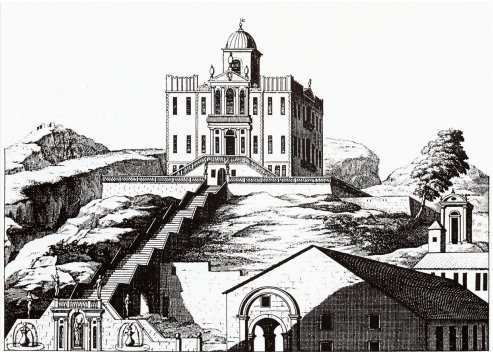
Secondo Galliano Migliolaro, artista e storico locale aponense, la chiesa "di tardo stile romanico ... ad una sola navata con le pareti affrescate e la facciata affiancata da due campanili" risalirebbe all'XI secolo, più volte rimaneggiata ed infine, a seguito del Regio Decreto del 7 luglio 1866, n. 3036, che stabilì la soppressione degli Ordini e delle Corporazioni religiose, trasformata in struttura residenziale (Migliolaro 1956, 136; Italia Nostra 2021). La fonte di San Bartolomeo, nella tradizione popolare figura di riferimento per le malattie cutanee, fu in uso fino agli anni Sessanta del Novecento.

7 | L'area di Villa Selvatico con il parco termale (Google Maps).

Oggi rimane solo una pozza in mezzo alla campagna, in proprietà privata, accanto ad un edificio di origine medievale, ampiamente trasformato; la testimonianza del culto al santo si conserva in una statua quattrocentesca entro un capitello costruito nei pressi della fonte.

Nella vicina Battaglia si conservano alcuni laghetti termali, oggi inclusi nella proprietà privata di villa Selvatico, solo recentemente aperta al pubblico [Fig. 7]. Le prime notizie di un abitato intorno al colle di S. Elena risalgono all'XI-XII secolo; le cronache antiche definiscono significativamente questa collina 'Monte della Stufa', riferendosi certamente alla presenza di grotte in cui si praticava il bagno a vapore (Mandruzzato 1804, 1-14, tav. I; 111-113; Menegazzi 1804) [Fig. 8]. Il primo bagno di cui si ha notizia, intorno alla metà del XII secolo, era collegato a S. Eliseo, con accanto un oratorio a lui dedicato, come nella vicina Montegrotto. Pochi anni più tardi sui resti dell'oratorio fu costruita una chiesetta dedicata al santo, a cui fu affiancata S. Elena, la cui venerazione divenne poi sempre più importante, tanto che da allora sia il bagno che il colle rimasero collegati alla figura della santa. Nel 1199 la nobile Speronella Delesmanini, in un lascito riguardante un terreno sulla sommità del colle, lasciò una grossa somma di denaro al Vescovo di Padova, affinché sulla collina, accanto alle grotte termali, fosse costruito un ospizio per i poveri e i pellegrini. Negli Statuti Padovani del 1235 si ricorda infatti un intervento realizzato dal Comune di Padova in quest'area termale. Altre notizie di questo 'spedale' e della chiesetta si registrano anche nei secoli successivi; nella prima metà del Cinquecento la collina entrò in possesso della famiglia Selvatico, già proprietaria di vasti appezzamenti tra Galzignano, Battaglia, Lispida e Arquà: in questo modo un'unica grande proprietà si estendeva nel settore sud-orientale degli Euganei; sul colle di S. Elena si trovava la casa padronale, circondata da "fabricis ruinosis" e "balneis tectis et apertis". Qui il 13 novembre 1580 si registra anche la presenza di Michel de Montaigne, che cercava la sorgente termale da cui proveniva





8 | Le grotte sudorifere dei bagni di S. Elena in un'incisione di fine Ottocento (https://battagliatermestoria.altervista.org/il-fango-termale-di-battaglia/).
9 | Villa Selvatico in un'incisione del Montalegre (1714), a destra la cappella dedicata a Sant'Elena (https://battagliatermestoria.altervista.org/villa-selvatico-a-battaglia-terme/).

l'acqua utilizzata per i bagni, che negli stessi giorni erano frequentati dal Cardinale d'Este per la cura della gotta di cui soffriva (Pezzolo 1883; Cattani 1925, 35-52; Zanetti 1989).

Nei primi anni del Seicento iniziò la ristrutturazione della casa sulla sommità del colle, opera che occupò diversi decenni e la presenza di maestranze locali ed esterne sia per gli interventi architettonici che per quelli decorativi, pittorici e scultorei. Un vero e proprio palazzo, il cui elemento focale era già rappresentato da una monumentale scalinata esterna, risulta compiuto alla metà del secolo; una nuova chiesetta, che manteneva il culto a S. Elena, fu realizzata dall'arcidiacono Luigi Selvatico come cappella di famiglia [Fig. 9].

Seguirono diversi interventi anche nei secoli successivi, fino a quando la proprietà ("due edifici ad uso di bagni minerali, tre case d'affitto, una casa di villeggiatura con brolo, oratorio privato e sorgenti minerali") fu ceduta nel 1814 ad Agostino Meneghini, che subito incaricò Giuseppe Jappelli di riordinare e ristrutturare sia la villa che il grande parco circostante, comprendente i laghetti termali e le strutture balneari. L'intervento jappelliano è quello che oggi meglio si coglie nell'imponente struttura della villa, incastonata nel suo splendido contesto paesaggistico. La proprietà passò nel 1842 ai conti von Wimpffen e all'inizio del Novecento alla famiglia Emo Capodilista (Fantelli 1989), cui seguirono diversi passaggi fino ad oggi.

Una sorte diversa toccò alla struttura alberghiera, anch'essa più volte rimaneggiata, e ad una parte del parco: verso gli anni Trenta del Novecento furono acquisiti dalla Cassa Nazionale delle Assicurazioni Sociali e nel 1936 sui resti del precedente venne realizzato un nuovo complesso ricettivo, noto come 'Terme dei Lavoratori' o 'Stabilimento dell'Istituto Nazionale Fascista della Previdenza Sociale' (poi INPS), che andava ad affiancare i già esistenti alberghi presenti nel territorio: il Grand Hotel Terme, l'Albergo S. Elena e l'Albergo Italia, tutti posti lungo il canale Battaglia, principale via di comunicazione con Padova e Venezia. All'inizio degli anni

10 | Il territorio di Lispida, con la proprietà intorno a Villa Italia e il laghetto termale (Google Maps).

Sessanta fu poi costruito un nuovo padiglione delle Terme di S. Elena, sullo stesso luogo del precedente edificio, demolito.

Le grotte o 'stufe' di S. Elena sono tuttora esistenti, ma rimangono di proprietà regionale (ex INPS) e sono attualmente precluse ad ogni tipo di visita o intervento. Le acque termali, estratte in profondità, vengono impiegate oggi solo nelle vicine moderne strutture alberghiere e in una piscina pubblica situate tra Battaglia e Galzignano.

Poco più a ovest, a brevissima distanza dai laghetti termali di Battaglia, ma già nel territorio di Monselice, in località Monticelli, accanto all'isolato piccolo rilievo del Monte Lispida, si trova un'altra emergenza termale, riconoscibile ancora come un piccolo bacino idrico, compreso all'interno della vasta proprietà privata, in cui si trova anche un importante edificio storico, noto come Castello di Lispida o Villa Italia [Fig. 10]. Risalgono al XIII secolo le prime informazioni sul sito, dove sorse un monastero dell'Ordine di S. Agostino con una chiesa dedicata a S. Maria di Ispida; durante il dominio della Serenissima la proprietà fu confiscata dal Doge Giovanni Mocenigo e alla fine del Settecento acquisita dai conti Corinaldi, che costruirono l'imponente villa tuttora esistente, all'interno di una vasta proprietà a vocazione vitivinicola (Callegari [1931] 1973, 59-60). Rimane tuttora all'interno della tenuta un lago termale, con sorgenti calde, utilizzato per l'estrazione di fanghi terapeutici che vengono impiegati, dopo maturazione, nella vicina area termale euganea. In questo luogo, preservato allo stato naturale, quasi selvaggio, è fiorita una leggenda legata alla presenza di una sirena: Manfredo, conte di Monticelli, era stato colpito da una dolorosa malattia alle gambe che l'aveva portato a desiderare la morte. Nella notte di S. Giovanni Battista si era avvicinato alle sponde del lago, con l'idea di porre fine alla sua vita e alle sue sofferenze, ma con un canto melodioso gli apparve una fanciulla bellissima, per metà donna e metà pesce, che decise di aiutarlo: scese nelle profondità del lago, riportandogli del fango bollente, con il quale guarì il giovane. Nelle notti successive egli tornò al lago, senza più rivedere la fanciulla; secondo la tradizione però nella notte di S. Giovanni ancora oggi lo spirito del conte e la fanciulla si incontrano e chi si trova a passare nelle vicinanze può udire dal fondo del lago l'ammaliante canto della sirena (Rodella 1959, 97-109).

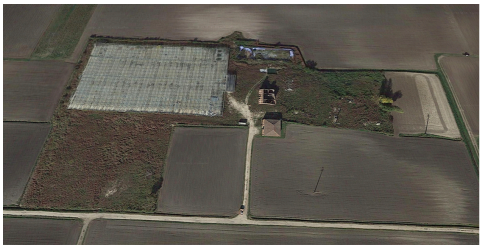
11-11a| Il Lago della Costa, oggi sito Unesco, nel territorio di Arquà Petrarca (Google Maps); veduta del lago.
12 | Il tempietto progettato da G. Jappelli (fatto ricostruire nel 1938 da Adolfo Callegari) presso la Fonte Raineriana, in località Costa di Arquà Petrarca.

A poca distanza, verso sud-ovest, si trova il lago della Costa (Callegari [1931] 1973, 279-280), nel territorio di Arquà Petrarca, dal 2011 riconosciuto come parte del sito Unesco 'Siti palafitticoli preistorici dell'arco alpino', sede di un villaggio palafitticolo risalente all'Età del Bronzo (Bianchin Citton, Zerbinati 1994). Anche in questo caso si tratta di un lago naturale, alimentato da una sorgente termale, che in passato veniva sfruttato per l'estrazione dei fanghi [Fig. 11].

Oggi l'area è difficilmente accessibile, interamente recintata e racchiusa all'interno di una proprietà privata; poco lontano, nella stessa località Costa, si trova un'altra sorgente di acqua termale, nota come Fonte Raineriana, poiché qui nel 1829 l'arciduca Ranieri d'Austria aveva fatto costruire una struttura a forma di tempietto romano [Fig. 12], anch'essa progettata da Giuseppe Jappelli in stile neoclassico (Callegari [1931] 1973, 280-283). Demolita nel 1932, fu poco più tardi fatta ricostruire fedelmente, sulla base di un disegno conservato nella raccolta iconografica jappelliana della Biblioteca Civica di Padova, da Adolfo Callegari, all'epoca direttore del Museo Archeologico Atestino. Un'iscrizione sulla facciata ricorda l'arciduca, che finanziò anche degli studi sull'acqua solforosa della sorgente per verificarne i benefici terapeutici.

Il versante occidentale

Il fenomeno termale è presente anche nel versante occidentale dei Colli Euganei, in particolare nella zona della Val Calaona [Fig. 13], ampia bassura compresa tra i Monti Cero, Cinto e Lozzo, nota per essere stata popolata fin dall'epoca preistorica (Callegari [1931] 1973, 155). Gaetano Nuvolato nel suo *Storia di Este e del suo territorio* (Nuvolato [1851] 1969, 638-639) a proposito delle acque termali scriveva: "Due sole sono le fonti nel nostro territorio, cioè quelle nella valle detta la Calaona, e in minor copia a Fontanafredda. Le prime scaturiscono da un terreno torboso per qualità simili a quelle di Abano, sebbene un po' meno calde, giungendo la loro massima temperatura a gradi 31 di Reaumur, ossia 38-75 centigradi. Datano da poco più di mezzo secolo le bagnature che ivi si cominciarono, assai salutari al corpo umano, ed è a ricordarsi un villico detto Marin di Calaone, che fu il primo a introdurre colà l'uso dei bagni. Nella stagione estiva vi continuano ancora i bagni, ma per difetto di uno stabilimento condegno alle classi agiate, forse è rimasta al di sotto della sua celebrità questa valle sulfurea



13 | Settore della Val Calaona in cui si trovano le sorgenti termali, in epoca recente sfruttate per le coltivazioni in serra (Google Maps).
14 | Locandina pubblicitaria del 1904 per promuovere le Terme della Val Calaona.
15 | Resti delle antiche strutture termali e ricettive in Val Calaona.

in confronto alle terme di Abano e di S. Elena e di altre dell'euganea contrada. Ma a' nostri giorni in cui tanto si usa di questi mezzi di pubblica igiene, si profitti una volta di quanto ci offre la provvida natura, e o una società o il Comune di Calaone che n'è il proprietario, faccian colà sorgere uno stabilimento che d'appresso ai colli può riuscire amenissimo, e prestare ai forestieri nostrali e d'oltremonti le moderne comodità, a cui andrebbe congiunto sicuro guadagno tanto per quella località che per la vicinissima città atestina".

I primi documenti che ne trattano risalgono al 1682, quando l'area, compresa nel territorio atestino, era frequentata liberamente; dovevano esistere all'epoca solo pozze e vasche, senza alcun tipo di protezione. Solo all'inizio del XIX secolo, probabilmente a seguito di un sopralluogo della Delegazione Provinciale di Padova, si decise di realizzare alcune strutture mirate a favorire la fruizione e l'accoglienza dei visitatori: un edificio e una vasca comune (Monselesan 1872). Non si risolse però il problema della gestione; in documenti della seconda metà dell'Ottocento, quando l'area era passata sotto la giurisdizione di Baone, la vasca è definita "bolgia infernale": "In essa l'acqua non si rinnova mai, non vi sono spogliatoi né camerini di divisione tra uomini e donne e lo smuovere del fondo melmoso rende ributtante l'aspetto dell'acqua". Nel 1895 il medico provinciale ne ordinò la chiusura.

All'inizio del XX secolo il Comune di Baone promosse un nuovo progetto di sfruttamento e valorizzazione del fenomeno termale sia con la realizzazione di strutture idonee, balneari e alberghiere, che con una buona campagna pubblicitaria [Fig. 14]; nel giornale padovano "La libertà" del 10 luglio 1904 si legge: "Possiamo affermare che l'Amministrazione nulla ha trascurato per renderlo un luogo di vero conforto morale e fisico." Purtroppo gli eventi della Prima Guerra Mondiale portarono le loro tragiche conseguenze anche qui: le strutture furono subito utilizzate per alloggiare i numerosi sfollati e subirono in pochissimi anni un penoso degrado; nel 1921 lo stabilimento fu nuovamente chiuso (Comune di Baone, *Le terme di Val Calaona*).

Un nuovo interesse sembrò riaccendersi negli anni Settanta, quando furono condotte ricerche scientifiche sulle acque e le loro qualità, ma l'impegno economico appariva troppo gravoso.

16 | Fontanafredda, località Crosara con la fonte termale e le strutture realizzate negli anni per attività produttive (Google Maps).
17 | Crosara di Fontanafredda. Il mulino e la vasca termale dopo i recenti interventi di restauro.

Le vasche termali continuarono ad essere frequentate liberamente, ma il fenomeno termale venne sfruttato anche in altro modo: vennero costruite, su concessione del Comune di Baone, serre su un'area di 11.500 m2 da parte di una Cooperativa, che per alcuni anni trasformò il sito in zona produttiva. L'azienda poi fallì nel 2013 e nonostante altri tentativi di recupero messi in atto dal Comune, la vasta area giace tuttora in totale degrado [Fig. 15].

A poca distanza si trovano altre sorgenti termali, come quella ricordata dal Nuvolato: in località Crosara di Fontanafredda [Fig. 16], nel territorio di Cinto Euganeo è stato recentemente recuperato un complesso di vasche che raccolgono acqua che sgorga oggi a 27°. Secondo la tradizione locale prima del terremoto del 1976, l'acqua, moderatamente solforosa, raggiungeva una temperatura di oltre 40° e sgorgava in diversi punti della piana. Documentata almeno a partire dal XII secolo (Casarin 1976, 191, 313-314), la sua presenza ha favorito anche in questo caso le attività produttive: al 1300 risale il mulino a coppedello (Grandis 2001; Grandis 2005, 237-239), tuttora conservato accanto alla vasca principale, legato alla produzione della farina, mentre in tempi più recenti la vasca fu utilizzata per la macerazione della canapa sfruttando la temperatura e la composizione chimico-fisica dell'acqua [Fig. 17]. Oggi un intervento privato (Fontanafredda, *Antica vasca termale Fontanafredda (PD)*) ha portato al recupero e al restauro delle strutture, comprese le vasche, dove ancora si coglie lo sgorgare spontaneo dell'acqua in superficie; nonostante qualche iniziativa volta a promuoverne l'identità, pochi ancora conoscono il luogo, che meriterebbe invece un'adeguata valorizzazione, sia per il suo significato storico che paesaggistico.

Il fenomeno del termalismo è quindi ben presente nel territorio euganeo, anche se la fama e la continuità di vita dell'area aponense ha concentrato l'attenzione e l'interesse in particolare in questa zona. Le diverse vicende storiche che i luoghi hanno conosciuto, ne hanno determinato uno sviluppo (o mancanza di sviluppo) che certamente ne ha segnato l'evoluzione, ma da un punto di vista storico-culturale, va sottolineato come proprio nei luoghi meno noti e frequentati dal turismo, internazionale ma anche locale, sia rimasta più evidente e percepibile

18 | Il territorio fortemente urbanizzato tra Montegrotto e Abano Terme (Google Maps).

l'identità termale, che conserva con maggiore integrità il suo valore e il suo aspetto originario. Il termalismo si presenta ancora oggi come un diffuso e variegato paesaggio d'acqua, non più percepibile ormai nel territorio di Montegrotto e Abano, dove l'urbanizzazione e l'imponente frequentazione turistica da molti decenni ha trasformato radicalmente il paesaggio [Fig. 18]. Proprio per questo motivo andrebbero valorizzati i siti 'minori', altrettanto ricchi di storia e di cultura, anche per rendere maggiormente partecipi di un lungo passato storico e sociale gli attuali frequentatori dei moderni centri termali.

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English abstract

Thermalism in the Euganean area has been known and exploited for millennia, but today the interests, including economic ones, are concentrated in particular in the area between Abano and Montegrotto Terme, where there are important remains from the Roman era. However, the phenomenon is much wider and more widespread in the territory and deserves adequate valorisation, also because in the less known and frequented areas the thermal water landscape better preserves its original characteristics and lends itself to tourist and cultural promotion actions.

keywords | Thermalism; Euganean Hills; Water Landscapes.

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Pilgrimages to mineral springs between Antiquity and the Middle Ages

Maddalena Bassani

Introduction

On the sidelines of the issues developed by the rurAllure European project (for the presentation of which see the contribution of Martín López Nores and Alessia Mariotti), it may be interesting to propose some data on the traces of ancient and post-ancient pilgrimage at sacred contexts that arose near curative springs and geothermal events in Ancient Italy.

The study of votive bequests by pilgrims and travelers at places of worship or otherwise where salutary water flowed has long been the focus of various publications that have sometimes investigated general aspects, inferable from literary and epigraphic sources (Marasco 2001; Dvorjetski 2007; Basso 2013 and 2014, with bibliography; on the Modern age, Clay Large [2015] 2019), in other cases to the material evidence (among which Bassani 2017; on sacred contexts at thermal mineral stations, Bassani 2014a; Bassani 2014b). To the springs capable of resolving illnesses that today can be classified as trivial afflictions, but at the time potentially lethal in the absence of specific medical treatment, individuals or groups of worshippers went not only in Roman times but also in the Medieval and Modern ages, with significant lingering in contemporary times. The fame of the well-being derived from 'curative pilgrimage' to the springs, as well as the sacred aura implied in them, continued over time: some Roman sites intended for treatment through mineral waters were included in the European pilgrimage routes, which were consolidated in Medieval and Modern times into today's three Romee, namely the Via Romea Francigena, the Via Romea Strata and the Via Romea Germanica [Fig. 1]. Along such routes, hundreds of thousands of people from different states of Europe have crossed Italy and some of its regions. If the Francigena from the west and the Strata from the east join in Tuscany proceeding toward Latium, the Germanica, coming from the north, intersects the Strata in the Euganean area, then continuing southward; only in the vicinity of Lake Bolsena do the three Romee head together toward the final destination, which is the city of Rome.

However, one would make the mistake of thinking that the phenomenon of the 'healing journey' often coinciding with the 'spiritual journey' has remained unchanged over the centuries passing through the same routes and the same ways. The history of studies on 'water cults' is extremely rich but tends to flatten very different phenomena from one another in the name of a kind of universality of the human approach to water and using comparative methods that are not always agreeable (Eliade [1970] 1974). Conversely, as outlined for the phenomenon

of cults at mineral sources (Bassani 2013; Scheid 2015), each case makes its own history, although common aspects can be inferred from different contexts for both the Roman and post-antique periods.

In fact, when looking at [Fig. 1] we can see that, compared to the mapping of thermo-mineral sites of ancient times indicated with dots, where there was pilgrimage both locally and from very distant places, there is a partial proximity of these modern routes to Roman health resorts: in some cases, the routes directly touch the ancient sites, in other cases they are several tens (sometimes hundreds) of kilometers away from them. This discrepancy can be explained in several ways. On the one hand by the fact that ancient healing facilities did not always continue to be maintained and exploited after the fall of the Western Roman Empire and thus no longer constituted a valid reason for making a healing/faith stop at those springs. On the other hand, because post-antique pilgrimage routes were able to intercept routes closer to other newly formed centers, e.g. churches and monasteries: the latter were managed by new authorities in the territory and maintained in efficient condition, i.e. free from the uncontrolled proliferation of vegetation that always has the upper hand in the absence of man. Finally, the sacredness of the water inherent in each spring, including those that are oligo-mineral and thus intended only for drinking or hygiene, may have suggested to the wayfarer alternative routes near landscapes evocative of apparitions of the Madonna or Saints, thus conveying new expectations of well-being and faith and promoting other walking routes (Nicoud 2015). On the other hand, the topic of the *interpretatio christiana* of gods and pagan cults to healing springs has not had an adequate analysis so far. Hence, given a only partial continuity of the frequentation of therapeutic springs concerning the three Romee routes, this paper will present two contexts located near the two routes later traveled respectively by Francigena and Strata, which continued to be travel destinations over the centuries precisely because of the presence of springs that have both a curative potential but are also charged with sacredness. These are clearly illustrative cases of broad and multifaceted phenomena found in many other Italian and European settings, for which specific in-depth studies will be necessary.

I. Along the Via Francigena: the case of the shrine of Minerva Medica at Caverzago (Piacenza)

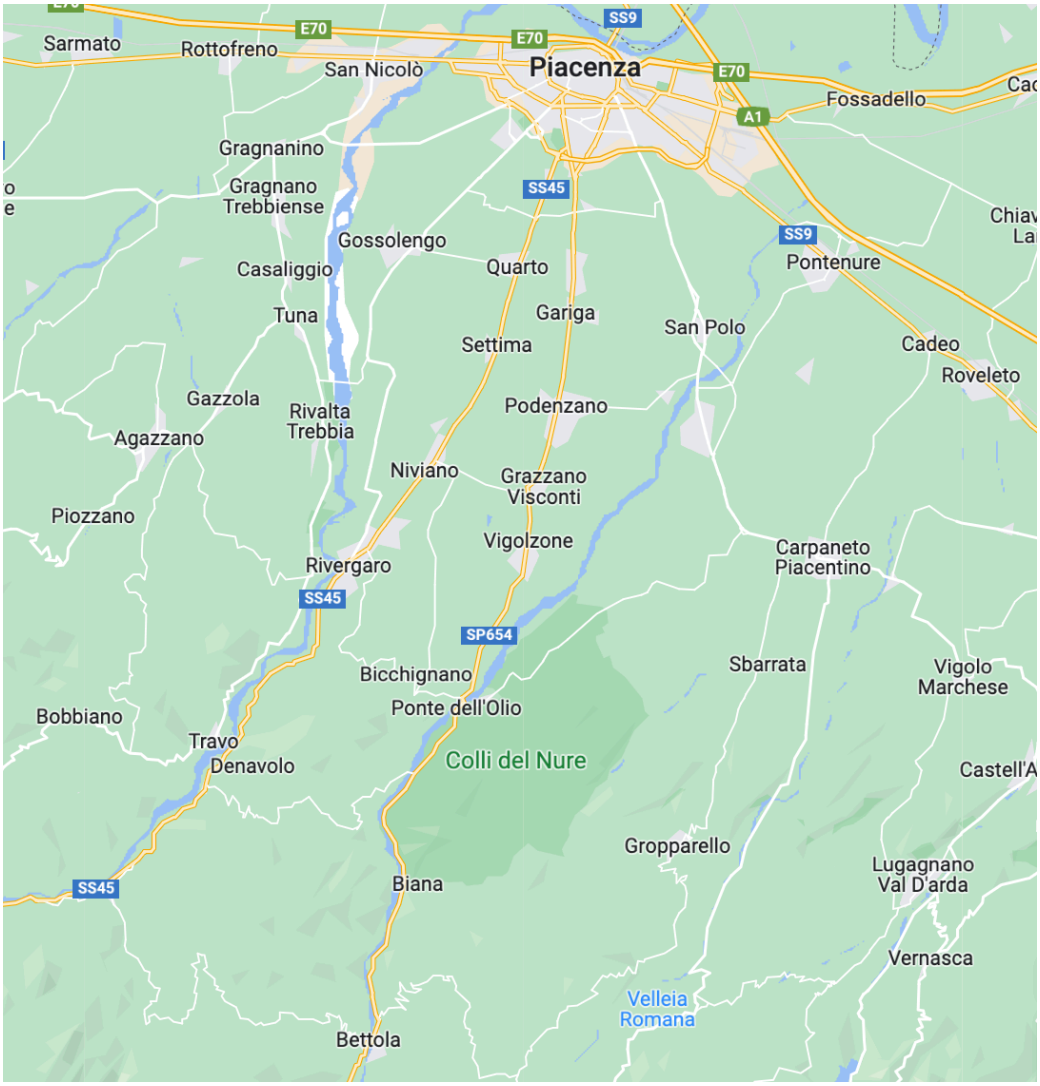
In the first section of the Via Francigena in Italy, between Piemonte and western Emilia-Romagna, the geographical context in the locality of Travo and Caverzago, between Velleia and Piacenza, is about 22 km southwest of the route [Fig. 2]. Here should be placed an important place of worship that arose in the middle valley of the Trebbia River, whose main building (perhaps a temple or a structure articulated in halls and open spaces) is not known for the time being, but only for some related cult artifacts and some of its construction parts, including blocks of Istrian stone reused in the church of S. Antonino, near Travo, and S. Maria, in Caverzago *(Minerva Medica 2008).* Moreover, it is plausible that in addition to the sanctuary, there were various outbuildings for the priestly component, intended to help devotees not only in ritual practices but also to interpret any oracular responses – whose existence seems to have been very likely. Neither should there have been a shortage of *mansione*s and facilities

1 | Map with thermo-mineral Roman sites (light blue dots) and the three Romee routes: the Via Romea Francigena from the west (dark red line), the Via Romea Germanica from the north (orange line), and the Via Romea Strata from the east (red line) (reworking the map of Roman thermo-mineral sites by A. Meleri, realized between 2010 and 2014 by the team of the University of Padua).

to accommodate many pilgrims who came to the sanctuary, nor even productive buildings to meet the needs of the faithful. The pilgrims from the nearest roads, including the *Via Aemilia* from Piacenza, could deviate from the journey by following a route identified downstream: from here it was then possible to reach the sanctuary, dedicated to the goddess Minerva (Carini 2008). As for the location of the ancient sacred structure, today it tends to rule out the hypothesis that it was near Travo since it seems more likely that the sacred complex stood at a spring at the foot of the Caverzago hill: here the church dedicated to St. Stefano Protomartire was erected in the XVII century, on an earlier building named in a manuscript of 1346 (Carini 2008; Marchetti 2008).

I.1. The springs, the shrine and the devotees in Roman times

Several mineralized cold springs, particularly at the Dorba stream and the Argà brook, are known to exist here, rich in sodium sulfate decahydrate also known as 'Glauber's salt': they are considered effective in the case of digestive system problems and to treat ulcers and wounds. In Roman times the main deity here was Minerva, worshipped with the epithets of



2 | Map showing locations connected to the shrine of *Minerva Medica* between Travo and Caverzago in Val Trebbia, Piacenza (Google Maps).

Medica Memor Cabardiacenis (Scheid 2008; Buonopane, Petraccia 2014). She was recognized with multiple powers, including curative abilities – as is well made clear by the first epithet of the goddess, *Medica* – and through her priests, she prescribed the cures to be practiced through those special springs. However, her second appellation, *Memor*-Mindful, hints at oracular powers: while some ancient etymological sources traced the name Minerva to the verb *memini*, 'to remember' (Arnob. 3, 31; Fest. P. 222), Minerva's implicit connection with strategies for enhancing memory, that is, with knowledge through learning, was embodied in

her being the patroness of the arts, ingenuity, and military strategies. Minerva could thus be asked to formulate advice and predictions, because she was a deity who, mindful of many things, knew how to forecast the future (see Weinreich 1968; Scheid 2008).

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that among the faithful there were people of various social ranks: aristocrats, artisans, and people of servile status all left a gift to the deity for a fulfilled or formulated ex votos, coming from neighboring areas or more distant locations. Minerva's third epithet, *Cabardiacensis*, introduces the theme of the goddess' territorial domain, which extended over a geographical area corresponding to the *fundus Cabardiacus*, hence Caverzago. The territorial area is to be located between Piacenza and Veleia and is mentioned in the *tabula alimentaria* of Velleia, which reports data on loans granted to landowners in the area; from those interests, the Roman State then drew quotas devolved to minor and destitute boys and girls (Criniti 1991; Soricelli 2002).

Although most of the worshippers came primarily from the area surrounding Travo and Caverzago, from the remaining epigraphic sources, dated between the I and III centuries AD, we learn that people came to the shrine after covering far longer distances (Carini 2008; De Cazanove 2009, 366-367; Buonopane, Petraccia 2014, 225-226). From Cremona came a certain *Caius Domitius Alendus* [Fig. 3], who had dedicated a votive stele in green stone to Minerva: *C(aius) Domi[tius] / Alendu[s] / Cremon(ensis) / Minervae / v(otum) s(olvit) [l(ibens)] m(erito)*: CIL XI, 1298; Criniti 2012, 3).

From Milan *Lucius Caelius Agathopus, Marcus Atilius Masculus, and Caius Domitius Priscus* came to Minerva for help: *Caelius* had offered a white marble memorial stone asking for mercy for Celia Marcellina, *Atilius* left a votive stele in green stone, and *Domitius* a small white marble altar (respectively: *M(inervae) m(emori) / sanctiss(imae) / L(ucius) Coelius / Agathopus / Mediol(anensis) pro / Coelia / Marcellina / l(ibenti) [a(nimo)] v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*: CIL XI 1296; Criniti 2012, 2; *Minervae / v(otum) s(olvit) / M(arcus) Atilius / Masculus / Mediol(anensis)*: CIL XI, 1294 = AE 2007, 150 = AE 2008, 537; Criniti 2012, 2; *M(inervae) M(emori) / C(aius) Domitius / Priscus / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*: CIL XI, 1299 = AE 2007, 150 = AE 2008, 537; Criniti 2012, 3).

From Vercelli, however, was Valeria Sammonia *(Minervae / Medicae / Cardabiac(ensis) / Valeria / Sammonia / Vercellens(is) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*: CIL XI 1306 = ILS 3137; Bollini 1969, 349; Criniti 2012, 4), while from Brescello, in Emilia, came *Lucius Callidius Primus*. He recalled in his dedication to the goddess that he donated two pounds of silver and a pair of silver ears, which have not come down to us but were perhaps placed above the base *(Minervae Aug(ustae) / L(ucius) Callidius Primus / Brixellanus ex arg(ento) / lib(ras) II item L(ucius) Callidius / Primus aures argenteas / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*: CIL XI, 1295 = ILS 3136; Criniti 2012, 2).

This last inscription introduces us to the questions around the diseases that affected the pilgrims who turned to *Minerva Medica Memor Cabardiacensis*: *Lucius Callidius Priscus* may

have donated silver ears because he had been cured by Minerva's medicinal waters for ear problems, such as persistent otitis and/or momentary deafness. Conversely, a certain Celia Giuliana dedicated a marble altar because she had been cured of a debilitating disease: *Minervae / Memori / Coelia Iuliana / indulgentia / medicinarum / eius infirmitate / gravi liberatam (!) / d(onum) p(osuit)*: CIL XI, 1297 = ILS 3134 = AE 2007, 150 = AE 2008, 537; Bollini 1969, 349; Criniti 2012, 3 ("To Minerva Mindful. Celia Giuliana placed as a gift for being freed from a serious illness through the efficacy of her medicines"). In this case, we do not know what Celia was suffering from, but thanks to the goddess' medicines (*medicinarum eius*) she fully recovered (*liberata*).

More precise information comes from a further epigraphic text engraved on a marble pedestal and dedicated by another woman, which specifies her illness: *Minervae / Memori / Tullia / Superiana / restitutione / facta sibi / capillorum / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*: CIL XI 1305 = ILS 3135 = AE 2007, 150 = AE 2008, 537; Bollini 1969, 349; De Cazanove 2009, 366; Criniti 2012, 3 ("To Minerva Mindful, Tullia Superiana willingly and deservedly dissolved her vow because her hair was restored").

So, the waters and the cures, thanks to Minerva quoted here as an oracular deity (*Memor*), were able to restore Tullia's lost hair. We do not know what the therapy might have been, but a clue comes from similar evidence discovered at the springs of Ischia, protected by Apollo and the Nitrodi Nymphs (at the beginning of the I century AD): the thermal waters were able to give beautiful hair to Capellina (*nomen omen*!), who dedicated an inscribed Grechetto marble slab, where she had herself portrayed during the therapy [Fig. 4]. She is seen naked and bent over before two Nymphs, with her head reclined to wash her hair in a circular basin held by one of the Nymphs, while the other poured water from a pitcher. On the opposite side of the scene, Apollo with a lyre observes the healing practice near a tree, reiterating the therapeutic power conveyed by himself: *Capellina v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) Nymphis* (CIL X, 6793; Basso, Petraccia, Tramunto 2011, 191, with bibliography).

Not even for the case of the Ischian baths was known the actual site of the pilgrimage, however, thanks to the image preserved on the relief, we came aware of part of the therapy: after being washed with miraculous waters, both ladies, grateful to the goddess, left memories of a recovered baldness and regain of a harmonious appearance.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning one last dedication that amplifies the power of the goddess from primarily therapeutic to that of a tutelary deity in a much broader sense. A certain *Lucius Nevius Verus Roscianus*, in his capacity as prefect of a cohort of *equites* of the Gauls, dedicated a slab to Minerva as a thanking gift for bringing him back safely from military exploits in Britain: *L. Naevius Verus Roscianus praef(ectus) coh(ortis) II / Gall(orum) eq(uitate) votum ex Britannia rettulit l(ibens) m(erito)* (CIL XI 1301 = ILS 2603 = Epigraphica 1989, 250 = AE 1989, 318 = AE 2007, 150 = AE 2008, 537; 2013, 248-249, with previous bibliography).

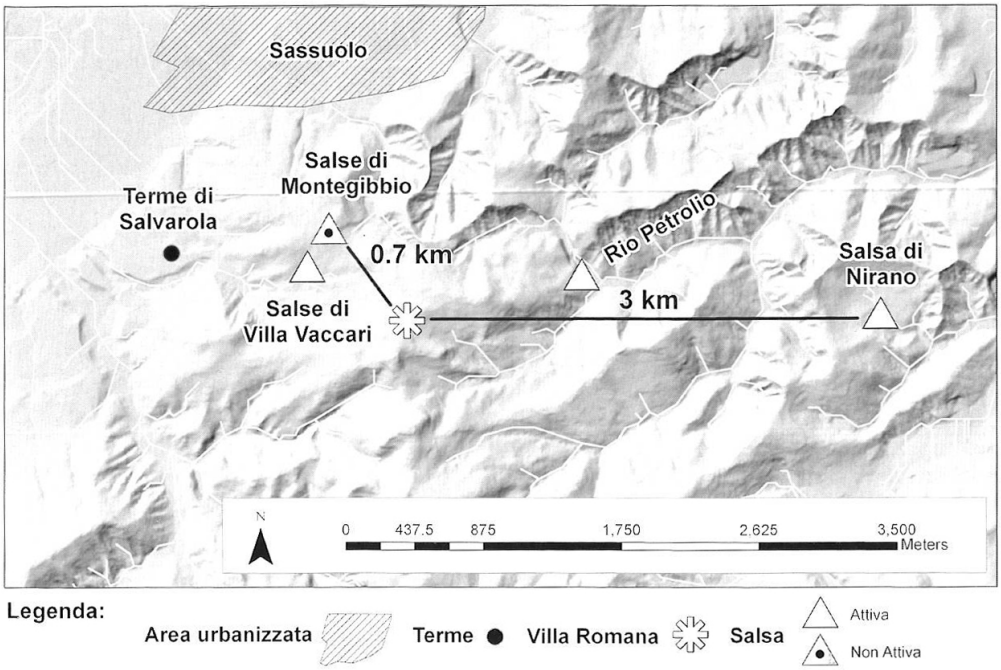
3 | Piacenza, Musei Civici. Marble altar with dedication to *Minerva Memor* by *Domitius Alendus* (CIL XI, 1298; from Carini 2008, 25, fig. 19).
4 | Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Relief from Ischia with dedication to the Nimphs Nitrodi by Capellina (CIL X, 6793; from Adamo Muscettola 2002, 13, fig. 19).

The inscription dates to the reign of *Antoninus Pius* and represents a sample of ex votos for the happy return home of soldiers, who often made a vow to deities before departing to ask for salvation while on a mission (on this subject see Buonopane 2013). In this case, we do not know Rosciano's city of origin, but it is significant that he took the trouble to arrive in Travo-Caverzago to donate the artifact to a goddess whose fame transcended the boundaries of the sanctuary and protected those who turned to her for broad protection – and not only related to spa therapy.

I.2. Minerva water cults and post-antique therapeutic traditions in Emilia

Minerva Cabardiacensis expanded her healing and tutelary influence beyond the Travo-Caverzago site, reaching a much wider geographic area. And indeed, in the Emilia-Romagna region other water cults are traced back to Minerva, including those at the 'salse' (muds) located southeast of Caverzago, in the Modena area [Fig. 5]: this is a still active phenomenon involving the outflow from the subsoil of clays very rich in salt, due to the marine origin of the groundwater from which they are generated, crossing clay rock layers.

Specifically, in Montegibbio (Sassuolo), near the largest mud volcano in Italy that has been dormant for about two centuries, a Roman shrine dedicated to *Minerva Medica Memor* was discovered, which was connected to mud used for healing purposes (*L'insediamento di Montegibbio* 2010; *Minerva Medica* 2015). The sanctuary, dating as early as the III-II century BC, underwent several renovations due to landslides caused by mud eruptions and, presum-

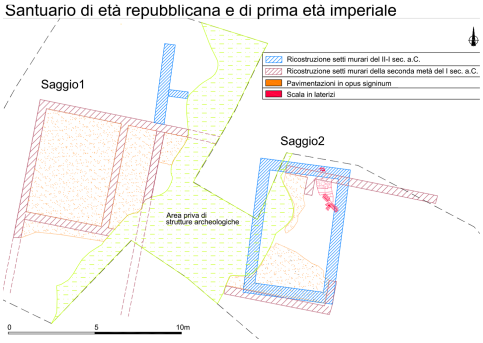


5 | Map showing the 'Salse of Nirano' area and the sites related to Minerva near Sassuolo (from Borgatti *et alii* 2010, 104, fig. 11).

ably, earthquakes [Fig. 6a]. Initially there must have been a rectangular enclosure (5x7 m) bordering the 'mud of Minerva', and later (from the I century BC) a number of rooms surrounding a courtyard were built, of which only portions of 'signino' floors and fragments of plaster on the walls, with polychrome hues, remain. The salsa/mud was accessed by a staircase outside the rooms, and there was also a kiln for the production of cult artifacts, to be sold to the faithful who came to honor Minerva. Few ceramic artifacts dated between the III-I centuries BC are preserved of these objects, among which there is a fragment of a bowl that qualifies, as was often the case in ancient times, as itself sacred to the goddess: *(Eg)o Miner(vae) sum* [Fig. 6b]. The sanctuary was then abandoned due to a new eruption in the II century AD, and, in the following century, a farmhouse was built on it, which was in use until the late period.

The pervasiveness of Minerva's power in the Modena area is also indirectly attested in the vicinity of Nirano, where a votive stone arula still dedicated to Minerva was recovered in the valley at the bottom of the 'Salse' or mud volcanoes – although it cannot be traced back to a precise place of worship (Susini 1959, n. 5, 88; Guandalini 2006, 276; *Atlante dei Beni Archeologici* 2009, 229-230, nn. 92 e 96).

Minerva was therefore evoked and worshipped as the one who presided over these unusual geothermal manifestations, and indeed the peculiarity of this phenomenon was well known to



6a | Plan of the shrine dedicated to *Minerva Medica* at Montegibbio near Sassuolo, Modena (from *Minerva Medica* 2015, 6, fig. 1).
6b | The dish with inscription to Minerva (from *Minerva Medica* 2015, 3, fig. 3).

the Romans, and it was brought back to the supernatural. Pliny the Older recalled an event that occurred in 91 BC, according to which in the Modena region two mountains had collided and the collision had given off enormous flashes of fire:

> Factum est semel, quod equidem in Etruscae disciplinae voluminis invenio, ingens terrarum portentum L. Marcio Sexto Iulio cos. in agro Mutinensi. Namque montes duo inter se concurrerunt crepitu maximo adsultantes recedentesque, inter eos flamma fumoque in caelum exeunte interdiu, spectante e via Aemilia magna equitum Romanorum familiarumque et viatorum moltitudine. Eo concursu villae omnes elisae, animalia permulta, quae intra fuerant, exanimata sunt, anno ante sociale bello, quod haud scio an funestius terrae ipsi Italiae fuerit quam civilia (Plin. *nat*. 2, 199).

> There occurred once only – as I personally find in the texts of the Etruscan discipline – an enormous prodigy of lands in the region of Modena, under the consulship of *Lucius Marcius* and *Sextus Iulius*: that is, two mountains collided with a great roar, leaping forward and backward, and between them, flames and smoke rose to the sky in broad daylight; attended, from the Via Emilia, by a great crowd of Roman horsemen, with their retinue, and travelers. By the crash, all the houses in that countryside were crushed, and a great many beasts, which were in the midst, were killed: this was a year before the Social War, which I might call more fatal for this land of Italy even than the civil wars.

The extraordinariness of the phenomenon, to be located between Montegibbio and Nirano, should be traced back to the geothermal instability of the area, which caused (as it still does today) strong earthquakes and eruptions of muds and salts, as well as the outbreak of large fires due to the release of hydrocarbons and flammable gases. Pliny's account, therefore, fits into the series of *mirabilia*, but the reference to his source, the *volumina Etruscae disciplinae*, indicates that such geothermal manifestations were nonetheless attributed to specific deities, who alone could have been at the origin of such prodigies, in front of which, as Pliny recalls, military personnel and wayfarers on the Via Emilia stopped in amazement.

The muds could be used for the treatment of various afflictions, including those of the skin (such as scabies, sores, and wounds), and it is no coincidence that knowledge of the healing properties of these muds did not end with the ancient epoch: archival documents show that as early as 1276 one: "*Hospitale in loco ubi dicitur le Salse in ecclesia Sancti Petri in Insula cepit edificare ad honorem dicte Beate Marie Virginis*" and that this building was designed "*ad substentionem et receptionem omnium confluentium pauperum peregrinorum ad hospitale praedictum*" (Malmusi 1858, 144, footnote 13). It was, in essence, a place of shelter and care for pilgrims and poor people, which was built in an out-of-the-way location but accessible from the main route between Piacenza and Modena – namely the *Via Aemilia*, on which the Via Francigena later partly overlapped. The cures were handed down over the centuries, as is evident from other documents from the XVI century and beyond, so much so that they were well known even to the Benedictine monks: they prepared the 'St. Catherine's Oil' in the monastery of St. Peter in Modena (or 'petrolio delle Salse/olio del Sasso' (Gerali 2011-2012), which was employed as a soothing and balm for various afflictions. We also know that where the Salvarola Baths – whose place name is spoken today and uses saline-bromine-iodine waters – are located, the muds were harvested for preparations useful in combating lice, ulcers and burns, as well as stomach and childbirth pains, and for treating rabies and injuries to animal joints, as well as for lighting (Guandalini 2006, 275-278).

In conclusion, the Roman water cults linked to Minerva both in Caverzago and in the Modenese area should be traced back, on the one hand, to the proven therapeutic efficacy of the waters and its by-products such as muds, and on the other hand, to the eccentricity of the geothermal phenomena themselves, that occurred in the area and are still present today. The latter attracted thousands of people over time, and in the Nirano Nature Reserve (Fiorano Modenese), covering more than 200 hectares, it is possible to see them 'in action' [Fig. 7]: seething mud volcanoes, due to the presence of liquid (petroleum) and gaseous (methane) hydrocarbons, erupt huge quantities of clays/salts: solidified in the air, they create inverted cones of different sizes. These phenomena impress today's visitors, but especially the imaginations of the ancients, who over the millennia stopped at Minerva's sacred places and then at the churches and hospitals, that became pilgrimage sites in Medieval and Modern times.

II. Along the Via Romea Strata: the thermo-mineral context at the *Fons Timavi* (Monfalcone)

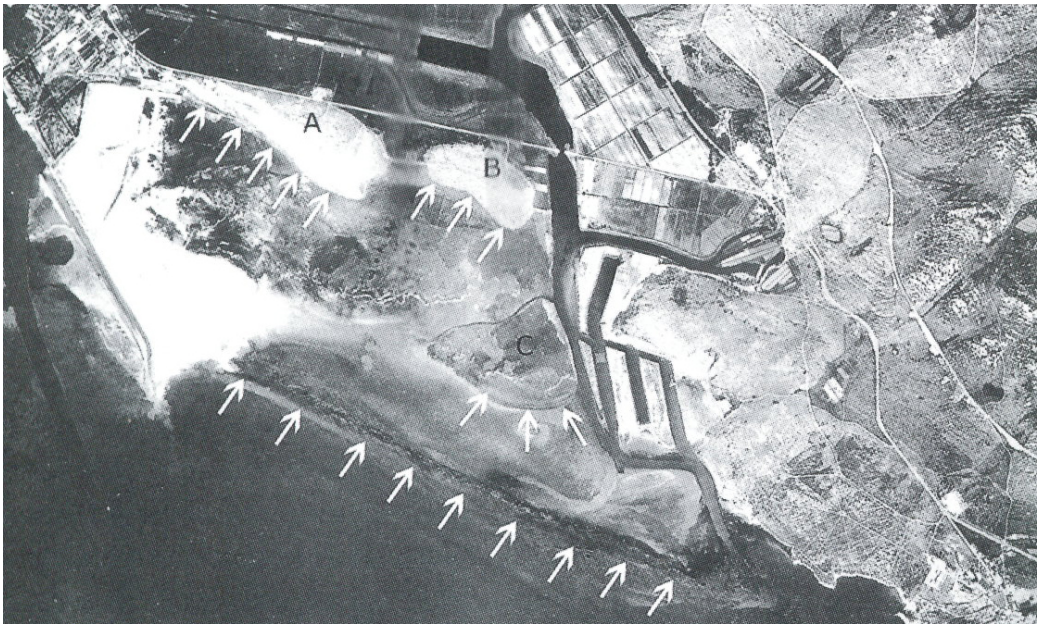
Remaining still in Northern Italy but shifting attention eastward, runs the Via Romea Strata that spans across the regions of Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, partly coinciding with the Roman consular road Via Annia. The ancient settlements in the Euganean area close to this route are numerous and we refer to previously published works for a detailed examination of them (*Aquae Patavinae* 2011-2012; *Aquae salutiferae* 2013; *Guida del Museo del Termalismo antico* 2021) and here to the contributions of P. Zanovello and A. Meleri. Conversely, the proximity of the road to the thermo-mineral area linked to the *Fons Timavi* shrine, near Monfalcone, which appears to be only 5 km away from the modern pilgrimage route, has not been considered so far.

7 | The 'Salse of Nirano' Nature Reserve (Modena). A solidified 'salsa' in the shape of a volcano (©wikicommns).

The area is now totally urbanized and subject to heavy geo-environmental alterations due to anthropogenic intervention, but in pre-Roman and Roman times it corresponded to the *caput Adriae* and must have covered large inhabited and cultivated areas. In this sense there are interesting indications not only of a sacred area surrounded by woods but also of a 'spa' and resting station close to the coast, as well as a boat; thus a varied settlement in which to place the movements of pilgrims both along the land route of the future Via Strata and probably also by sea.

II.1. The sources, the *thermae* and the *mansio*

Just across the Adriatic Sea, recent studies (*La voce dell'acqua* 2011; Ventura, Casari 2011) have traced the Lisert Plain to ancient island outcrops, in which were three hills now completely flattened [Fig. 8, letters A-C]: these are the Hill of St. Anthony and the 'Collina della Punta'/Hill of the Tip, to which a third hill called the Hill of St. John is added. The Lisert Plain is considered a recent geological formation, traceable to the beginning of the I millennium BC where springs both hot (40-41°C) and cold, but with a considerable concentration of hydrogen sulfide, carbonate, carbonic acid, and magnesium sulfate, must have bubbled up close to the sea, from about 2 km depth. At least one must have been present at St. Anthony's, and another was at the foot of the Hill of the Tip, on the side facing the mountains. We know from Pliny the Elder that a strange phenomenon occurred here, one that caused the flow of mineral



8 | Monfalcone, site of the *Fons Timavi*. The location of the three hills: A, Hill of St. Anthony; B, Hill of the Tip/'Collina della Punta', and C, Hill of St. John, described by Plinius the Older (*La voce dell'acqua* 2011, 16).

water to vary twice a day depending on the tide, with a slight alteration in the average temperature of the water: "(...) In the stretch of sea in front of the *Timavus* there is a small island, with hot water springs, which, conforming to the tides, increases or decreases their flow" (Plin. *nat*. II, 103, 229: ...*Timavum amnem insula parva in mari est cum fontibus calidis, qui pariter cum aestu maris crescunt minuunturque*).

Currently, this type of water is used for the healing treatments of wounds, dermatological problems, gynecological and rheumatic diseases, and it is important to note that in the XIX century a building was constructed for curative purposes, which largely destroyed the ancient remains. The latter, discovered on several occasions between the XVI and XXI centuries, coincide with portions of the Roman curative facility on St. Anthony's Hill and a *villa-mansio* on the Collina della Punta, to which was added a *mithraeum* located not far from the *mansio*. The complexes were served by roads, including the Via Flavia and the Gemina, which also partially intercepted much older routes, such as the protohistoric Amber Road (the precious resin that came from the Baltic to northern Italy to be processed and traded: see *Roma sul Danubio* 2002; Bietti Sestieri *et alii* 2015; *The Amber Roads* 2016).

On the curative facility, in a recent examination (Ventura, Casari 2011, with previous bibliography), some rooms paved in terracotta with plastered walls (3x5 m each) were brought to light; these were flanked by other rooms (of 3x4 m) with water apparatuses defined as 'wash basins' by the first excavators. While not excluding their curative function, they could be used

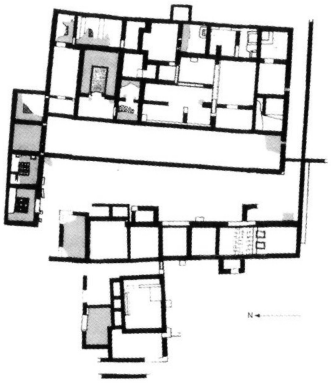
for productive purposes or as places of residence for pilgrims and ills. In this same complex, a pool with marble-covered steps, a peristyle with exedras (possibly an open space for a gym or other activities) and a concrete pool next to a courtyard were also discovered. Part of a statuette of a sleeping erote was recovered from one of the rooms, and it should be interpreted as part of the sculptural materials that decorated the health resort. Overall, and based on the materials and building techniques, the attendance dates between the I century BC and the III century AD.

On the other Hill known as 'Collina della Punta', where the cold springs were, part of a large building of a semi-private nature has emerged instead [Fig. 9]: it could be a *villa* but it is more likely to be a mansio where travelers might have been hosted. The complex in an early phase (early I century BC) had some small rooms with 'cocciopesto' floors; in order to secure the context, layers of material were spread to reclaim and level the area, but from the Augustan age the structure was restored and greatly enlarged: about 40 rooms aligned along an elongated and central open area, with access from the north and southeast, date back to this phase. The rooms were provided with floor coverings with black-and-white and geometrically patterned mosaics, in one case with crenellated wall decoration. Later, in the Trajan-Adrian age, the *mansio* was equipped with heating systems by means of *praefurnia*, and only in late Antiquity (III-IV century AD) some rooms were used as facilities.

That the complex might have been a hotel for wayfarers and pilgrims, is evidenced not only by the building's proximity to a road section but especially by the recovery of a large wooden boat found on the slopes of the high ground [Fig. 10] (Marchiori 1982; see *Lacus Timavi* website). The boat was found in 1972 and brought to Aquileia for a restoration that lasted almost ten years (but it is no longer on display due to its precarious condition); it is made of load-bearing planking using different timbers (oak, fir, walnut, hornbeam), and it is characterized as a vessel intended for transportation. It is preserved for a length of 11 meters and a width of 3,8 m and dates back to the same settlement phase as the *mansio* (I century BC-II century AD). The boat carried objects as well as peoples: ceramic vessels, a wicker basket and a vessel with traces of grapes inside were found during the excavation. Goods necessary for the sustenance of holiday-makers had to arrive at the *mansio*, but it is also possible that there were plots of land and stretches of coastline around the stopping station intended for productive activities from which further income could be derived. The clientele might have been accommodated in this 'hotel' and then used the baths or went to pray on the other hill: they found all kinds of comforts here, leaving in these lands current money but also personal experiences, testimonies of life and spirituality – as can be gleaned from the texts of the inscriptions recovered in the vicinity and about which we shall discuss below.

II.2. The places of the sacred at *Fons Timavi*, between hope and devotion

As for sacred contexts, the sources remind us of the presence of several places of worship at *Timavus*, which appear connected to the salutary function only indirectly; structural attestations of them are lacking but several written testimonies have come down to us.



9 | Monfalcone, Hill of the Tip. Plan of the Roman *mansio* (*La voce dell'acqua* 2011, 37).
10 | Monfalcone, View of the Roman boat found near the *mansio* (Marchiori 1982).

It is Strabo who informs us of the existence of a sanctuary in honor of Diomedes at the *Timavus*: "In the same recess of the Adriatic there is a sanctuary of Diomedes, worthy of note, the *Timavus*:

> ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ μυχῷ τοῦ Ἀδρίου καὶ ἱερὸν τοῦ Διομήδους ἐστὶν ἄξιον μνήμης, τὸ Τίμαυον· λιμένα γὰρ ἔχει καὶ ἄλσος ἐκπρεπὲς καὶ πηγὰς ἑπτὰ ποταμίου ὕδατος εὐθὺς εἰς τὴν θάλατταν ἐκπίπτοντος, πλατεῖ καὶ βαθεῖ ποταμῷ (Strabo V, 1, 8).
>
> For it has a harbor, a sacred forest out of the ordinary, and seven springs of river water that immediately flow into the sea, through a wide and deep course.

In another passage in the same chapter, the writer attests that not only here but in the Veneto region in general, sacrifices were bestowed to the Greek hero at two sacred groves, which he shared with *Hera* and *Artemis*:

> τῷ δὲ Διομήδει παρὰ τοῖς Ἑνετοῖς ἀποδεδειγμέναι τινὲς ἱστοροῦνται τιμαί· καὶ γὰρ θύεται λευκὸς ἵππος αὐτῷ, καὶ δύο ἄλση τὸ μὲν Ἥρας Ἀργείας δείκνυται τὸ δ᾽ Ἀρτέμιδος Αἰτωλίδος (Strabo V, 1, 9).
>
> It is said that honors were bestowed to Diomedes by *Enetoi*: in fact, a white horse was sacrificed to him and two sacred groves were pointed out, one dedicated to *Hera Argiva*, the other to *Artemis Aetolia*.

A number of studies have already been presented on Diomede in the Adriatic (Braccesi 2021, 51-54, with previous bibliography) and although there is a lack of structural traces of the cult site in the Lisert Plain, it is believed that in Archaic times at the *Fons Timavi* there was an open area – an enclosure – with a sacred grove traceable to the cult of the Greek hero, to which an actual *sacellum* would later be added or substituted in the Augustan age when Strabo wrote. In the late Republican and Imperial periods, the archaic heroic cult for Diomedes

could be joined, thanks to Roman construction skills, by the curative practice through the exploitation of the springs, which enhanced the economic growth prospects of the place without exhausting the devotion to the deities worshipped there. This is evidenced by three inscriptions recovered in the area.

One, dated as early as the I century BC, was drawn on St. John's Hill and bears the dedication to *Timavus* [Fig. 11]: "To *Timavus* for fulfilling the vow" *(Temavo / voto / [(suscepto)]*: CIL I, 2647 = I.It X, 4, 318 = I.Aq. 1, 19 = AE 1926, 104 = ILLRP 261; Cuscito 1976, 59). Two inscriptions come instead from finds on St. Anthony's Hill, both from the I century AD: a certain *Quintus Titatius Maximus* had dedicated a marble altar because his vow had been fulfilled by *Fons*, which is almost certainly the source of *Timavus*: "*Quintus Titatius Maximus* willingly and deservedly dissolved his vow to the (goddess) Fons" *(Quintus Tita[cius] / Maxi[mus] / [F]onti votum / [s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)]*: AE 1921, 71b = I.It. X, 4, 321; Arnaldi 2000, 52; Cuscito 1976, 49). Similarly, one such Poblicio Statuto had placed another marble altar to *Fons* as a vow for an unspoken request: "Sacred to the (goddess) Fountain, Poblicio Statuto has dissolved the vow" (*[Font]i sacr(um) / [-P]oblicius / Statutus / v(otum) s(olvit)*: AE 1921, 71b = I.It. X, 4, 320; Arnaldi 2000, 52; Cuscito 1976, 49).

However, other deities must also have been worshipped on St. Anthony's Hill: this is attested by not a few sometimes-inscribed ex votos, which refer to *Hercules Augustus* and *Spes Augusta*, as well as *Dionysus* and *Timavus* himself. For example, a marble altar (I century AD) had been offered by an inhabitant of Oderzo who had come here either for treatment or for work: "Sacred to *Hercules Augustus*, *Caius Curius Quintianus*, of Oderzo, has dissolved the vow" (*Hercul[i] / Aug(usto) / sac(rum) / C(aius) Curiu[s] / Quintianu[s] / Opiterginu[s] / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*: I.It X, 4, 322 = I.Aq. 1, 217 = AE 1926, 106; Cuscito 1976, 51).

Instead, four inscriptions dating between the Augustan age and the III century AD refer to *Spes Augusta*, which seems traceable to requests for health or more general protection. In one case the ex voto says nothing about the dedicator (it is a marble altar dated to the Augustan age: *Spei / Aug(ustae) sac(rum) / [p]ro sa[lute - - -*]: "Sacred to *Spes Augusta*, for salvation---": AE 1926, 107 = I.It. X 4, 327), while in two cases these are votives left by military personnel, who invoked the protection of Spes for themselves or their relatives. *Sacchonius Varro* left writing: "To *Spes Augusta*, *Caius Sacchonius Varro*, tribune of the I *militia* cohort of Dalmatians, dissolved the vow" *(Spei Aug(ustae) / C(aius) Saccon/ius Varr/o trib(unus) co/h(ortis) I mil(l)ia/riae Del/mataru/m v(otum) s(olvit)*: III century AD, CIL V, 707 = I.It X, 4, 326; Cuscito 1976, 50). *Auconius Optatus*, a native perhaps of a small town in *Noricum* (*Aguntum*), dedicated a votive gift for his son, who had been initiated into a military career: "To *Spes Augusta*, *Auconius Optatus*, awarded the public horse, decurion and *duovir* of Claudia of *Aguntum*, for the salvation of his son *Titus Auconius Optatus*, a Roman knight, has willingly dissolved his vow" *(Spei Aug(ustae)/ [- - -] Auconius / Optatus eq(uo) p(ublico) / dec(urio) et IIvir Cl(audiae)*

Ag(unti) / pro salute / T(iti) Auconi Optati / fili(i) sui equit(is) Rom(ani) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito): II century AD, CIL V, 708 = I.It X, 4, 325 = EQNoricum A, 3; Cuscito 1976, 50).

Instead, a final ex voto was dedicated by a woman, a certain *Iulia Stratonicia*, to a worker in service of the imperial household and another personage: "Sacred to *Spes Augusta*, for the salvation of *Aquilinus*, factor of the two *Augusti and Tiberius Iulius Aquilinus, Iulia Stratonicia* has dissolved the vow" *(Spei Aug(ustae) / s(acrum) pro sal(ute) / Aquilini vilici Aug(ustorum duorum) / et Ti(berii) Iuli / Aquilini / Iulia Stratonic(e) / v(otum) s(olvit)*: second half of the II cent AD, CIL V, 706 = I.It X, 4, 324 = = I.Aq. 1, 358; Cuscito 1976, 49).

Then, the votives found at the *Timavus* confirm a frequentation by worshippers over a very extended period, in the various settlement dynamics during the I millennium until the Late Age. But the fame of the waters of the *Timavus* likely continued beyond that, as seems to be evidenced by more than just epigraphic and literary clues. In fact, an ex voto was found dedicated to entities with an oracular and ill-defined profile, namely the Fata. It reads: *Fatis Octavia / Sperata votum / solvit lib(ens) / m[erito] MVN*, so "*Octavia Sperata* willingly and deservedly melted the vote to the *Fata* MVN" (CIL V, 705 = I.It X, 4, 319 = I.Aq. 1, 195; Cuscito 1976, 59-60). It is possible that the inscription came from one of the caves that speleologist Ettore Boegan reported in the XX century on St. Anthony's Hill and in particular from a cavern significantly called the 'Cave of Fairies'. What deities were these? Roman religion knows the *Tria Fata*, personifications of fate often connected with the *Parcae* (*Moirae*) and the oracles (Enciclopedia Treccani, under entry *Fata*; Ferrari 1999, under entry *Fato*). Thanks to Varro (Varro, *l.l.* VI, 7, 51) and to Tertullianus, we know that they were called upon after the first week of an infant's life to spin its fate, that is, to define its afterlife at the hour of passing away (Tert. *anim*. 39, 2: *dum ultima die Fata Scribunda advocantur)*.

The etymology of *Fata* from the verb *fari*, 'to speak', recalls the ability to say what was intended for one person, and therefore the mantic function of the *Fata* is implicit in the various manifestations of the cult. Some artifacts are explanatory in this regard: in the Forum of Rome, at the *Rostri*, there were three statues of the *Parcae*-Sibyls (Plin. *nat.* XXXIV, 22); while on three memorial stones, dating from the early Republican period and found at a place of worship in Tor Tignosa (Pomezia-Rome, where sulfur springs are known), appears the dedication to the three *Fata* (*Parca Maurtia*, *Neuna*, *Neuna Fata*) in addition to *Lar* (Granino Cecere 1992; La Regina 2014; Bassani 2014a, 166). In this case, these were entities related to *Faunus* and *Albunea*, who could well patronize those waters with their raw smell and unusual color.

In the Imperial age, *Fata* also appears in funerary contexts and is mentioned on inscriptions (for instance in CIL III, 4151) or is depicted on frescoes within tombs, especially late antique ones, in which pagan and Christian creeds and related iconographies could contaminate each other. Such is the case with a painting in the hypogeum of *Vincentius* and his wife *Vibia* located along the Appian Way in Rome (in front of the Catacombs of St. Callisto), which is dated to the mid-IV century AD [Fig. 12] (Wilpert 1903, 362, tav. 132.2; Ferrua 1971 e 1973). In one of the two arcosoli were buried spouses, and in the sub-arch were painted two scenes, with the

11 | Monfalcone, the altar dedicated to *Timavus* (*La voce dell'acqua* 2011, 47).
12 | Rome, Appian Way, Hypogeum of *Vincentius* and *Vibia*. The painting in the sepulchral room: on the bottom, *Virbia* attendant the verdict by the *Fata Divina*; on the upper part, *Vibia* is admitted to the heavenly banquet (Wilpert 1903, 362, tav. 132).

names of the characters painted in red above each figure. In the lower scene, from the right, appeared Alcestis and Vibia, both with veiled heads, preceded by *Mercurius Nuntius*, awaiting the judgment of *Dis Pater* (*Pluto*) and *Aeracura* (*Proserpina*) presented on a high podium in the center and seated on a throne; the final judgment, however, was bound to the verdict displayed by the three cloaked figures placed on the left, whom the epigraph identifies as *Fata Divina. Pluto'*s right arm facing them as well as the expectant attitude that connotes Mercury, Vibia and Alcesti, well clarify the absolute power of the word spoken by the *Tria Fata*, superior to that of the gods. Fortunately for Vibia, the *Fata* were favorable to her, which is why we find her depicted in the upper scene as she is welcomed by a *bonus angelus* (a toga-like male figure with a crown on his head) into the heavenly banquet. Such a depiction is very effective in expressing the generic nature of the demons who spun human destiny: the three figures in the hypogeum, while not perfectly preserved, do not have defined male or female connotations; indeed, they do not seem to have a specific characterization. After all, the *Tria Fata* were called upon to define 'other' conditions, such as the transition from the neonatal/fetal state to that of a swaddled individual, or, as in the case of Vibia, to decide the transition to *post-mortem* life.

The inscription from the *Timavus* of *Octavia Sperata* thus acquires special significance, certainly not because of the ex voto itself, but because of the imagery underlying the dedication itself, which lets us understand the popular dimension of life subjected to indefinite forces

that had already foreseen everything. The *Fata* evoked by *Octavia* remained in popular memory and become the *Faerie* dwellers of caves and patrons of waters and springs, all the more so if they were curative, as had been the Nymphs so often mentioned at therapeutic springs. For instance, at Galatro in Calabria, where there are the Terme of S. Elia with salty-bromine-iodine waters at 37 °C, some findings in the Caruso cave (fictile votive offerings and remains of ancient structures) were identified by nearby inhabitants as pertaining to a 'Palace of the Fairies' (Costabile *et alii* 1992). Later on, to the popular imagination, which projected into the irrational remembrances of ancient cults perhaps never quite dormant or at any rate resemantized in the new Christian creed, another testimony to the mineral springs should be ascribed. In Rapolano Terme (Campo Muri, Siena), at the Baths of St. John the Baptist ('La Puzzola') with sulfurous and bicarbonate-calcium-magnesium waters at 39 °C, various votive materials collected in a deposit known as the 'Buca delle Fate/Fairy Hole' were found. These are commonplace objects in bronze and iron, as well as pottery, coins and a fragment of a bronze left hand, which were deposited by pilgrims and devotees in Roman times: they left records of their devotion to the healing waters, which later, in post-antique times, were identified with the Fairies, patrons of a water source that was always and everywhere miraculous.

III. Food for thought and research perspectives

The panorama that emerges from the data presented in the preceding pages allows us to make some concluding remarks and foreshadow possible insights for future research. The two contexts in northern Italy, which arose around curative waters albeit with different characteristics and properties, attracted pilgrims and travelers from multiple origins over time thanks to the extensive network of roads built by Rome between the late Republican and Imperial ages. The consular roads close to the two sites, the *Via Aemilia* and the *Via Annia* (rebated many centuries later by the Via Francigena and the Via Strata), as well as the minor segments connected to them, constituted the necessary infrastructure to reach the shrine of *Minerva Medica* in the Trebbia Valley and the shrine of *Fons Timavi* at *caput Adriae*, respectively.

The importance of a capillary road network and related resting buildings, sometimes also serving the health resorts, has already been highlighted in recent studies (see the miscellaneous volume *Statio amoena* 2016 for a large-scale framing of the phenomenon of *stationes* and *mansiones*, while for the relationship between health resorts and the road system see most recently Ghedini 2014, with previous bibliography; here, see the contribution of J. Turchetto). Indeed, while a general overview such as the one presented has revealed how far away the pilgrims' lands of origin might have been, many of the dynamics related to the journey itself and the time required to reach those curative destinations on foot or by chariot remain to be reconstructed.

For example, the journey from *Mediolanum* of the three dedicators of the inscriptions to *Minerva Medica* according to Google Maps today corresponds to a 20-hour walk (compared to 1.30 minutes by car) from Milan to Caverzago. Therefore, one can imagine at least two days of walking, along which there were certainly stopping and refreshment points for wayfarers

before they reached Minerva's shrine. It might therefore be a useful element to have valid comparisons to evaluate, in addition to the ancient traces, the ways in which pilgrims' journeys along the three Romee routes are undertaken today, whether done on foot or by slow means such as bicycles, on unpaved paths (thus with reduced speed like that of a wagon).

In addition, I believe that the possibility of analyzing the complex phenomenon of ancient pilgrimage together to the healing stations along waterways, as well as along land roads, should not be ruled out. The discovery of the boat in the vicinity of the *mansio* at the base of the 'Collina della Punta' at the *Fons Timavi* leaves open the hypothesis that, where possible, travel was also ensured for the sick and travelers using boats along rivers and by sea, intercepting people who came even from very distant places in the Adriatic and Mediterranean. Here, then, is where an analysis aimed at investigating possible traces of even these alternative routes to those over land would perhaps enable a broader view and understanding of structural and infrastructural remains attested in the surroundings of the healing and cult centers, which now appear in their own right and not in relation to the therapeutic stations. Illuminating in this regard is the famous description of the sacred springs of the *Clitumnus* in Umbria (with springs in ancient times considered curative but to this day not recognized as mineral) by Pliny the Younger, who records that the springs, the temple and the many shrines to the deities worshipped there were reached both by land and by the river by crossing a bridge, which separated the sacred and the profane parts. The river over which the bridge had been built was navigable and, in some stretches, 'swimmable' for those who felt like swimming; around and over it then stood villas and accommodations, where the devout and needy could be housed. And to fully understand the value of the experience of pilgrimage to those springs, Pliny suggested that the recipient of the letter go to the shrine to study and read the "many phrases of many people, written on all the columns and on all the walls, phrases by which that spring and the god are celebrated. You will appreciate many of them, some will make you laugh, although you, given your humanity, will not mock any of them":

> (1) Vidistine aliquando Clitumnum fontem? Si nondum - et puto nondum: alioqui narrasses mihi -, vide; quem ego - paenitet tarditatis - proxime vidi. (2) Modicus collis assurgit, antiqua cupressu nemorosus et opacus. Hunc subter exit fons et exprimitur pluribus venis sed imparibus, eluctatusque quem facit gurgitem lato gremio patescit, purs et vitreus, ut numerare iactas stipes et relucentes calculos possis. (3) Inde non loci devexitate, sed ipsa sui copia et quasi pondere impellitur, fons adhuc et iam amplissimum flumen, atque etiam navium patiens; quas obvias quoque et contrario nisu in diversa tendentes transmittit et perfert, adeo validus ut illa qua properat ipse, quamquam per solum planum, remis non adiuvetur, idem aegerrime remis contisque superetur adversus. (4) lucundum utrumque per iocum ludumque fluitantibus, ut flexerint cursum, laborem otio otium labore variare. Ripae fraxino multa, multa populo vestiuntur, quas perspicuus amnis velut mersas viridi imagine adnumerat. Rigor aquae certaverit nivibus, nec color cedit. (5) Adiacet templum priscum et religiosum. Stat Clitumnus ipse amictus ornatusque praetexta; praesens numen atque etiam fatidicum indicant sortes. Sparsa sunt circa sacella complura, totidemque di. Sua cuique veneratio suum nomen, quibusdam vero etiam fontes. Nam praeter illum quasi parentem ceterorum sunt minores capite discret; sed flumini miscentur, quod ponte transmittitur. (6) Is terminus sacri profanique: in superiore parte navigare tantum, infra etiam natare conces-

sum. Balineum Hispellates, quibus illum locum Divus Augustus dono dedit, publice praebent, praebent et hospitium. Nec desunt villae quae secutae fluminis amoenitatem margini insistunt. (7) In summa nihil erit, ex quo non capias voluptatem. Nam studebis quoque: leges multa multorum omnibus columnis omnibus parietibus inscripta, quibus fons ille deusque celebratur. Plura laudabis, non nulla ridebis; quamquam tu vero, quae tua humanitas, nulla ridebis. Vale (Plin. *epist*. VIII, 8; See Bassani 2012).

Not only a pilgrimage by land, then, but also a pilgrimage by water, with the whole network of related structures and infrastructure. And a central aspect of such an experience was participation in rituals and gift-giving to the deity: objects to be dedicated to the deities were often bought near the shrine, as documented in the Mediterranean area (*Lo spazio del rito* 2005; specific samples in Cipriano, Rizzo, Serritella 2018). Statues, statuettes, reliefs, altars, arule, vases, parts of architectural elements etc. could be donated with or without inscriptions by devotees who intended to leave a trace of their spiritual experience at the aquae (Bassani 2019, with bibliography). A tangible example of this is offered by the discovery of a probable vase emporium found in the Montirone locality near Abano Terme, which intercepted devotees to *Aponus* and other deities worshipped in the Euganean area (Lavizzari Pedrazzini 1995). In the cases examined in this contribution, the types of objects are very diverse, while on a general level, the formularies are rather repetitive in their inscriptions; at the same time, the motivations for which the offerers went to those places of worship also seem to be multiple. Some asked for healing from a specific illness, others wished for the health of a loved one, and still, others asked for protection in a broader sense. Thus, while the main motive for the visit was probably to heal from illness, the pilgrimage itself could also be dictated by subjective instances, related, for example, to the fact that a person was most devoted to Minerva and intended to pay devotion to her even beyond her healing abilities.

At the *Fons Timavi* people worshipped not only *Timavus* and his *Fons* (a single god? or the god *Timavus* and the god *Fons*?) but also Diomedes, the goddess *Spes*, *Hercules*, *Dionysus*, *Mithras*: thus, one could go to the springs not only to recover health through the *Fons* but also for simple faith or to ask for help in overcoming difficult times. Indicative in this sense is the inscription with a dedication to the *Fata* recovered at the springs of the *Timavus*, and although the last transcribed syllable 'MVN' has not yet been effectively interpreted, clear is the intent of *Octavia Sperata*, who had dissolved the promise made to the *Fata* through the object laid down.

The gods of fate were conjured up for reasons unknown to us, and their presence projects us far beyond the therapeutic experience, giving us glimpses of passages of people who entrusted their expectations and hopes to abstract divine subjects. And indeed, over time, pagan gods were often replaced by Christian saints and martyrs sometimes endowed with healing powers but as simply (re)discoverers of beneficial springs. This is the case of St. Agnes at the springs of Bagno di Romagna (of the bicarbonate-alkaline-sulphureous type, hyperthermal at 45 °C), over which the Via Germanica passes (near Sarsina: Ortalli 2004; see the website): the young woman, who was ill and persecuted for her beliefs, fled to the springs, where there

was formerly a Roman curative building with an adjoining station for travelers. Here she began proselytizing among the local and surrounding inhabitants, causing them to rediscover the therapeutic potential of the waters and promoting a new impetus to the settlement and economy of the area. After her death, a church was built and a cult was dedicated to her, the memory of which still remains.

In conclusion, the transition from paganism to Christianity at mineral springs is a research topic of great interest and opens up new investigations, which will allow reconstruction elements of continuity and discontinuity of cults to healing springs, namely pilgrimage practices between Antiquity, Medieval and Modern times.

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Abbreviations

AE
Année Epigraphique.

CIL
Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.

EQNoricum
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I.Aq.
J.B. Brusin, *Inscriptiones Aquileiae*, Udine 1991-1993.

I.It
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ILLRP
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ILS
Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae.

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Abstract

The article aims at analyzing two Roman archaeological contexts attested in Northern Italy characterized by the presence of thermos-mineral sources, in which sacred buildings and artifacts, as well as private structures related to pilgrims have been found. The dataset proposed can offer interesting elements to consider the pilgrimage phenomenon in a *long durée* perspective, and the relations with the votive activities along the three Romee routes (Via Romea Francigena, Via Romea Germanica, Via Romea Strata) throughout the centuries.

keywords | Thermalism; Sacred Places; Roman Roads; Pilgrimage.

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The Roman centuriations of Patavium and Altinum

A water management system in the central Venetian plain

Jacopo Turchetto

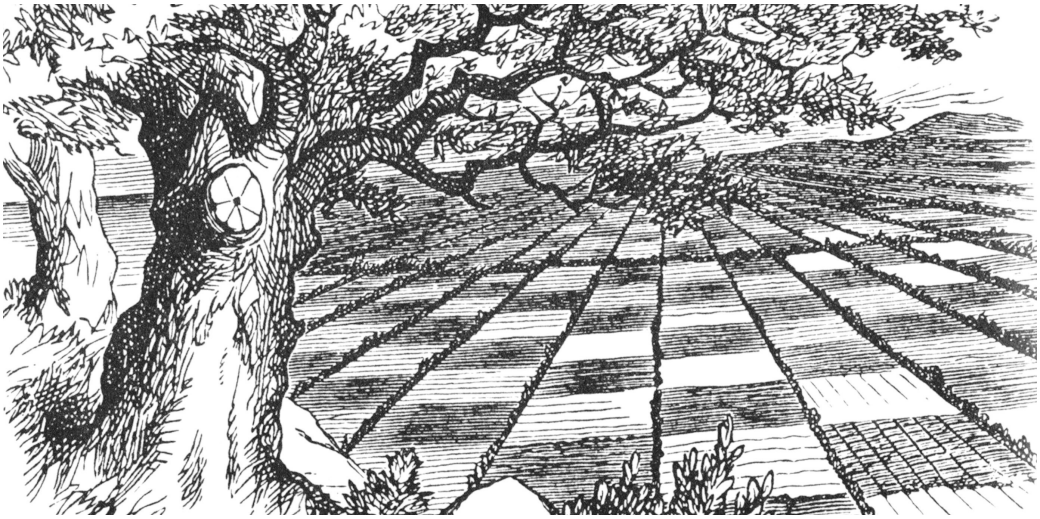
The reasons of a choice

In the perspective stimulated by the rurAllure European project towards the enhancement of rural areas located in the proximity of pilgrimage roads, particular attention was immediately paid to the territory to the north–east of Padova, which gravitates around the municipality of Borgoricco. It is indeed an area, wedged between the Saint Anthony Path to the west and the Via Romea Strata to the south, which had the ideal characteristics to become a pilot area in the context of Work Package 5, dedicated to the theme of thermalism and cultural heritage along the ways to Rome.

Mostly neglected by pilgrims, tourists, and travellers of all times, it represents on the contrary a territory with a high cultural potential, being the result of one of the most significant territorial interventions of the Roman world, rightly defined as a real monument of/in the landscape: the centuriation. It is enough to virtually fly over that whole area, via Google Earth for example, to appreciate the historical value of that landscape, which resembles an enormous chessboard, formed by parallel and orthogonal lines defining plots of square shape and of equal extension (the *centuriae*). It is clearly a contemporary landscape, but the layout which has been impressed on it derives from the work of Roman land surveyors. More than two thousand years ago, they knew well how to read the landscape and to lay out, keeping in mind the *natura loci* and its morphological features, a geometric and regular grid of roads and canals, with an expertise that today leaves us almost amazed.

Within the plot of the centuriation the micro–stories of the rural communities alternated, contributing towards enriching that landscape with castles, fortresses, churches, mills, and aristocratic villas. They also kept alive that delicate territorial system, in which water, as we will see, has always represented a strongly conditioning and decisive feature, from the early Middle Ages up to a few decades ago (before the depopulation of the countryside).

Today, the Museum of the Roman Centuriation of Borgoricco, housed in the splendid building of the Civic Centre designed by Aldo Rossi, represents the ideal starting point for rediscovering the history (or histories) of that territory which closely resembles what, from a hill, Alice was



1 | "The chess field": illustration of the 'chessboard by John Tenniel, published in the first edition of Lewis Carroll s *Through the Looking Glass* (1871).

able to observe in the company of the Queen of Hearts: "For some minutes Alice stood without speaking, looking out in all directions over the country – and a most curious country it was. There were a number of tiny little brooks running straight across it from side to side, and the ground between was divided up into squares by a number of little green hedges, that reached from brook to brook. "I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard! [...] It's a great huge game of chess that s being played all over the world – if this is the world at all, you know" (Carroll 1871, chapter 2) [Fig. 1].

The long–lasting evolution of a water management system

A period of economic and demographic crisis can have a very strong impact on the management of the territory and its resources. This also applies to the ancient world, as shown, for example, by the panegyric dedicated to the emperor Constantine in 312 AD by an anonymous rhetorician, professor and senator of *Augustodunum (*Autun), who stated:

> Iacebat illa civitas non tam moenium ruinis quam virium defectione prostrata, ex quo eam novi census exanimarat acerbitas. Nec tamen iuste queri poterat, cum et agros qui discripti fuerant haberemus et Gallicani census communi formula teneremur, qui fortunis nemini possumus comparari [...]
> Habemus enim, ut dixi, et hominum numerum qui delati sunt et agrorum modum, sed utrumque nequaquam hominum segnitia terraeque perfidia. Unde enim nobis Remus aut Nervius aut ipse ille de proximo Tricassinus ager aut arator, quorum reditus cum labore contendunt? Quamquam merito quivis ignoscat ipsis cultoribus, quos piget laborare sine fructu. Siquidem ager qui numquam respondet impendiis ex necessitate deseritur, etiam inopia rusticanorum, quibus in aere alieno vacillantibus nec aquas deducere nec silvas licuit excidere. Ita quidquid olim fuerat tolerabilis soli aut corruptum est paludibus aut sentibus impeditum. Quin etiam ipse ille pagus

Arebrignus inani fertur invidia, cuius in uno loco vitium cultura perspicua est; nam retro cetera silvis et rupibus invia securarum sunt cubilia bestiarum. Illa autem quae subiecta et usque Ararim porrecta planities fuit quidem, ut audio, aliquando iucunda, cum per singulorum fines continua cultura procursus fontium fossis patentibus evehebat; nunc autem interclusis vastitate meatibus, quidquid humilitate sua fuerat uberius, in voragines stagna conversum. Ipsae denique vineae, quas mirantur ignari, ita vetustate senuerunt ut culturam iam paene non sentiant. Radices enim vitium, quarum iam nescimus aetatem, milies replicando congestae altitudinem debitam scrobibus excludunt, et ipsam propaginem non abditam sed obtectam produnt imbribus eluendam et solibus perurendam. Nec possumus, ut Aquitanis aliisque provinciis familiare est, novis vitibus locum ubique metari, cum supra saxa perpetua sint, infra humilitas pruinosa.

That city lay prostrate, not so much because of the collapse of its walls as because of the exhaustion of its strength, from the time when the harshness of the new census drained it of life. But a complaint could not be made with justice, since we were both in the possession of the fields which had been registered and bound by the common formula of the Gallic census, we who can be compared to no one in our fortunes [...].
For we have, as I have said, both the number of persons which was recorded, and the amount of land, but both are rendered worthless owing to the inactivity of men and the treachery of the earth. For where are we going to find a field or a farmer comparable to those of the Remi, the Nervii or even of our closest neighbours the Tricasses, whose returns match their labour? Although one would fairly pardon the cultivators themselves, whom it irks to labour profit, if a field which never meets its expenses is abandoned out of necessity, especially when you consider the poverty of the country folk, for whom there was no possibility either of draining water off their land or cutting back the woods, reeling under their debts as they were. Thus whatever was once tolerably fertile land has now either degenerated into swamps or been choked with brambles. Indeed, even that famous district, the Arebrignian is spoken about with empty envy, for cultivation of the vine is conspicuous in only one place; for the rest of it, by contrast, is impassable because of forests and rocks, the dens of untroubled wild beasts. That plain, moreover, which lies under it and extends as far as the Saône, was indeed once a delightful spot, as I hear, when uninterrupted cultivation throughout the properties of individual proprietors carried away the overflow from springs in open channels. Now, however, that their courses have been blocked because of desolation, whatever had been very fertile because of the low–lying has been converted into marshes with deep holes. Finally the vineyards themselves, at which the ignorant marvel, have grown so decayed with age that scarcely respond any longer to cultivation. The roots of the vines, the age of which we do not now know, are bound by having been layered a thousand times, and prevent the trenches from reaching the required depth, and the very shoots that they send out are not buried but merely covered, to be washed out by rains and scorched by the sun. Nor can we mark out a place anywhere for new vines, as is customary in Aquitaine and other provinces, since higher up the rocks are broken, and below the low–lying land is subject to frosts (*Panegyrici latini*, VIII [V], 5, 4–6, 8. Translation by Nixon, Saylor Rodgers 1994).

In the case of the fertile plain of Autun, the uprisings of groups of shepherds and peasants, probably of Celtic origin, who, because of their debts, ravaged Gaul between the III and IV centuries AD, caused such political and social insecurity that the people of the *Edui* (the oldest allies of the Romans among the Gauls), were deprived of "[...]la volontà e i mezzi stessi per lavorare la terra" (Lissandro, Micunco (a cura di) 2000, 25). This instability led to a forced

2 | Detail of the centuriated landscape to the north–east of Padova, among Borgoricco, Santa Maria di Sala and Villanova di Camposampiero (Google Satellite, through QGIS 3.10; elaboration by J. Turchetto).

abandonment of all human activities related to the exploitation of the land for agricultural purposes. Consequently, the entire area was invaded by brushwood and brambles and became unproductive due to the swamps generated by the lack of maintenance of the open canals that were supposed to ensure efficient water flow and the proper functioning of the drainage system. Nature had taken back what culture (i.e. man) had exploited.

Very often, in the Roman world, the territory was managed through the practice of the centuriation (*centuriatio* or *limitatio*) [Fig. 2]. This procedure established not only the regular division of the land into quadrangular lots and their assignment, in private ownership, to the inhabitants of the colonies founded in the conquered territories or to those of the municipal territories, but provided also for land reclamation, the creation of a dense network of canals and the regulation of rivers. The centuriation, indeed, represented a true territorial planning intervention on a large, if not very large, scale, which had to be constantly controlled, maintained and managed. When this control was lacking or loosened, as the words of the panegyrist of Autun remind us, the mechanism began to break down: the canals became obstructed due to the accumulation of deposits, the rivers, no longer effectively regulated, began to overflow onto the plains and change their courses, the waters invaded ever larger portions of the territory, giving rise to marshy and stagnant areas, and crops gave way to spontaneous vegetation and woodland.

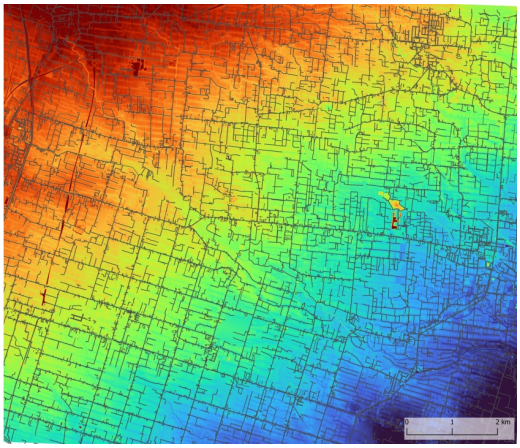
It is therefore evident, in a diachronic perspective, that anthropic factors (economic, political, or social crises) and natural factors (climate deterioration, lowering of temperatures, increase

in rainfall) have played a major role over time in the preservation or obliteration of the ancient centurial pattern. Indeed, the centuriation is a long–lasting phenomenon, whose outcome is still evident today, but whose evolution over time must be carefully studied, putting together all the possible sources and all the tools we have at our disposal, in order to avoid overly mechanistic interpretations or simplifications which would temporarily flatten the dynamics of transformation/transmission of the ancient agricultural structure.

Phenomena of hydro–geological instability, connected to a decrease in population in late Antiquity, have, for example, contributed substantially to the complete obliteration of the centurial network in the Foglia valley, in the Marche region, south–west of Pesaro (Dall'Aglio, Nesci 2013, 380–381) or to the partial disappearance of the centuriation of the Fidenza plain or of the one north of Reggio Emilia, "[...] dove gli spagliamenti tardoantichi del Crostolo hanno portato alla formazione di una vasta palude, il *Gurgum*, ancora presente in età comunale" (Dall'Aglio, Franceschelli 2017, 271).

In addition to the phenomena of preservation and obliteration of the centurial grid, episodes of revival after a period of abandonment and partial erasure have also been ascertained. This is the well–known case of the Lugo plain. The agrarian organisation that we can observe there today can be traced back to the reoccupation and restoration of the territory by some monks from Ravenna who, around the year 1000, restored the axes of the centuriation, which had been buried under 4–5 metres of alluvial deposits, lengthening the various *limite*s which could still be seen in the surrounding areas and which must have been preserved because they were traced in morphologically higher and more stable areas (Franceschelli 2016, 188–189).

What, on the contrary, does not seem to have occurred with reference to the Roman centuriation is the debated phenomenon of *renormatio*, i.e. the superimposition, in the same area, of a series of centurial interventions carried out at different times and with divergent orientations. It is a territorial phenomenon that has been hypothesised, through cartographic and aerophotographic analysis, by the so–called "Besançon School" during the 1980s, and then recalled and strongly supported by French archaeogeographers (for a history of studies on Roman centuriation and for a critical position with respect to these positions see Franceschelli 2016, 179–181 and bibliography cited therein; Dall'Aglio, Franceschelli 2017, 278–280). The presence of agricultural organisations stacked one on top of the other, in fact, would represent, in the opinion of those scholars, a constant in the management of the territory in antiquity, justified by a multipolar vision of space, which, in contrast to our modern way of seeing, was not "[...] ni unique ni unificateur", nor even less an "[...] élément de cohérence ou élément qui finit par rendre cohérent" (Chouquer 2008, 866–867). As Gérard Chouquer has variously reiterated, "la superposition et l imbrication de deux ou plusieurs trames de limitation a beaucoup intrigué les Modernes au point que cette réalité a souvent été rejetée comme impossible. Il est vrai qu on peut être surpris de ces interférences, d'autant plus que nous sommes habitués à dessins parcellaires et à des plans cadastraux uniques, ce qui donne une



3 | The *megafans* of the Venetian–Friulian Plain (from Mozzi, Ferrarese, Fontana 2013).
4 | The border between the centuriations of Padova (to the south–west) and Altino (to the north–east) (QGIS elaboration by J. Turchetto).

base cohérente à l'enregistrement cadastral. Il n en allait pas de même dans les habitudes de division et d'assignation" (Chouquer 2010, 263).

In particular, according to the current of thought of the *archeogéographie* (Chouquer, Favory 2001, 160–162; Chouquer 2008, 865–866; Chouquer 2010, 263–264), the *renormatio* could be suggested on the basis of some passages by Pseudo–Agennius, Siculus Flaccus, Hyginus Gromaticus and Marcus Iunius Nipsus. However, from a re–reading of the *Gromatici Veteres* it appears quite evident that there was a forcing in the interpretation of their meaning, which, in reality, would lead to the exclusion of the systematic application of the practice of re–centuriation in Roman times. Indeed, as Maria Pia Muzzioli already recalled (Muzzioli 2010, 48–49), interventions of *renormatio*, with the overlapping of centurial axes with different orientations, would have also destroyed the entire agricultural system of the territory, from the rows of trees, to the vines ("che sono il patrimonio del campo e non si sostituiscono in breve tempo"), to the network of canals, ditches and collectors created for hydraulic regulation and land reclamation, up to the road which constituted the backbone of the centurial system itself and which was connected to the main road network. Therefore, the infrastructures that could guarantee an effective agricultural exploitation of the territory and make the land productive would have been destroyed, through an operation that, all in all, would have proved to be very expensive and also completely useless. If things work, indeed, why would it be necessary to intervene to change them?

Approaching the centuriations of Padova and Altino from a diachronic perspective

The diachronic dynamics of persistence, obliteration and revival can also be detected in the Roman agricultural organisation that can still be identified today in the central Venetian plain, roughly comprised among the Brenta, the Sile and the lagoon margins [Fig. 3]. From a geomor-

phological point of view, it is an area that corresponds to the distal portions of the Pleistocene sector of the Brenta of Bassano megafan, which stretches in a north–west / south–east direction starting from the outlet of the Brenta Valley in the plain (Valsugana), up to the edge of the Venice lagoon near Mestre. Unlike the sector of the so–called high plain (characterised by gravelly–sandy sediments), the entire area south of the Sile (low plain) "is composed of soils consisting mostly of siltyclay deposits". The transition zone between these two sectors is the resurgence line, a territorial strip between 2 and 10 km wide, in which the rising of part of the water table is induced by the presence of impermeable horizons. The different composition of the soils also entails a different characterization at the hydrographic level between the high plain, which is almost devoid of surface water, because it is particularly draining, and the low silt–clay one, which is rich in water and resurgence rivers, such as the Musone, the Marzenego, the Dese or the Zero (Fontana, Mozzi, Bondesan 2004; Mozzi 2004; Bondesan, Meneghel 2015).

Within the framework of a rational agricultural organisation of this territory in Roman times, the presence of abundant surface waters played a central role not only in the creation of the two centurial systems (one pertaining to Padova and the other to Altino, separated by the course of the Musone), but also, subsequently, in their different state of conservation [Fig. 4]. As far as the countryside of Padova is concerned, in fact, we can easily recognise a phenomenon of exceptional survival of the limits (represented above all by roads and canals), which still today can be read clearly through carto–photo–interpretation, both in the case of axes laid every 20 *actus* between one centuria and another, and of the *intercisivi* ones placed within them. The reasons for the persistence could be found, on the one hand, in the fact that that the whole sector was crossed by resurgence rivers with a limited flow and, therefore, potentially not very dangerous; on the other hand, in the inability of the early Medieval political–administrative structures to intervene in incisive terms on the territory and its organisation; furthermore, in the constant laborious efforts of the late medieval rural communities to clean the canals and strengthen the embankments (Bortolami 2012, 137, 143, 195).

The countryside of Altino, on the other hand, presents more fleeting traces and the overall design is not always easily reconstructable in detail. In this case, some explanation could derive from the punctual analysis carried out by Matteo Frassine, from which it can be deduced that "[...] la maggior parte dei limiti conservati è composta da strade campestri (42%) e da canalizzazioni (36%), mentre solo al terzo posto si collocano le strade (17%) e all ultimo quei segni coincidenti con l idrografia (5%)" (Frassine 2015, 71–72).Therefore, since it is a centurial grid which was materialised, in most cases, through an artificial network of canals and drains and since that sector is characterised by rivers with a much more consistent flow, the lack of systematic maintenance of the entire system could have led, as in the case of the Autun plain, to an (at least partial) obliteration of the *limite*s [Fig. 5].

Moreover, episodes of revival seem to have occurred in some sectors of the centuriation to the north–east of Padova, such as Arsego or San Giorgio delle Pertiche, where the regularity of the

5 | Detail of the 10.XVI map of the *Second Military Survey* (1825) of the area of the centuriations of Padova (with *limite*s represented mainly by roads) and Altino (with *limite*s represented mainly by canals and rural roads).

present situation, in which a rational organisation of the landscape can easily be recognised, is not reflected in the historical cartography of the early 19th century. Comparing modern aerial photographs (GAI flight of 1955) and, in particular, the *Kriegskarte* by Anton von Zach (1798–1805), it appears clear that various *limite*s have been (re)traced by adapting to the orientation suggested by the *decumani* and *kardine*s which were preserved in the neighbouring areas (Lachin 2010, 42, 44–45).

The possibility of being faced with a re–centuriation phenomenon, on the other hand, appeared starting from the end of the 1970s, following the discovery, through a remotely sensed analysis of satellite images, of lineations buried in the Veneto–Friuli plain interpreted as Roman centuriation axes. The most disruptive aspect of that discovery, subsequently corroborated by analyses conducted on the basis of more recent satellite images, was that new systems of lineations were identified, despite they had been never documented before through carto–photo–interpretation, and which overlapped the already known centuriations, with divergent orientations [Fig. 6]. What was attempted, therefore, was a stratigraphic investigation that could confirm the existence of a relative chronological seriation of the various centurial systems identified, since these seemed to "coprire o essere coperti da altri o essere meno visibili sul terreno perché sepolti etc., indicando così una sequenza temporale" (Lachin 2010, 47). The hypothesis was then advanced of the existence, in a period between the *lex Pompeia de Transpadanis* of 89 BC and the municipal law of 49 BC, of a territorial framework characterised by two very large centuriations gravitating around *Patavium* and *Altinum*. In particular, it was hypothesised that the agricultural division of Padova extended even beyond the course of the Musone Vecchio and reached the Piave, while that of Altino extended between

the lower courses of the Sile, those of the Piave and that of the Livenza. In these terms, the first could have guaranteed a certain level of protection at the mouth of the Piave valley, in correspondence with the first dolomitic reliefs, and of the entire foothills of Treviso; while the second would have placed itself in control not only of the Piave directrix, but also of the entire district of *Opitergium*/Oderzo.

In the second half of the I century BC, however, new and changing needs (i.e., the battle of Philippi, the war of Perugia, the decisive battle of Actium, the difficult management of veterans and the development of centres, such as *Opitergium* and, above all, *Tarvisium*, with increasingly Roman connotations) perhaps led to a territorial reorganisation inducing a large–scale phenomenon of re–centuriation of the Venetian plains (Lachin 2010, 49; Rosada, Lachin 2013, 33). In particular, in the sector between Musone Vecchio, Sile and Piave, there would have initially been a contraction of the agricultural division of Padova and, in that left free area, a new centuriation of Altino would have been created, i.e. the one we can still observe today. Furthermore, in a phase that is not easily identifiable, perhaps at the same time or later, the countryside of Altino would have ceded portions of territory to the benefit of the development of neighbouring municipalities: the sector between Piave and Livenza would have become part of the countryside of *Opitergium* (whose renewed agricultural structure would have obliterated the traces of the previous centuriation of *Altinum*, which, being older, are in fact no longer visible either in cartography or on the ground); while a large portion of the territory between Sile and Piave would have been incorporated into the countryside of *Tarvisium*.

As already mentioned, however, it is difficult to accept a systematic use of *renormatio* in the Roman period. Precisely for this reason, the satellite images that had led to the discovery of the buried systems have recently been analysed again, with new and more refined instruments. The result is that there is, in no case, evidence of the very numerous lineations which should have formed the large overlapping agricultural systems mentioned above (Turchetto 2022, 104–136) [Fig. 7]. In this specific case, the traces seem to be evanescent because they are found on supports that are not particularly precise or in high–resolution, and were reasonably stimulated by a certain enthusiastic optimism which perhaps has led to reconstructing, in retrospect, what in reality most likely did not exist at all. We must not forget, indeed, that photointerpretation for archaeological purposes must always comply within limits that take into account, not only the variability of the legibility conditions of the terrain and the shooting methods, but also the additional disturbances, known as 'false traces' which can lead to errors of interpretation. The anthropic traces identified may correspond to traces actually existing on the ground, but not necessarily due to archaeological or datable elements, even if they have a very similar typology (Zamboni 2002, 48, 50).

Moreover, if we consider the Roman centuriation as a territorial organisation also aimed at the management of surface waters, it appears even more evident that the overlapping of groups of lineations with divergent orientation would have completely undermined the previous drainage and runoff system. In this perspective, therefore, we can better understand the

6 | Superimposed systems of lineations detected by Baggio and Sigalotti in 1999, by analysing SPOT and Landsat satellite images (modified from Turchetto 2022).
7 | Detail of the RGB composition (1–2–3) of the multispectral image SPOT 1 (date of capture: June 9, 1989) and superimposition of the traces identified by Baggio and Primon in 2000 (from Turchetto 2022).

genesis and development of the two agricultural systems of Padova and Altino, which, within the framework of a reasonable unitary and systematic territorial structuring, found their own shared border in the course of the Musone river and were defined with two distinct orientations. Such different inclinations, however, did not originate from the practice of *renormatio*, but simply from the political will to distinguish, as it is suggested by Roman surveyors (Front., *De limit*.,31, 7–9, Lach.), the territories belonging to two different cities.

Enhancing the centuriated landscape through slow tourism

The detour called 'The ring of the centuriations , planned to accompany pilgrims travelling along the Romea Strata and Saint Anthony s Path to discover the centuriations of Padova and Altino, aims at making the history of that corner of the Veneto plain better known. There, past and present merge in an efficient water management system, by exploiting the same mechanisms set up by the Romans more than two thousand years ago. In this perspective, precisely to enhance both the historical–cultural and naturalistic aspects linked in particular to water and rivers, a cycling itinerary has been planned around the course of the Musone Vecchio river, along the stretch between Camposampiero and Stigliano. Indeed, that is the line that in Roman times should have represented the shared border between the centuriation of Padova and that of Altino and, in the Middle Ages, the north–eastern border of the territory of Padova, as it is suggested in the seal of the city: *Muson, mons, Athes, mare certos dant michi fines*

('The Musone, the mountain, the Adige, the sea clearly mark my boundaries) (Bortolami 2012, 129).

Halfway along the route, near Massanzago, a network of orthogonal roads allows to reach the Museum of the Roman Centuriation of Borgoricco and to experience the geometric regularity of the Roman layout. Instead, the banks of the Marzenego river, near Noale, lead through the centuriation of Altino in the direction of Piombino Dese, where a beautiful stretch of the Treviso–Ostiglia cycle path, created along the old military railway line, permits to reach Camposampiero, thus concluding the tour.

The enhancement of the centuriated landscape is provided by a series of narratives, developed as a support for a thematic featured trip across the territory around the Municipality of Borgoricco. In this way, pilgrims are offered the opportunity to gain a great variety of in–depths focuses about both cultural and natural aspects ranging from antiquity to modern times: history of transportation, from Roman roads to military railways and cycling paths; man struggling with the geomorphology of a territory of resurgences; the role of Roman centuriation in the history of the territory of the central Venetian plain; the implication of a correct water management in a flat landscape; water as a resource: the mills and the tradition of silkworm breeding along the Musone river.

All this will contribute to a better knowledge of the whole district, and furthermore to boost the attention and the curiosity on an often neglected Roman territorial monument.

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Abstract

Starting from the assessment of the impact of an economic–demographic crisis on the landscape, the contribution describes the possible transformations to which the Roman land division could be subject in the *longue durée*. Subsequently, these results are briefly illustrated starting from the specific cases of the agrarian organisations of Padova and Altino, which represents the main topic of the cultural detour called 'The Ring of the Centuriations'. This is dedicated to the discovery of an often–neglected territory, which instead deserves to be reconsidered and enhanced due to its historical and cultural value

keywords | Roman Centuriation; Water Management System; Diachronic Perspective; *Venetia*; Via Romea Strata.

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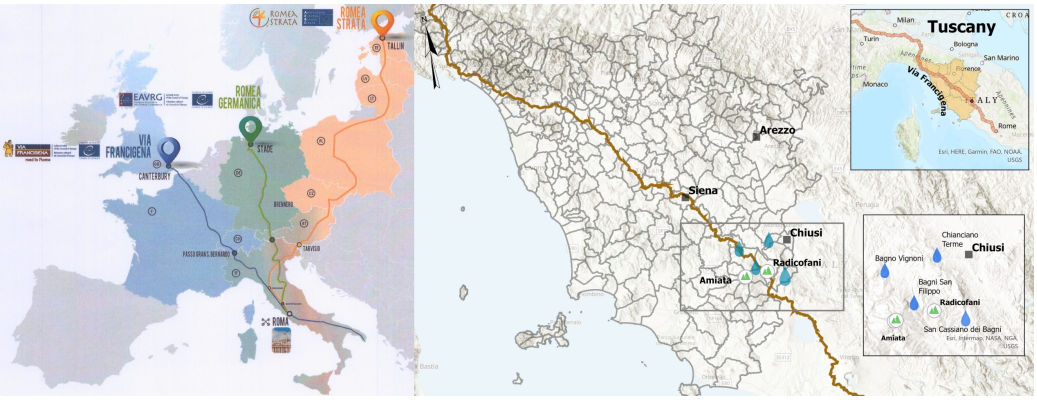
Thermal heritage on the Via Francigena in Tuscany

A diachronical overview from the European rurAllure project

Silvia González Soutelo, Miguel Gomez-Heras, Laura García Juan

The Tuscany region (Italy) is of great interest, beyond any doubt, thanks to its historical, archaeological and natural heritage. This region is known worldwide and highly valued for its unique Medieval cities and its countryside. One area of particular interest within the Tuscany region is the Val d'Orcia, which was declared World Heritage by Unesco in 2004 for its history and landscape. Despite its recognition, this rural area has a poor public communication system, and its sites are only easily accessible by private transport, and numerous small towns that are very rich in terms of heritage are not yet very well-known. Consequently, this region was considered particularly interesting to be included as a specific pilot case within the European rurAllure project (Horizon 2020 n.101004887) which seeks general tools that help and encourage the discovery of those rural areas close to pilgrimage routes which are already consolidated or in progress. Additionally, our pilot case is focused on thermalism and provides a new subject area which should be considered as a potential aspect to be discovered on the Val d'Orcia (Tuscany) in relation with the historical Via Francigena Route and its thermal heritage (material, immaterial and natural) which is mainly located in rural areas [Fig. 1]. In this sense, in the context of the work package focused on the Thermal sector (WP5), an in-depth analysis of this area was considered after assessing different options within the scope of the Italian territory, considering three pilgrimage routes to the city of Rome: Via Francigena, Via Romea Germanica and Via Romea Strata.

Specifically, the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) team, comprised of several specialists in thermalism, archaeology, geology, geography and museology, in collaboration with the European Association of the Via Francigena ways (EAVF), also member of this European project, carried out several tasks in this route. These tasks were focused on analysing and rediscovering different sections of the Via Francigena to recognize regions of special interest for the preparation of some narratives and actions created to share new subjects that can allow pilgrims and visitors to enjoy a transversal and interdisciplinary perception of the importance of thermal heritage in this territory. Consequently, the first sub-pilot was focused on an area within the southern part of the Tuscany region, which was deemed of interest in order to understand the uniqueness of the territory from different point of views, such as, in this



1 | The Romea Routes to Rome and the area of Val d'Orcia among the Francigena Route in Tuscany, including specific details of the area analysed in this article (maps ed. by authors).

case, its geology and archaeology, and the rich and interesting manifestations of thermalism with a diachronic vision of thermal landscapes since Antiquity (about the Ancient thermalism in Italy, see among others, the last volumes derived of the *Aquae Patavinae* project in Bassani, Bressan, Ghedini 2011; Bassani, Bressan, Ghedini 2012; Bassani, Bressan, Ghedini 2013; Annibaletto, Bassani, Ghedini 2014; Annibaletto, Basso 2014, 79. Some others studies should be mentioned, like the studies by Guérin-Beauvois 2015; Guérin-Beauvois, Martin 2007, among others). Against that background, we have analysed specifically the thermal heritage of this territory and, to do so, we have selected some interesting cases of studies: the thermal towns of Chianciano Terme, Bagno Vignoni, Bagni di San Filippo and San Casciano dei Bagni, as some excellent examples of the different perspectives of study about the thermalism through history.

Analysing a historical thermal area: The *Clusini* territory

According to our proposal of offering a joint vision of geological, archaeological, and geographical factors shaping this region, we have focused this research on the study of the Bagno Vignoni territory as one of the most interesting areas to analyse the role of mineral-medicinal waters since Antiquity (Chellini 2002; Bassani 2014; Donahue 2015). Nevertheless, as a starting point to discover the singularities of this town, we have had to consider the landscape from a general point of view. Indeed, the present landscape of this territory is not only the result of a cultural rural agricultural history as pointed out by UNESCO, but also of natural processes linked to geological history dating back millions of years. The area is marked by a succession of gentle hills that make up the characteristic landscape of the Val d'Orcia, and consequently the Tuscany region.

The geological history of the Tuscan hills is the result of the collision between Europe and Africa. While in other areas of the Apennines the folding process is still underway, in this area a series of tectonic depressions or basins, oriented NW – SE and delimited by faults arranged

in steps, were formed starting in the upper Miocene (around 6 million years ago). Val d'Orcia is placed within one of these depressions, the Radicofani basin, which is bordered by Mount Amiata on the western side and Mount Celona on the eastern side (Vezzoli, Principe 2020). As a result, this part of the Tuscany region is a great area to take a journey through time from millions of years ago when volcanoes were formed, to historical times when mineral-medicinal waters began to be exploited and thermal towns were built around springs. All these phenomena have created a singular rural landscape of natural and cultural thermal heritage where the diachronically use and exploitation of these natural resources for many functions should be considered and analysed in detail (Pola *et alii* 2014). Historically, the importance of the thermal springs of this territory was already mentioned as *Fontes Clusini* cited by Horatius in the I century BC in the ancient *Etruria* province, that is to say, the thermal springs related to the Etruscan and Roman city of *Cleusi/Clusium*, the modern Chiusi (Chellini 2002; Ghedini 2014). People in Antiquity flocked to these thermal sites to cure their illnesses (mainly stomach aches as indicated in the ancient text) by drinking these waters (Annibaletto, Basso, 2014, 79-80; Mantovanelli 2014). Because of considering those waters as sacred healing areas some of these mineral springs were also equipped with *sacella* and sanctuaries. Hence, the *Fontes Clusini* were described according to their healing function:

> Quae sit hiems Veliae, quod caelum, Vala, Salerni / quorum hominum regio et qualis uia (nam mihi Baias) / Musa superuacuas Antonius, et tamen illis / me facit inuisum, gelida cum perluor unda / per medium frigus; sane murteta relinqui / dictaque cessantem neruis elidere morbum / sulpura contemni uicus gemit, inuidus aegris / qui caput et stomachum supponere fontibus audent /Clusinis Gabiosque petunt et frigida rura (Hor., *epist*. 1, 15, 8-9).

> What's the winter like, my Vala, at Velia, what's the climate at Salernum / what sort of people live there, what kind of road is it / for Antonius Musa makes Baiae useless to me, and yet puts me in ill favour there / now that in midwinter I drench myself in cold water. Of course the town murmurs at its myrtle-groves being deserted / and its sulphur baths despised, so famous for driving a lingering disorder from the sinews / and takes offence at invalids who dare to plunge head and stomach under the showers / from Clusium's springs, or who repair to Gabii and its cold countryside (Hor., *epist*. 1, 15, 8-9 trasl. Fairclough 1929).

According to this text, although there is a discussion about which healing springs *Fontes Clusini* were, Horatius was probably talking about all the numerous mineral springs around this Etruscan-Roman city (Soren *et alii* 1998; Paolucci 2021; Chellini 2002, 145-165). Indeed, some of the closer and richer thermal areas to be included in this description could have been Chianciano Terme and San Casciano dei Bagni, because of their proximity, the quality of their waters and their abundant flow. It is also demonstrated by the archaeological remains of this period found there.

For example, Chianciano Terme is located just 10km away from Chiusi, and 20km from the Via Francigena route. It is famous for its salubrious waters, with 4 main mineral springs: Acqua Santa, Acqua Fuculi, Acque Sillene and Acqua Sant'Elena, specially indicated for liver treatments due to their mineralitation (mostly bicarbonates, alkalines, sulphated waters, at

2 | The natural thermal basin of Bagni San Filippo named “White whale” (ph.CC).

24-38ºC; cfr. Rosetti, Valenti 2013, 109-112). In those springs, there are various examples of Etruscan and Roman archaeological remains linked mostly to some ancient sanctuaries. One of the most interesting sites in this town is the archaeological sanctuary of Mezzomiglio, from the Late Etruscan and early Roman Imperial period, studied by the American archaeologist David Soren at the end of the 20th century (Soren *et alii* 1998; Soren 2006; Mecchia 2010).

Another fascinating site, considered also like *Fontes Clusini*, is San Casciano dei Bagni (23km away from Chiusi, and 6km from Via Francigena route), a Medieval town with a very long thermal tradition. In fact, this town has been considered the most abundant in thermal water in Italy (with 38 thermal springs: Chellini 2002, 145-151; Mariotti, Tabolli 2021, 109) and boast one with the largest flow rates in Europe (mainly fluorinated, sulphated, calcic, weakly sulphurous, with variable temperature between 27 and 43ºC; cfr. Rosetti, Valenti 2013, 35). In this town it was frequent to discover Etruscan and Roman anatomical ex-voto and some epigraphs linked to some different thermal springs (Iozzo 2013; Salvini 2014). Nevertheless, recently, close to the best open thermal pool of the town (the Bagno Grande), an amazing Etruscan and Roman thermal sanctuary was discovered in 2019, and fortunately, the archaeological excavation is in progress with extraordinary discoveries (Mariotti, Tabolli 2021; Mariotti *et alii* 2022).

The importance of thermalism in this area was also highlighted in the Medieval period, as is well demonstrated in the different studies on this subject (among others, Guérin-Beauvois, Martin, 2007, Boisseuil 2002; Boisseuil 2015; Chellini 2002). Thus, following these authors, since the XIII century, when the pontifices made the “*creatio corporis*”, it was frequent to take to “summer towns” to get out of the city to recover their health. In this regard, each city-State of this territory established rules to identify, value and protect mineral-medicinal waters. Consequently, some pools were built or readjusted in this period to preserve and use the qualities of these thermal and mineral springs, as a natural resource of great value, fitted in some cas-

es with constructions surrounded by a wall without a roof (Boisseuil 2015, 106-109). At the end of the Medieval period, it was so important to recognise the mineral characteristics of these waters that some Lords considered it necessary to prepare a catalogue of the thermal springs of some of these Italian territories, as was carried out by Michel Savonarola, among others, in the XV century (Pasalodos Requejo 2020).

One of the best examples of this period also in this Tuscany region, is the thermal site of Bagni San Filippo [Fig. 2], a small Medieval town made up of a much-reduced number of houses, under the control of Siena republic. Although it is said to have been occupied in the Roman period, we don't have enough evidence of this chronology (Chellini 2002, 151) to recognize this settlement. Nevertheless, there is a very rich Medieval documentation, and it is said that it had been visited by many personalities since the XII-XIII century due to the quality of its water. For example, the Medieval thermal spa was not preserved, but there is an inscription indicating the restoration of the building in the XVI century by Cosimo I de Medici (Boisseuil 2002, 284-291). Moreover, as we will see, there are also nowadays some popular and free natural pools and agreeable travertine waterfalls because of mineral waters (sulphurous, bicarbonates and calcite-rich waters at 52-36ºC). Unfortunately, the lack of archaeological studies in most of these sites do not allow the origin and the chronologies of these constructions to be identified. It is therefore advisable to promote new research to identify the diachronic evolution of the use of these thermal waters.

Bagno Vignoni: a proposal of an integrated study between geology, history, and archaeology in a thermal hamlet through centuries

To evaluate and recover the historical and economical value of the diversity of uses of thermal and mineral waters in this region during centuries, we have highlighted the thermal village of Bagno Vignoni, linked directly to the Via Francigena Route as one of the best examples of the enormous relevance that thermalism had in some territories along centuries, since Antiquity until nowadays.

Bagno Vignoni village was built on a hillside by the Orcia River, in the Siena province. According to the topography, the Via Francigena, the Medieval way, crossed the Val d'Orcia very close to Vignoni town and it's a small thermal hamlet sited some hundred meters downhill.

1. Thermal waters and healing spas

This hill, sited in front of the Rocca di Tentennano, is formed by Cretaceous (145 to 65 million years old) limestone. Whenever rainwater goes through the limestone, it dissolves calcite and other minerals, such as sodium chloride (table salt) and calcium, magnesium and sodium sulphate. This mineral-enriched water percolates to aquifers where its temperature rises due to the geothermal heat coming from the magmatic activity of the volcano of Mount Amiata (Vezzoli, Principe 2020). This warm water comes to the surface through faults as a thermal water spring. As it comes to the surface it loses pressure making the CO2 dissolved in the water become gaseous again, therefore leading to the "sparkling water" phenomenon. This fact can be

3 | Plan of the Bagno Vignoni town, indicating the different points mentioned in this article (ed. by authors); aereal view of the "water square" (ph.CC).

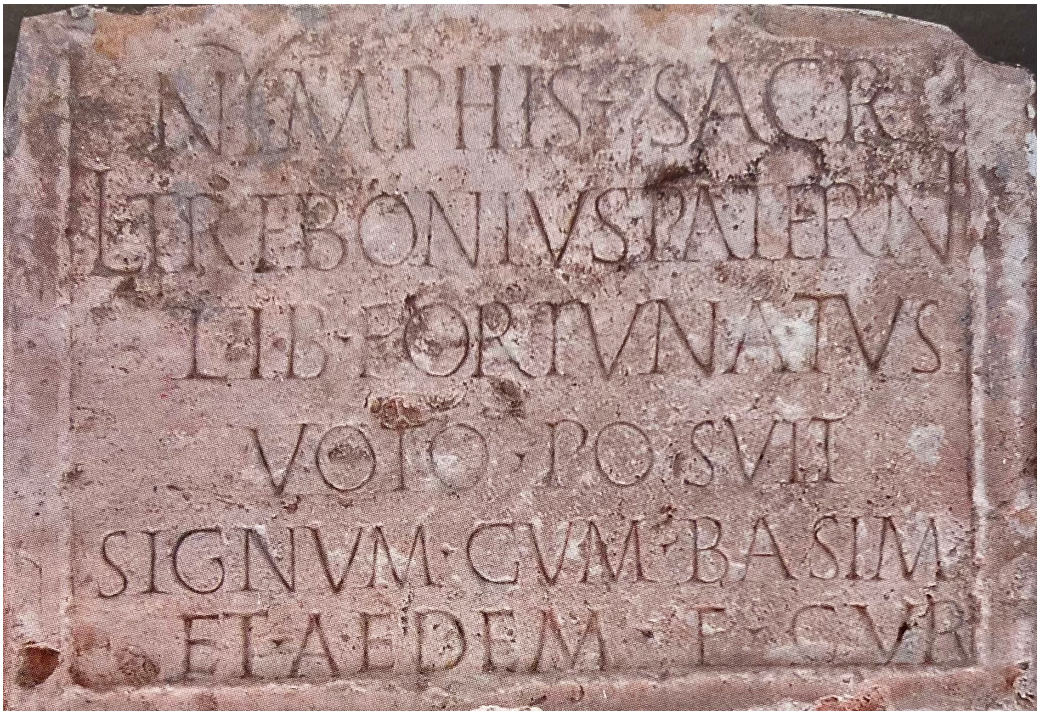
observed in the main square of this thermal hamlet where water gushes up from the bottom of the pond [Fig. 3].

The antiquity of this site has not been yet analysed by any archaeological project in order to identify Etruscan or Roman remains in it, even though it was also part of the *Clusini* territory, although the existence of thermal mineral waters in this place, as well as the mention of the discovery of various epigraphs associated with these waters seems to confirm this (Chellini 2002, 161-162). Proof of this origins is the epigraph (CIL XI, 2595) located in this town dedicated to the Nymphs [Fig. 4], which is preserved in one thermal establishment, and which refers to a small temple (*aedes*) and base of a statue dedicated by a freedman named *Lucius Trebonius Fortunatus*, from a well-documented family in Chiusi and in its territory (Chellini 2002, 159-161; Arnaldi 2006, 89-81; Petraccia *et alii* 2013, Basso 2014, 194; Paolucci 2021, 67-68):

4 | Epigraph dedicated to Nymphs, travertine, II century BC, Bagno Vignoni hamlet (ph. in Paolucci 2021, 67, 5.9) NYMPHIS SACR(um) / L(ucius) TREBONIVS PATERNI / LIB(ertus) FORTVNATVS / VOTO POSVIT / SIGNVM CVM BASIM / ET AEDEM F(ecit) CVR(avit).

The water that flows here is rich in sodium chloride, calcium carbonate and iron, calcium, magnesium and sodium sulphate, with a temperature between 43-49°C with various upwelling points (Rosetti, Valenti 2013, 116). Undoubtedly, the most significant spring is the one that emerges precisely from the ground and appears collected by the deposit of this central pond that makes up the main square of Bagno Vignoni. That point could correspond to a Medieval structure(cited already in the XI century), with a probable construction base from Roman times, although it is not possible to confirm in the absence of archaeological and stratigraphic studies of this construction.

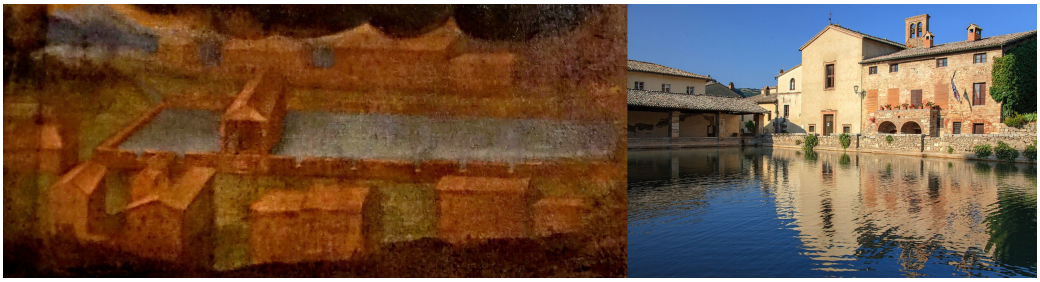
This pond has a maximum width of 26.6m (90 Roman feet), with a possible original maximum length of approximately 70.4m, almost 2 Roman acts (Chellini 2002, 159), rounded by stairs and blocked doors. The southern part of the pool was later cut by the portico of Santa Caterina, and the subsequent construction of a thermal building right in the southern part of the



pond. This aspect has been confirmed by the review of the Medieval sources that indicate that the chapel was in the middle of the pond (described by Tondi in 1334), and this is also reflected in the painting of the XVII century that is preserved in the immediate church of St. John The Baptist's Church, as has been investigated by C. Chellini (Chellini 2002, 160) [Fig.5].

Likewise, the configuration of this space, its measurements, and the designation in the XVII century of this pool as "the great Roman Bath" make this author consider that it could be an original pool from Roman times, probably between the 1st and the II century AD judging by the inscription (Chellini 2002, 160-161), although much modified in later centuries (case of the wall that delimits the pool and the doors walled on it). This mentioned portico could be justified as a bridge from one side to other of the pool, but also as a Christianisation of ancient pagan cults, including the presence of a Chapel to St. Caterina, and also the next Medieval church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, where the mentioned painting was preserved. Following D. Boisseuil (Boisseuil 2002, 303-312), this portico-bridge separated this basin in two pools, one for men and one for women, as was frequent in the Middle Age.

Nevertheless, the pagan appreciation of these healing waters continued over time, as it is said in a later inscription in a marble slab (it is said to be dated in the XVI century) preserved there, which is surprisingly written in Greek letters. This inscription has been preserved in one of the pillars of the St. Caterina portico, and it includes a poem dedicated to *Naiades* (divinities as-



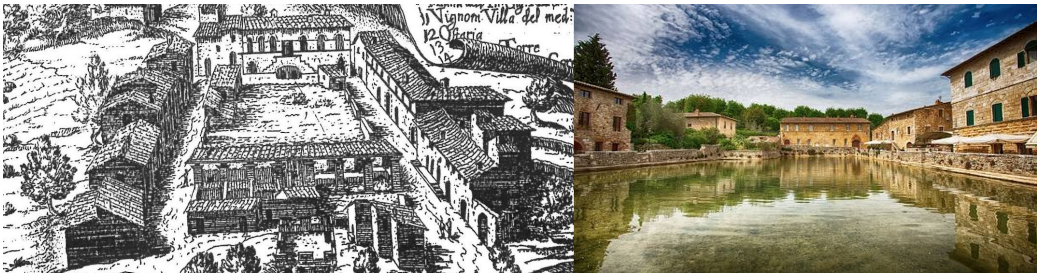
5 | Detail of a painting representing the main pool with the portico as a division, XVII century, St. John the Baptist church, Bagno Vignoni (ph. by authors).

sociated to waters) by Lattanzio Ptolomeo from Siena, asking for good health using "these hot waters":

> Oh Naiads, who live in these hot vapours, free the perennial fire among the waves, restore with your eternal flow the suffering ones free of odious death, I salute you, and you provide copious waters. Flow charmingly, o good springs, and with your flow bring health to the infirm and a very gentle bath to the healthy. Both will be grateful to you. Lattanzio Ptolemeo Senese (trans. by Sandra Romano for this article).

Be it one way or another, the truth is that the thermal water that flows here was decisive in the existence and development of this small town, especially since Medieval times, in which its strategic location at the crossroads intersected, among others, by the Via Francigena, as well as the existence of this abundant flow of water and the health effects recognized throughout the province, show the importance of this site during centuries as a space of economic and health interest. Nevertheless, this fact made it also the scene of numerous conflicts, for which the population suffered various periods of destructions over the centuries (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 35-38).

Although this pond could have been used as the main pool for bathers in the early days, there are also indications to different bathhouses where these waters were used at least since the Middle Ages [Fig. 6]. Also, different types of lodgings and hospitals for pilgrims, travellers and water users have been preserved around this central square, as well as the Ponte dell'Orcia hospital (*hospitalis de balneis*) mentioned in Medieval documentation, where pilgrims and visitors could have a rest to recover their health in the XIV-XV century (Boisseuil 2002, 18-19). Thus, in Medieval times, mainly between the XIII-XV centuries, the main houses were built to welcome the distinguished bathers who visited these waters (the presence of St. Caterina is documented in the XIV century – hence the devotion of this place. It is popularly said that numerous personalities came to visit the waters, such as Pope Pius II (who had a house built in there) and Lorenzo de Medici (also known as Lorenzo the Magnificent). Nevertheless, the importance of these thermal spas was developed mainly since the XVIII century, and nowadays, this town also combines ancient and Modern thermal spas, but also natural free pools that can be visited in the Parco dei Mulini area.



6 | Thermal bath represented at the southern part of the big basin. Detail of Bagno Vignoni, engraving of Vincenzo Ferrari in Amminstrazione Tenuta S. Quirico, 1700 ca. (ph. Cianci *et alii* 2000, 56). View of today (Ph. CC).

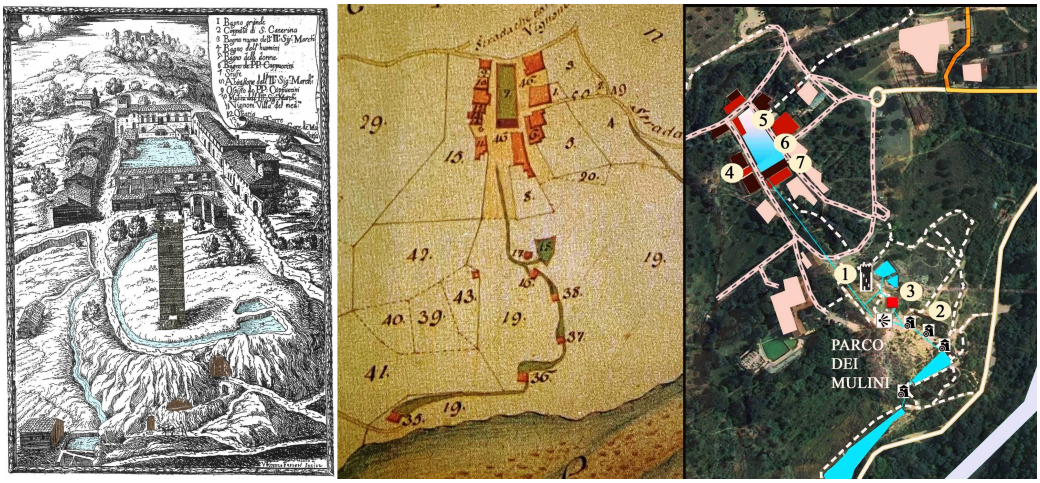
The importance of waters in this town was not only linked to healthy properties but also to industrial purposes, becoming a successful site due to the importance of watermills and fullers and the curative values of these waters. This development was partly a cause of the unique topographic configuration of this town.

2 Another function: the "Industrial" uses

As we have already mentioned, thermal waters could be also destined to other uses (Bassani A. 2014; Bassani 2016). Waters coming from the main pool and other springs in the area, were reused as an industrial resource at least since the Medieval period, taking advantage of a stable running flow of water, despite droughts or seasonal flows.

Consequently, this town was a significant settlement not only because of their thermal baths, but also due to the Medieval and Modern fuller and watermill industry (Boisseuil 2002, 12) like in the very famous Saturnia cascade, in Grosseto; Bagno di Rapolano, Bagno di Armaiolo, Bagno a Valiano, Bagno di Roselle or San Casciano dei Bagni, among others. So, firstly, this watermill industry in Bagno Vignoni (recently restored in the 'Parco dei Mulini' – watermills park – Cianci *et alii* 2000) was built to take advantage of the rich flow of thermal water discharged from the town to the Orcia river sited at foot of the town with a significant slope. This initial problem was used here as an advantage, as they were provided with hydraulic energy after storing and channelling the excess of thermal water from the main square towards the river. In this way, a waterfall was established and the flow allowed the watermills to be driven. These structures were also created on the travertine formed by these thermal waters over centuries, and that progressively, and up to the present, were covered with tuff and new travertines that make up the thermal waterfall present in this enclave [Fig. 7].

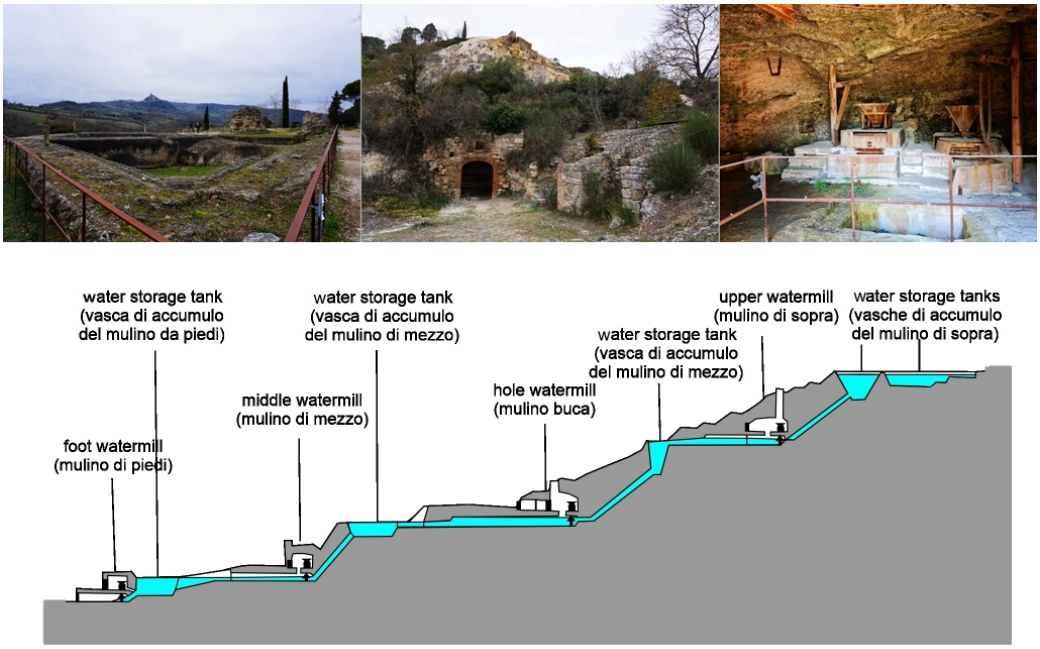
So, these watermills were built in tiers to make the most of the waters derived from the main pool mentioned above and also known as 'Bagno Grande'. This area was configured according to the needs and uses of these watermills, possibly around the XIII century as reflected in the "Carta Libertatis" of 1207, in relation to some mills close to the current Rocca d'Orcia (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 35).



7 | Plan of Bagno Vignoni, including the main pool, the thermal spa, the tower, and the hydraulic system for watermills, Vincenzo Ferrari's engraving, Amministrazione Tenuta S. Quirico, 1700 ca. (ph. Cianci *et alii* 2000, 56); Catasto di Montepulciano, 1775, with Bagno Vignoni and the Mulini, Archivio di Stato di Siena (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 37); Complete plan edited by authors (cf. Fig. 1).

Its maintenance and control were later under the supervision of the Republic of Siena, although after various capitulations, they later became part of the fiefdom of San Quirico, as part of the property of the Gherardini family since 1676. It is from this author that we obtain a more extensive description of the 4 mills that are still preserved and that can be visited in this park [Fig. 8]: the "mulino da capo", "mulino buca", "mulino di mezzo", "mulino da piedi", according to the documentation of the XIX century. These mills were active until 1950 (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 35-38), as a local resident also confirmed to us. To supply them with more strength, in the upper part of the *Parco dei Mulini*, it can be still seen, although without water, the water accumulation pond ("gore") as well as the channel that would derive the water from here. These would be horizontal wheel mills that were created after XI century in Italy within the mechanization process developed using hydraulic energy (Boisseuil, 2002b). The wheels would be in a buried or semi-buried place ("carceraio"), to where the water was conducted through a conduit to make the wheel move. The case of Bagno Vignoni, however, is unique due to its morphology, since its structure is largely hypogeal, excavated directly into the travertine layer formed by the carbonated deposits of the thermal water that feeds these mills (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 39-42). This interesting adaptation to travertine clearly manifested the need for its constant maintenance to avoid mills being blocked by calcareous concretions. Likewise, today's natural outdoor pools that can be enjoyed at the foot of the mills, were once squares or spaces for cleaning the grain that was ground in this site.

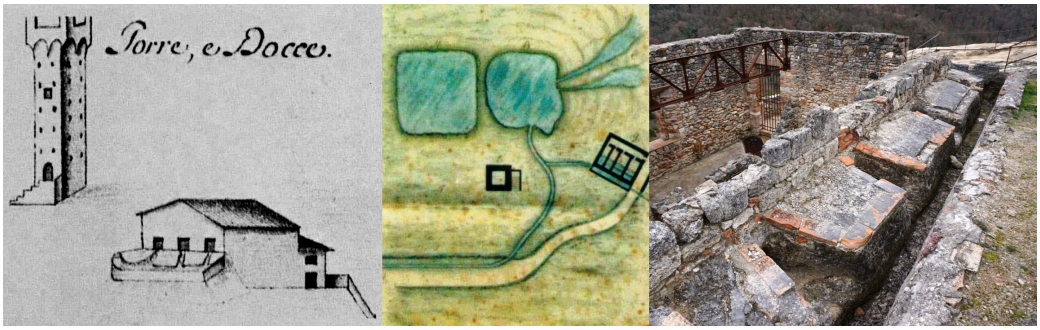
Another interesting and singular aspect that can be found in this town related to these waters and with the unique configuration of the topography, was the building known as *Fabbrica ad uso delle docce* ("Shower building") where the presence of pipes that take advantage of the



8 | Above: water storage tanks at the top of the hill; façade of the foot water mill; cave excavated for the water mills, with the reconstruction of part of the engineering (ph. Authors and EAVF). Down: Section of the water mills hill, with the different infrastructures created for its functions, taking advantage of the cascade created by the thermal waters (ed. by authors, after Cianci *et alii* 2000, 44-45).

fall of water for its use like showers and bathrooms has been documented. Although this type of infrastructure has been mentioned by authors (Gómez *et alii* 2017), who call on ancient texts, very little evidence has been identified with this function. Nevertheless, there are very few examples of this type of building in the Medieval and Modern period. The Bagno Vignoni establishment is therefore one of the best preserved and documented ones, taking advantage not only of the inclination of the hill, but also of the copious flow and the properties of the thermal waters [Fig. 9]. From the recovered written and graphic documentation, it was probably built at the beginning of the XVIII century and was in use until the end of the XIX century (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 52-54).

Finally, as we will see in the next point, the industrial use of these waters and its derivates were also used for different proposals. For example, as local travertine was of good quality, it was exploited to obtain ashlars and block were used in constructions all around this territory since antiquity (for example, in the Nymphs altar). Indeed, the importance of this industry was especially relevant in Bagno Vignoni at least since the beginning of the XI century, and it is equally manifested by the construction of defensive and surveillance elements, which in some way, served as a deterrent and functional element to protect structures, trades and commerce



9 | Pictures of the restored structures of the "Shower building" in Bagno Vignoni, detail of the representation of the tower and shower bath in the "Cabreo" document, XVIII century; the same in Pianta di Bagno di Vignoni", XVIII century, both of them in *Amministrazione tenuta San Quirico* (ph. in Cianci *et alii* 2000, 54); Archaeological remains of the top of the structures (ph. by authors).

that was developed all around this population. Thus, in addition to the tower present in the village of Vignoni located on top of the hill with and excellent visibility to control the entrance routes to the town and place of Bagno as well as the territory in general, another tall tower was built in the area currently comprising the Parco dei Molini, between the large water storage pond preserved and the different channels that lead the water towards the beginning of the cliff. Although today only the foundation of this construction is standing, a tower with an internal staircase and a completely square plan was built approximately between the XII-XIII century, and would remain standing, as reflected in the plans and graphics of the moment [Fig. 10], until the middle of the XIX century, when it was ruined, possibly due to a movement of the earth on which it sits (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 52-55).

3. Natural heritage

Finally, the free travertine pools, which are also included in the Parco dei Mulini are one of the most significant elements in Bagno Vignoni, and one of the most valued aspects by visitors. The carbonate deposits created by thermal waters dominate this area. When a hot surge emerges, it loses pressure and cools down, losing CO2 rapidly. It does more so if the areas where the water flows are covered with plants or algae. This leads to the precipitation of calcite forming two specific types of limestone: tufa and travertine. Tufa forms when calcium carbonate rich water precipitates on moss and higher plants. Travertine, usually associated with thermal waters, forms when calcium carbonate precipitates extensively on microbial and algae veils. Travertine is a unique type of limestone (a rock formed from the mineral calcite – calcium carbonate) deposited by calcium bicarbonate rich springs, such as the thermal surges we find in this area. When rainwater mixes with atmospheric CO2 it forms carbonic acid and becomes slightly acidic. Thus, when rainwater goes through carbonate rocks, as the ones we can find in the hills around the Radicofani basin, it dissolves calcite in the form of calcium bicarbonate. Furthermore, warm, acidic and CO2 rich waters can dissolve more calcite. This

10 | Plan of the Bagno Vignoni hamlet, Ettore Romagnoli. *Terme di Vignoni*, first of XIX century, where the Vignoni town can be observed on the top of the hill, an also the Bagno Vignoni houses and the tower which protects the shower building and the watermills, and the infrastructures created for the mills (ph. in Cianci *et alii* 2000, 35). On the right, the archaeological remains of the tower in Parco dei Mulini (ph. by authors).

water feeds the aquifers in the Radicofani Basin and surges along the tectonic faults bordering the basin as in Bagno Vignoni.

As is well-known, its name (travertine) derives from *lapis tiburtinus* which means "stone quarried at *Tibur*" – a thermal town, Tivoli, closed to Rome–. Travertine mostly has a fibrous texture and appears as an accumulation of very fine layers with a lot of pores. The rate of growth of travertine is very slow (it depends on composition of waters, but around 1 mm per day), so the pools you are seeing have taken centuries to form. This is therefore a geological asset to respect and protect because of their fragility (Erfurt 2021).

Specifically, in Bagno Vignoni, these pools have been formed from the carbonate deposits created by a stream of the thermal water derived of the main pool (Bagno Grande) spilled from a network of watermills and filling machines built around the XIII century as the surplus goes down to the Orcia River. Other similar pools can be visited in Bagno di Petriolo, Bagno di San Filippo or Bagno di Saturnia in the Toscana province, not far from the Via Francigena, as some of the best European examples of this type of natural pools conditioned by human constructions and natural phenomena (Capezzuoli *et alii* 1999). Also, the blocks of travertine in the area were extracted from quarries, exploited probably since Medieval times or even earlier to build most of the houses of this town (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 62-71) [Fig. 11]. One of the main Travertine quarries attached to Bagno Vignoni is 1km away from the open free pool at Parco dei Mulini. This quarry has been also considered part of the historical territory that was included in a general programme of environmental recovery called Parco delle Acque, degli Ecotipi e dei Travertini (Cianci *et alii* 2000, 21-28) that has not been created yet.

Conclusions

Even when the pilgrim's main focus is on walking the way, the cultural and natural information about the route can give them a chance to discover the way as a new reality where each oc-

11 | Cascade and natural thermal pools above travertine hill in Parco dei Mulini, and travertine quarry close to Bagno Vignoni, showing the characteristic lines and surface of this material (ph. by authors).

casion is based on the possibility of understanding the landscape from different themes and perspectives. In this project we have suggested offering pilgrims ways to discover their pilgrimage routes from different points of view, alongside to the existing offers to visit cities or monuments from different perspectives that have been developed in the last few years (e.g.: the city of Rome as the URBS that conquered the ancient world; the architectural analysis of its buildings; the water in Rome, López Salas 2021 etc.). Our objective has been to do so in ways that allow an understanding of the territory, but also to open new opportunities for visits and create alternative routes that allow new aspect of natural, cultural and intangible heritage areas to be discovered.

According to this proposal, and in accordance with the main subject of our pilot of the European rurAllure project dedicated to thermal heritage on the Routes to Rome, the content and organization of the short narratives created have been developed based on two main axes: a) On the one hand, the presence of sites of interest linked to Thermal heritage that are not very far from the Way itself, and not always very well-known; b) On the other hand, the possibility of developing new experiences using a general narrative about local and general Thermalism (mainly, from the historical and geological point of view) where the natural and cultural manifestations of this phenomenon in this region are so abundant and significant.

Furthermore, the opportunity to investigate this territory has allowed us to find very good examples of the interaction between natural and cultural solutions, including the long tradition of using mineral-medicinal waters since the Etruscan and Roman period, but also during the following centuries until nowadays. Thus, as we have seen, the value of these waters is not only considered from a social and health point of view, but also as an economic and political resource that has contributed to the configuration and development of very different historical territories. According to this proposal, “thermal” points should be highlighted on the landscape recognizing their potential role, not only as wellness destinations, but also as sites to complete our perception of the territory and the evolution of some towns and regions. Our experience

in the European rurAllure project has led to the consideration of the ideas: the importance of creating interdisciplinary teams to improve our knowledge of landscapes and territories; the value of collaboration with local and regional actions to promote and develop the heritage of rural areas; and the importance of helping to understand, enjoy and promote rural territories asserting their singularities (in this case, thermal and natural ones), considering tradition, history and archaeology as economic and social resources.

Finally, considering the Thermal heritage from a diachronic perspective, including natural and cultural phenomena, we would like to promote "open minded" actions to create scientific narratives. Furthermore, to improve the perception of archaeological sites, the relationship between architecture, geology and geography, from a microscale to a macroscale should be taken into account, thus opening up possibilities to create participative, universal accessibility, and in continually updated experiences, which include the essential contributions of the different groups that actively embrace those sites (municipalities, associations, local vendors and visitors).

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Abstract

Within the European project rurAllure, the implementation of different narratives was proposed to show pilgrims and visitors new and different perspectives of the rich heritage and singularity of the different pilgrimage routes and the territory they pass through. To this end, in WP5, focused on the Italian territory, the main subject of study proposed was thermal heritage in the vicinity of three of the main roads leading to Rome: Via Francigena, Via Romea Strata, and Via Germanica. In this article we present the experience developed on the Via Francigena, specifically in the southern Tuscany region, a territory that is particularly representative of the different manifestations of thermal heritage. Within this territory, we will focus specially on the town of Bagno Vignoni, as one of the most significant sites for discovering the multiple facets of thermal heritage that allow us to understand and enjoy the configuration and the (natural and cultural) history of the territory and the landscape that this road crosses.

keywords | Thermal Heritage; Pilgrimage Routes; Archaeology; Geology; Bagno Vignoni.

All contributions to this issue of Engramma have followed invited submission and have been reviewed by the editorial board and scientific committee of the journal.

Ancient history for tourism development
Building content for meaningful travel itineraries

Alessia Mariotti, Mattia Vitelli Casella

Introduction: The European approach to culture and tourism

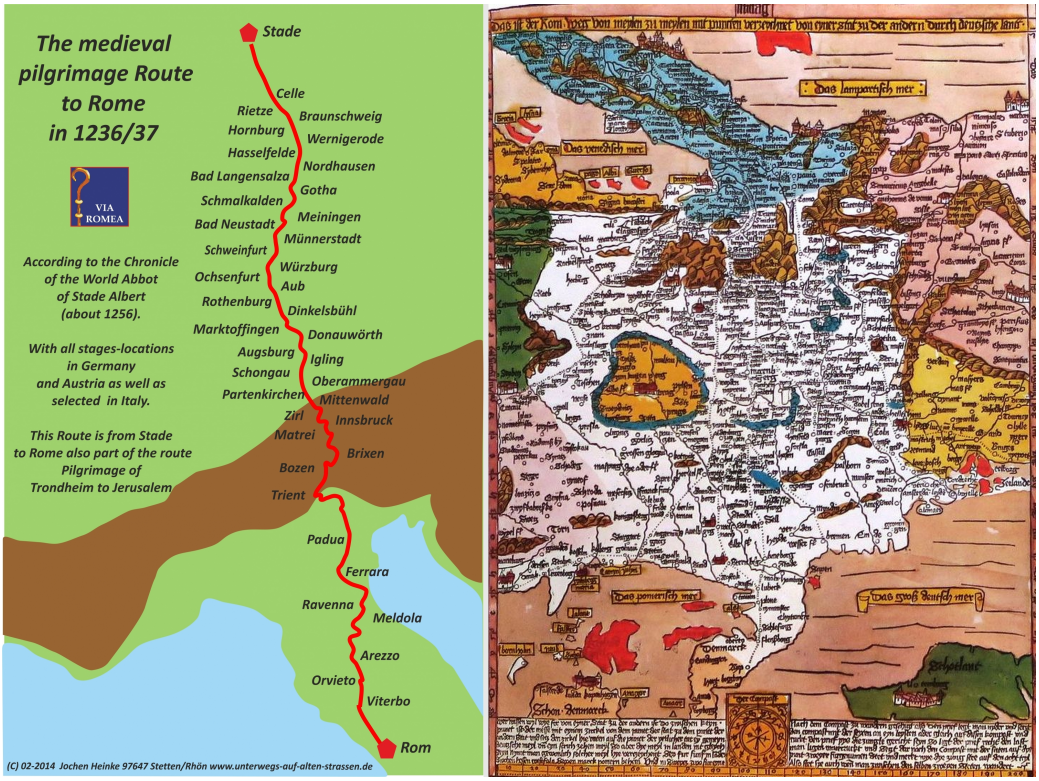
When it comes to cultural tourism studies, sustainability, and environmental protection are often addressed in the framework of the management of tourist flows accessing cultural attractions in urban areas. Before the pandemic, the main debate concerning cultural heritage attractions and sustainability was linked to the massive flows of tourists reaching historical city centers, thus endangering the social life of residents as well as the quality of their environment, without ensuring adequate economic impact on cities and regions. The phenomenon of over-tourism (maybe just a new name to refer to an old occurrence once called mass tourism) has been widely researched (Pechlaner, Innerhofer, Erschbamer 2019) and in some cases also compared or conceptually linked to under-tourism mainly characterizing peripheral and rural areas. The need to better balance tourism development and its capability to boost the multiplier effect on richness and job creation over European regions has been lately address by the EU Commission with specific background policies on tourism, where culture-based tourism and cultural routes have gained a paramount role because of their "remoteness and rural" geographical character (see Eu-Commission for Cultural tourism).

Cultural Routes have been a growing phenomenon starting from the launch of the program by the Council of Europe in the mid-1980s. Under a tourism perspective, these international cultural cooperation projects have been the forerunners of what is becoming nowadays a social habit: slow tourism and traveling, targeting social practices and culturally meaningful experiences. Identified as strategic, innovative, and creative tools for boosting social cohesion, thanks to their intrinsic cultural and political value, that Routes have also been a driver for local economic development based on sustainable tourism practices, inclusive cultural initiatives, and intercultural dialogue (Mariotti 2012; Azzari, Dallari 2018). Among the first certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, pilgrimage trails have some peculiarities influencing their potential to act as local development drivers: they have a certain stability in time and space, the so-called geographical and historical sedimentation; they represent both short, medium and long networks of relationship among different actors; they are well embedded in their environment, contributing to shape cultural landscapes as well as civilizations and they could be interpreted as "living heritage" thanks to the constant interaction among visitors and guests. The continuous exchange between pilgrims and the local communities (Badone 2016)

opens further possible research lines, aiming at unveiling the real contribution of these "formal and informal" tourism practices and experiences in addressing some of the crucial issues peripheral and rural areas are facing: the loss of population, the loss of services, economic and social marginalization. Nowadays pilgrims are voluntarily crossing borders, pushed by spiritual needs or by curiosity (Collings-Kreiner 2014). Independently from their first motivation, their transnational mobility action has an impact on local communities, as well as on their natural and social environment. Adopting Bourdin's constructivist approach (Bourdin 2000), one could argue that places crossed by pilgrims have stronger development potential, due to the constant social construction, boosted by the collective action of both residents and pilgrims, repetitively negotiating the meanings of local identity.

Starting from the assumption that, so far, pilgrimage trails have had a limited environmental impact (Gupta 1999) and that this form of slow mobility is usually less interfering with the fragile equilibrium between humanity and its ecosystem, we argue that sustainability could be somehow also supported by driving hikers and bikers towards a deeper cultural discovery of the regions they are crossing. Furthermore, pilgrimage trails allow investigating sustainability also through different dimensions: the capability of local territorial systems to interact with upper-scale networks (as in transnational pilgrimage ways) thanks to diffused cooperation among different stakeholders: one of the rurAllure project premises and one of the standpoints of heritage-based itineraries development. The density of the network and the intensity of the relationships among the territorial actors, help in evaluating the capability of the mobility and cultural tourism practices along these routes to be sustainable, but also contribute building an upscaling analysis from local practices up to their effects over supranational territorial systems, where tourism is not a goal per se, but an implementation instrument for shared territorial projects. The latter is also one of the leading principles, supporting the aim and philosophy of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program, where the role of cultural heritage is to enhance social cohesion through mobility and exchanges that heritage-led tourism can engage. As stated by Dallari (2018,50) "heritage is an important element for social identification", because it combines both tangible and intangible elements: traditions, values, and beliefs, buildings, handicrafts, and landscape. The acknowledgment of a common heritage (in the sense that it is recognized as such by all Europeans) thanks to tourism and slow mobility along and in the vicinity of pilgrimage ways, not only paves the pace for respectful visiting practices but brings also to the surface the role of ancient history in sustainable development. As stated by the Council of Europe in the Santiago Declaration in 1987: "That cultural identity has been and still is made possible by the existence of a European space bearing a collective memory and crisscrossed by roads and paths which overcome distances, frontiers, and language barriers".

In the following paragraph, we present some reflections on the possibility for regions crossed by linear slow mobility infrastructures such as the pilgrimage ways labeled by the Council of Europe, to develop new tourism products coupling sustainability with the need of rebalancing the visitor's flows towards less frequented rural areas. Starting from one of the stops of the



1 | Map of the Via Romea Germanica (by Jochen Heinke); Erhard Etzlaub, *Rom Weg Karte (*Roads to Rome), 1500 ca., London, British Library, Maps C.2.a.7(2) (CC) oriented South to North.

Via Romea Germanica in Emilia-Romagna, an alternative path suitable for bikes and rich in meaningful cultural heritage contents is presented.

I. Ancient history-based bike itineraries in the vicinity of Via Romea Germanica

How to combine environmentally friendly tourism and ancient cultural heritage? The question does not bring us to an unexplored field because sustainable cultural tourism is now a widely spread reality throughout Europe, encouraged by the European Commission in different ways, with many actions and funded projects (see for instance the website Eu-Comission for Sustainable Cultural Tourism) with links for further information). As stated above, within this framework, special attention is paid to cultural and historical routes rediscovered or recreated based on common elements for towns and countries. One of the strong points of this initiative is to promote tourism in lesser-known regions, for exploiting the growth potential of small towns' cultural heritage. In this context, there are several projects concerning meaningful itineraries of the Roman age and late antiquity, now to be covered on foot or by bicycle. Keeping our focus on the Adriatic coast (Turchetto 2021), we can mention examples of Roman roads via Annia or via Claudia Augusta, and examples of early pilgrims' way Via Francigena, recog-

nized in 1994 as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe and in 2019 extended from Rome to Santa Maria di Leuca, based on the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* (see the website of Eu-Commission for European cultural Routes), one of the most relevant ancient itineraries dating back to 333 AD. Even if these cases are very different from one another, they have a coherent axis based either on the Roman network of roads and settlements or on a historical fil-rouge, as a famous person and his journeys. This is the concept also underpinning the Via Romea Germanica, which in some stretches follows Roman roads and to which, in the German-speaking countries, the well-rooted green awareness has granted success as travel infrastructure by bike or on foot.

For the present case study, we have established an alternative route according to contemporary needs, as explained in detail in other contributions of this volume, therefore we do not have any ancient path to follow like the ones mentioned until now, but the choice of relevant elements of cultural heritage along the established route has been strongly influenced by the availability of safe routes for bikers or walkers. We aim to provide visitors with a wide range of tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets to be experienced at a slow pace, and it is self-evident that this kind of practice gives travellers the time and opportunity to better understand the territories and cultures crossed by the selected route. The resulting green-friendly touristic offer allows us to appreciate the environment around the paths as well as the cultural heritage located in rural areas far from the most popular tourist routes.

Our first goal would be to give the travellers along this pilgrimage path an idea of how the landscape, in its broadest sense, changed and was modelled through the centuries by the interaction between men and nature. The concept behind that is that cultural heritage, in this case, the ancient one makes more sense if it is appreciated in its natural environment, in other words in what is commonly defined within a holistic approach to a cultural landscape. Such a point of view is stressed several times in the current National Research Programme (PNR) 2021/2027, especially in the research and innovation area entitled "Humanistic Culture, Creativity, Social Transformations, Society of Inclusion". Within it, three intervention areas – Cultural Heritage, Arts, History and Literature, and Ancient History – have specific research lines devoted to the match between humanities and green transition (PNR 2021/2027, 58-59, 61-62, 65-66). Indeed, in a few places the natural conditions were as decisive as in the Po Delta for influencing in every age both human settlement and activities, which on their side preserved the environment. It is in this perspective of a persistent relationship between men and nature, even though applied to the Renaissance and the Este dynasty, that the Po Delta was included in the Unesco world heritage list. The criterion is worth quoting: "The Po Delta is an outstanding planned cultural landscape that retains its original form to a remarkable extent". These words perfectly fit our goal and could be a reference also for the Roman time, although unfortunately, the traces regarding the monuments as well as the countryside planning are scarcer.

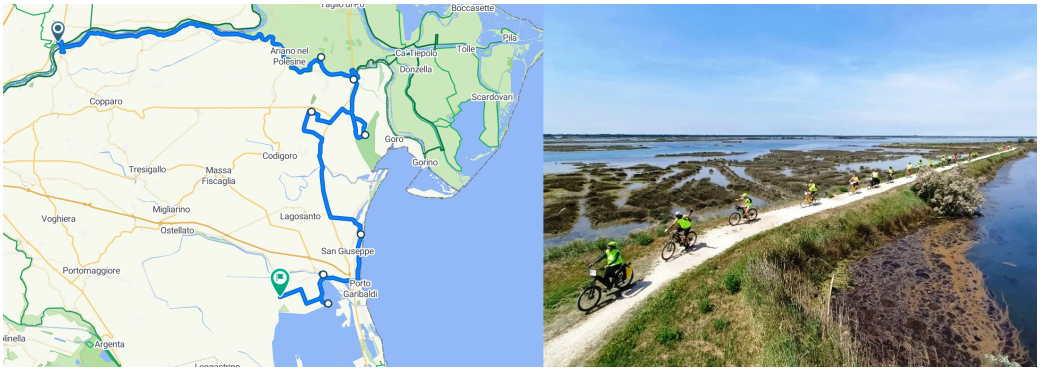
2 | Reconstruction of the ancient Po Delta with the evolution of the coastal line between Etruscan and Medieval Ages.
Lines: c) IV century BC; d) II century BC; II century AD; f) VI-VII century AD (from Bondesan 1986); an aereal view of the Po Delta coastal line today (©CC).

I.1. The Po Delta: an ideal combination of ancient history and nature

Ancient geography: In this regard, we must consider that the physical geography of this part of the Po basin consistently changed from antiquity until now, due to the modifications of the path of the rivers, above all that of the branches of the Po Delta. Many scholars have attempted to the reconstruction of the ancient geography of this area through the analysis of literary sources, such as Polybius and Pliny the Elder (Plb. II 16.10-12; Plin. *nat*. III 119-122), and geomorphological data (Ciabatti 1966; Bondesan 1986; Bondesan 1990; Cremonini 2022). The environment, together with human intervention, already in antiquity created different and peculiar landscapes. As a further example, in ancient northern Italy, a turning point under this point of view was undoubtedly the moment when Romans organized the settlement upon the colonization of Cispadane Gaul and reclaimed the land as preliminary action for allotting cultivable fields to the colons through the centuriation. This process usually left the most durable traces of the Roman intervention in the countryside and in this case can be considered a parallel of the above-mentioned initiative of the Este family in the surroundings of Ferrara. Unfortunately, such traces are not visible on the southern side of the present-day course of the Po (Cremonini 2022, 77-80); the impact on landscape of the Roman conquest in this region is quite uncertain and probably limited, because here the Romans adapted to the environmental conditions more than elsewhere, due to the lack of experience with such terrains (Uggeri 1986, 167-171). On the contrary, on the northern bank, the grid in the Adria's ager is not only still recognizable (Zerbinati 1984, 150-151) but has also been the object of musealisation and tourist valorization in Villadose, which also includes some cycling and walking paths in the countryside aiming at directly discovering this ancient landscape (see the website of Museo della Centuriazione).

Cultural and natural heritage: After these preliminary words, let us move to the description of the designed route and the explanation of the reasons behind it. The aim is to offer bike tourists the possibility of a nature-immersive experience in the Po Delta Park, one of the most important wetlands in Europe and the largest in Italy, which obtained an award from Unesco also as biosphere reserve (see the Po Delta website/Biosphere). The Park extends over two provinces (Ferrara and Ravenna) of the region Emilia-Romagna and the province of Rovigo in Veneto. The Park area as whole could be interpreted as a large eco-museum aiming at "research, conservation, protection, and enhancement of a set of cultural assets, of both a tangible and an intangible nature" (see the Po Delta website/Ecomuseum). It stages environment, landscape, territory, and the ways of life that have followed and accompanied its development. The Park is an inhabited protected area, therefore much valuable because of the active participation of the local communities, the so-called heritage communities mentioned by the Faro Convention. The Faro Convention spirit, even though addressing specifically cultural heritage, can be applied to natural heritage as well. By cycling or walking in this exceptionally preserved environment, we aim obviously at bringing the tourists to discover the ancient cultural heritage, which has been deeply investigated by scholars (nota 9: for instance, *Civiltà comacchiese* 1986; Alfieri 1989; Uggeri 2006; Berti *et alii* 2007) but has been for a long time undervalued by the tourism sector and is therefore still less known to the public. The best example of this approach is the Etruscan town of Spina, a multi-ethnic emporium of antiquity, exceptional in the northern Adriatic, which was discovered and excavated for the first time in 1922. Fortunately, excavations and scientific research continued (for instance, Patitucci, Uggeri 2016-2017; Reusser 2017; Uggeri 2020; Buoite *et alii* 2022), but the site is not accessible for visitors as a proper archaeological area. As we will see in the following lines about San Basilio and Comacchio, the awareness of this topic has increased over the last years thanks to innovative museum concepts and projects, whose mission is to recreate the ancient landscape for an immersive visit experience. To enhance knowledge and accessibility to cultural heritage, the Delta Park has developed a few weeks ago (May 2023) a section on its website dedicated to archaeology. Among the many valuable outputs of this initiative, the most relevant for our purposes is the interactive and georeferenced map of the archaeological and cultural heritage sites. Even though it is not a complete archaeologic map, still it is an exhaustive smart guide for both tour operators and tourists who want to plan their tour autonomously (see the Po Delta website/Archaeological detour). Besides witnessing the enhanced attention on this topic, it is worth noticing that the adopted approach, combining natural and cultural heritage, is in line with the above-mentioned holistic concept of landscape. Our attempt here is to couple the already available slow mobility facilities with an ancient history fil rouge, thus allowing visitors to move sustainably across the region while experiencing its history first-hand and the ancient landscape in its different fundamental elements.

A bike-friendly territory: The route we propose in this paper reaches the vicinity of Ravenna, but it is included within the ancient Po Delta. It was more extended southwards in comparison with today's situation. From the administrative point of view, the itinerary is quite completely within



3 | The proposed itinerary for bike tourists (elaborated from www.bikemap.net/). A bike journey in the Po Delta Park (©CC).

the Po Delta Park borders and within the Province of Ferrara, which paid in the last years great attention to bike tourism, developing a broad network of cycling routes with services dedicated to bike lovers, with information easily accessible through the web. As for the task of designing the itinerary, a fundamental tool has been the Bike Book downloadable from the Official Tourist Information Site of the province, because it provides detailed practical information on each trail, such as maps, length, difficulty, path or road surface, bike-friendly accommodation facilities, in addition to some tips for visits and experiences.

I.2 The itinerary

I.2.a.

The detour diverges from the route of the Via Romea Germanica at the crossing of Polesella; after the bridge, we will follow on the Emilian side of the Po for 34,5 km the Destra Po cycle path, section of the EuroVelo 8 – Mediterranean Route, up to Ariano Ferrarese, where we will cross the Po di Goro, its southernmost branch, to reach the archaeological site of San Basilio (Ariano nel Polesine, Rovigo). It is located on the so-called Isle of Ariano because it is surrounded by river branches. Besides its peculiar landscape, it is an important archaeological site with several habitation stages. Its first phase was that of a flourishing 'international' port-emporium, like the more famous Spina, dating back to the VI century BC. It was inhabited mostly by Etruscans with minor presence of Greeks and Venetians and benefitted from its geographical position (Negrelli *et alii* 2013; Gambacurta 2014; Iadicicco *et alii* 2022, 53-56): indeed, as we will see better with regard to Massenzatica, it rose close to the coastal dune belt IIa according to the classification of Ciabatti (Ciabatti 1966), and on the Po di Ariano near to the mouth. In the light of this favourable position, it developed as relevant harbour and exchange place between the Po Plain and the Adriatic routes before the growth of Adria. After a decline stage or even an abandonment, a Roman minor settlement grew along the via *Popilia/Annia*, the road connecting Ravenna and *Altinum*, and should be identified with the *mansio* (*vicus* according to some scholars) *Hadriani* mentioned in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (*TP* IV 1; Uggeri 1989, 119-120; Uggeri 2012, 155; Negrelli *et alii* 2013, 78; Cremonini 2022,

4 | Romanesque church of S. Basilio, IX c. AD, Ariano nel Polesine; Roman sarcophagus, II-III c. AD, from the archeological area of S. Basilio, Ariano nel Polesine, kept in the local Cultural center (Photos: Parco Regionale Veneto del Delta del Po).

76). It was continuously inhabited in Late antiquity with an early Christian complex and later in Early Middle-Ages, as attested by the Romanesque church. It emerges already from these few words that the history of the site is very interesting, and its cultural heritage is rich and accessible to many target groups. In fact, the major evidence of the Roman settlement consists in a building usually called *villa*, but probably to be seen as a *mansio* connected to the road, and another building, interpreted as a *horreum* (II-III century AD) beside the early Christian complex, one of the oldest in the region (IV century AD). What is particularly relevant for our purpose is to underline that there is an archaeologic visitable area including the necropolis and the early Christian complex (see the website for St. Basilio in Ariano/Archaeological area), close to the museum. It has an exhibition conceived in an innovative way to bring visitors into the ambiance, characterized by the settlement, the road, the river, the sea, and their interconnections, and their changes for a long timelapse, from Late Bronze Age to Early Middle Ages (see the website or St. Basilio in Ariano/Cultural center; Facchi et al. 2022, 208-210). Among the archaeological pieces, there are also two Roman inscribed monuments, a stele of the type called 'a disco', dating back between the end of the I century BC and the beginning of the I century AD (Zerbinati 1984, 150), and a later sarcophagus of the II-III century AD, yet unpublished, as to our knowledge. In the context of the exhibition, they are valuable witnesses of the ancient society bearing names of inhabitants and information about their life: for instance, the marble sarcophagus is a type of monument widely attested in the ancient Po Delta but chosen by families having good means (Rebecchi 1986, 136-145).

I.2.b.

After the visit to San Basilio, we will proceed for a few km on the path over the northern bank of the Po di Goro. After crossing it in Mesola (the center of the Natural Park), we will join the guided excursions in a particular reserve area called Boscone della Mesola (Great Mesola Wood). This is an outstanding example of biodiversity and one of the largest and best-pre-

6 | Fossil dunes in Massenzatica of the Bronze Age. Photo Archivio fotografico Provincia di Ferrara.

served remains of the forest broadly diffused on the northern Adriatic coast in the past (Uggeri 1989, 14). The wood is still frequented by bird species, which usually do not frequent anymore in this environment, and by native dune deer. As for the ancient landscape, the Fossil Dunes of Massenzatica Reserve, on the other side of the National Route 309, is worth visiting for the goal of this itinerary (see the website of Po Delta/Parks and Natural reserves). These dunes, already mentioned about San Basilio, formed still in the Bronze Age along the shoreline and they are valuable for establishing the coastlines during the centuries (Ciabatti 1966; Bondesan 1990, 16). Unfortunately, as many other traces of nature in antiquity, they have been often obliterated and therefore this site is particularly valuable under this point of view. Indeed, Massenzatica and San Basilio are located on the same dune line IIa according to the classification of Ciabatti (Ciabatti 1966, 383-384) and now are separated only by the Po di Goro, allowing the visitors to appreciate the continuity or changes in the landscape of this area. The context should have been not so different in antiquity, because the Roman settlement in present-day Massenzatica and that of San Basilio were on the opposite banks of the *Olana/e* along the *via Popilia/Annia*, which crossed the river, with a bridge or by boat (Uggeri 2012, 153-155). Both settlements were situated on the same coastal dune belt, on which also the main road was traced in the Late Republic; this became a fundamental element of the 'new' Roman landscape, as attested also by a milestone found around 10 km southernly in Ponte Maodino (Codigoro), always on the same dune line (AE 2009, 393; Donati 2009; Uggeri 2012, 137-140).

I.2.c.

The last asset of our tour is reachable by a stretch of the Adriabike route, which 25 km leads us from the Massenzatica Reserve to Comacchio, the most important town in the Delta. In addition to the high value of the historical city center, it houses the newly opened Ancient Delta Museum. Thanks to modern technologies, scenography, and reconstructions of contexts and

even olfactory paths, it leads the visitor most appropriately not only to appreciate beautiful objects but rather to experience the entire ancient territory and its inhabitants. In light of our focus, attention will mainly be paid to the Etruscan and Roman sections, the first dedicated to the already mentioned Spina, the second showcasing the exceptional discovery of the wreck of Valle Ponti, a Roman ship with perfectly preserved cargo dating back to the end of the I century BC (Berti 1990). Its relevance consists of course in the rarity of such findings but even more in the type of the ware, like shoes, wood items, and other personal belongings, which accompany the visitors into the life of their ancient owners (see the Ancient Delta Museum website/Roman ship). The museum has also an open-air section, located in Stazione Foce, on the western bank of the Valli di Comacchio, a few kilometres inland. The place is easily reachable with a panoramic cycle path along the Valli and is near the actual site of Spina. The museum is the result of a long project of experimental archaeology conceived for 'rebuilding' the ancient emporium; this has been done as precise as possible to provide the visitors with a view over a landscape similar to the one an ancient merchant, Etruscan, or Greek saw in Spina. Of course, this section of the museum makes sense if combined with the section of the 'traditional' museum dedicated to the findings from Spina, above all the exceptional collection of Attic vases, testifying the rich emporium reality of that town. Not far from Stazione Foce is the late-antique archaeologic complex of Santa Maria in Padovetere, located on the major branch of the Po in the Etruscan period, called *Eridanus* or Po di Spina, which deactivated in the VI century when the *monasterium* was built (Cremonini 2022, 81-82). The site is centred on a church and a baptistery, but the excavations of that area have discovered other structures and some material witnessing an earlier occupation stage, to be interpreted as a minor settlement of the Roman imperial age continuously inhabited, where the *monasterium* was built under the Goths and then replaced by a new one during the Byzantine period (Corti 2007; Cesarano, Corti 2017. This does not surprise, because there were several small-sized settlements and *villae* along the main coastal road (Uggeri 1989, 69-77). Unfortunately, the site of Santa Maria in Padovetere is usually not accessible, while it would be very meaningful for giving the visitors the idea of human occupation continuity of a settlement till the Early-Middle Ages, as in San Basilio. Moreover, the archaeological potential of the area is high, as attested by the recent discovery of three late antique ships (Cesarano, Corti 2017, 353-357).

II. Meaningful travel itineraries and sustainability at work: the rurAllure project

As already stated in the introduction, with this short essay we intended to underline the possibility to strengthen the relationship between ancient history and slow tourism in the vicinity of established pilgrimage paths, by emphasizing the need to integrate sustainability (both environmental and social) into the planning phase of tourist experiences. The research framework and context, rurAllure, an H2020 project for the development of a cooperation and support action enhancing the networking capabilities of small rural museums and heritage sites in the vicinity of transnational pilgrimage routes (see more details in other articles within this special issue), has allowed us to imagine how to cope contemporary bike tourism needs with meaningful cultural content. Pilgrimage and in general walking tourism are expanding sectors, with

7 | Hypothetical reconstruction of the ancient Spina, in the open-air section of the Museo del Delta Antico, and the Museum in Comacchio. Photo: Archivio di Delta Po Tourism.

increasing demand for services along the routes. In some cases, when the slow tourism infrastructure is well developed and maintained, these linear cultural routes become important local development magnifiers, possibly impacting the economic opportunities for the populations of the crossed regions. Depending on the stage in the lifecycle of the pilgrimage route, its development potential might be hindered by over-tourism side effects (as on the last stage of the Santiago Pilgrimage way) or, on the contrary, by little frequentation rates lowering the interest for public and private stakeholders' engagement. For resident communities, the benefits of pilgrimage trails reside in the economic impact they can ensure locally, mainly through accommodation.

The assumption underpinning the rurAllure project approach is that a wider area in the vicinity of the pilgrimage way could benefit from it if new products and cultural experience opportunities are designed and implemented, able to lure walking tourism passionate and let them stay longer to discover the surroundings also using other slow tourism travel means. To demonstrate the benefits and potentials related to the proximity of pilgrimage trails, we have designed a possible alternative itinerary by bike, starting from one of the stages of the Via Romea Germanica in the Ferrara province (Italy). Bike tourism infrastructures have gained a strategic role in this specific area of the region and some of the bikeable itineraries overlap ancient Roman roads or the pilgrimage way itself, thus facilitating the development of a slow cultural tourism option for hikers or pilgrims looking for enriching their experience while on the road. Ancient history has been used as a fil rouge not only to design a featured trip in the proximity of Via Romea Germanica but also to underline the role of cooperation and networking among stakeholders of both tourism (for instance bike rentals) and the culture and museums services. The area is rich in archeological sites and in ancient settlements that just need to be coordinated as a single product with themed offerings.

To conclude, the resulting green-friendly touristic offer allows us to appreciate the environment around the paths as well as the cultural heritage located in rural areas, far from the most popular tourist routes, thus contributing to lowering tourism pressure on highly frequented destinations (in our case the province capital cities Ferrara and Ravenna). Furthermore, the chosen theme around ancient history and related cultural landscape, calls for increasing research and transfer of knowledge on the iconic identity traits of this territory (the Po Delta area). Finally, we argue that through this exercise we have operated accordingly to the main role of a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe (CM/Res(2013)66):

> [...] shall contribute to reinforcing the potential of [...] cultural co-operation, sustainable territorial development, and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture, and values and the discovery of less well-known destinations. It shall strengthen the democratic dimension of cultural exchange and tourism through the involvement of grassroots networks and associations, local and regional authorities, universities, and professional organizations. It shall contribute to the preservation of a diverse heritage through theme-based and alternative tourist itineraries and cultural projects.

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Abstract

When it comes to cultural tourism studies, sustainability, and environmental protection are often addressed in the framework of tourist flows management accessing cultural attractions. However, studies emphasizing the need to integrate this analytical dimension into the planning phase of tourist experiences are less common. The European project "rurAllure," aiming at the promotion of rural museums and heritage sites in the vicinity of European pilgrimage routes, provides an opportunity to consider the development of slow tourism itineraries that allow hikers and pilgrims not only to cross regions but also to stay overnights along the route and discover the richness of the surrounding territories. In this approach, the concept of sustainability goes beyond merely environmental protection. It also includes the social dimension of mutual exchanges with residents and the sustainability side of cultural sites visiting practices that ensure a more balanced distribution of the economic impact of tourist flows. After introducing the conceptual approach to the relationship between tourism, pilgrimage, and ancient history from a sustainable practices perspective, the paper presents a practical example of how to plan a cycling tourism experience starting from the official itinerary of the Via Romea Germanica in the Po Delta River area.

keywords | Slow Tourism; Pilgrimage; Ancient History; Via Romea Germanica.

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Un pellegrinaggio 'archeologico' di fine Quattrocento

Bernardo Michelozzi e Bonsignore Bonsignori in Anatolia e nell'arcipelago (1497-1498)

Ludovico Rebaudo

Bernardo Michelozzi (1455-1519) e Bonsignore Bonsignori (1468-1525) hanno viaggiato nel Levante per un anno, fra l'agosto 1497 e il settembre 1498. Lo scopo del viaggio era la visita dei luoghi santi e la ricerca di manoscritti rari, ma esso si è trasformato, soprattutto grazie allo spirito di osservazione e agli interessi antiquari del Bonsignori, in un'importante fonte di notizie sul patrimonio antico dell'Anatolia e dell'arcipelago greco alla vigilia del Rinascimento. Il viaggio ha attirato l'attenzione degli studiosi già nell'Ottocento (Del Lungo 1867, 73, nota 1) ed è censito nei repertori della letteratura odeporica in Oriente (*Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae* 1890, nr. 453; Ganz-Blättler 1990, 398 con bibliografia; Yerasimos 1991, 121-122), ma è diventato celebre grazie a un articolo di Eve Borsook, che ne ha ampliato la reputazione fino a trasformarlo nel viaggio umanistico per eccellenza dopo Ciriaco d'Ancona (Borsook 1973). La trascrizione integrale del diario e delle lettere del Bonsignori, che il collega Bruno Figliuolo mi ha cortesemente fornito (v. § 2), ha reso possibile un esame completo dei contenuti archeologici e antiquari (Rebaudo 2016), che riprendo qui con gli aggiornamenti resi possibili dalla ricca letteratura apparsa nel frattempo.

I. I viaggiatori

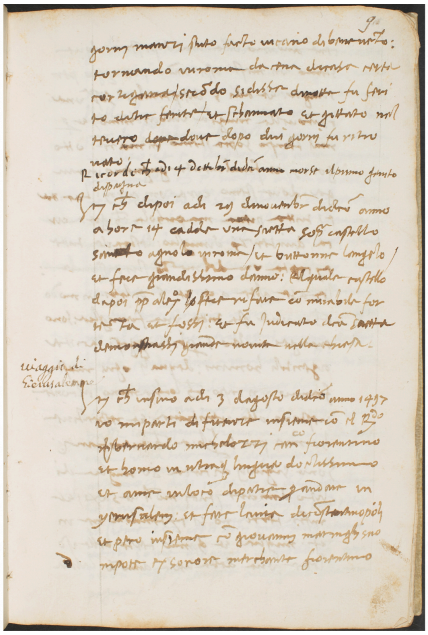
I.1. Bernardo di Michelozzo Michelozzi (1455-1519). Figlio minore dell'architetto e scultore Michelozzo Michelozzi, dottore in diritto canonico (1482), canonico della cattedrale di S. Maria del Fiore (1489), era stato il precettore di due figli di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Giovanni (1475-1521), il futuro Leone X (1513-1521), per oltre un decennio; Piero il Fatuo (1472-1503) per un periodo più breve (1479-1480), quando i rapporti fra Angelo Poliziano e Clarice Orsini si erano fatti difficili (Della Torre 1902, 774; Borsook 1973, 145; Pellegrini 2010). Dopo l'elezione del suo pupillo al soglio fu cameriere segreto e referendario apostolico. La sua carriera raggiunse il culmine il 15 novembre 1516, quando Leone X lo nominò vescovo di Forlì, sembra grazie anche all'interessamento del Bonsignori, che era allora membro della Segreteria Apostolica (Corfiati 2016). I suoi interessi umanistici sono noti soprattutto grazie al carteggio con l'amico Francesco Pucci, recentemente riesaminato (Corfiati 2020). Alla partenza per il viaggio è un ricco e colto prelato quarantenne fedele al partito mediceo, simpatizzante del

Savonarola (di conseguenza poco in sintonia con la fazione al potere a Firenze), già malato di gotta. In itinere è indubbiamente il capo-comitiva, ai cui ordini si prodigano gli altri membri della spedizione, di cui sembra essere stato il promotore e forse, in parte, il finanziatore.

I.2. Bonsignore di Francesco Bonsignori (1468-1530). Uomo di chiesa anch'egli, ma di nascita e condizione più modeste (Borsook 1973, 145-148; Figliuolo 2009). La sua fama fra gli studiosi del mondo antico è legata alla lettera che il 24 gennaio 1506 scrisse a Bernardo, annunciandogli la scoperta del *Laocoonte*. La lettera è, probabilmente, la seconda in ordine di tempo dopo quella (senza data) di Filippo Casavecchia a Francesco Vettori, ma è la sola che abbia tramandato il giorno preciso del rinvenimento: il 14 gennaio (testi ora in Maffei 1999, 100-101, nrr. II.1-2; sulla scoperta del *Laocoonte*: Volpe, Parisi 2009). La sua relativa fortuna, comunque continuamente accresciuta nel tempo, deve molto alla benevolenza di Giannozzo Pandolfini (1450-1525), vescovo di Troia, che nel 1491 gli procurò i benefici delle cappellanie perpetue di S. Andrea in S. Maria del Fiore, di S. Eustachio nella chiesa di S. Simone a Firenze, oltre a quella della parrocchiale di Panzano in Chianti (Figliuolo 2009, 25-29; Sartore 2019, 21). Nel 1495 Ludovico Martelli lo nominò notaio apostolico (Figliuolo 2009, 30). Perché Bernardo lo abbia scelto per accompagnarlo non sappiamo. Il suo ruolo durante il viaggio appare quello di "cancelliere", cioè di scrivano. In generale è lui che tiene il gruppo degli amici fiorentini al corrente degli avvenimenti principali e talora, come un vero e proprio segretario, copia le lettere di Bernardo. Dopo il rientro a Firenze mantenne strettissimi rapporti sia con i Michelozzi che con i Medici. Fra il 1502 e il 1504 visse in casa di Bernardo, per migliorare la conoscenza delle lingue antiche. Nel 1504 si trasferì a Roma al seguito del cardinale Giovanni e dal 1513 lavorò in Curia. A partire dal 1516 le sue lettere sono firmate dalla Segreteria Apostolica.

I.3. Giovanni Maringhi (?-1507). Il solo fra gli altri membri della comitiva di cui abbiamo una minima conoscenza. Sappiamo da Bonsignore che era figlio di una sorella di Bernardo (Borsook 1973, 149, nota 19). Nel 1497 doveva avere circa venticinque anni e risiedeva a Pera, il quartiere a nord di Costantinopoli dove aveva sede la maggior parte dei mercanti stranieri e dove egli operava come agente dei Medici e di altri fiorentini, far i quali Niccolò Michelozzi (1444-1526), il fratello maggiore di Bernardo (Randolph Bramlette Richards 1932, 136; Ilardi 2007, 120; v. anche § 2). La prima attestazione della sua attività è in una lettera del notaio ser Pace di Bombello del 13 luglio 1495 (Borsook 1973, 149, nota 19). Lo stesso notaio lo definisce "il più abile giovane fiorentino" che vi fosse in Costantinopoli (Brown 2008, 247, nota 75). Morirà il 22 gennaio 1507, probabilmente non ancora quarantenne, lasciando dietro di sé beni per 97.000 ducati (Houssaye Michienzi, Lassalle 2021, 79-80, con trascrizione dell'inventario). Nel 1498 seguì la comitiva fino a Bursa, poi tornò a Costantinopoli. Le lettere di Bonsignore ci danno l'impressione di un giovane dotato di senso pratico e, all'occorrenza, spregiudicato: è lui che risolve la maggior parte dei problemi logistici dei viaggiatori.

I.4. Altri. Alcuni altri membri della comitiva emergono dalla corrispondenza. Bonsignore menziona un ragazzo di origine siciliana ("el ciciliano"); un "Tomaxino" o "Masino" che potrebbe



1 | Incipit del *Viaggio di Gierusalemme* di Bonsignore Bonsignori. Firenze, BNCF, ms. Magliabechiano XIII.93, c. 9r.

essere il "Tomasino" di cui Giovanni Meringhi parla in una lettera a Niccolò Michelozzi del 10 agosto 1501 come di un giovane valletto raccomandatogli da Bernardo (Borsook 1973, 152, nota 45); un "Ghazetto", forse un rampollo della famiglia fiorentina Gazzetti, dato il soprannome (Bonsignore, in Pesaro, 23 agosto 1497: GC 29.99, c. 2: v. § 2). Durante il viaggio Masino e Ghazetto sono definiti paggi, quindi non erano più che adolescenti.

II. Le fonti

La ricostruzione degli aspetti archeologici del viaggio è possibile grazie all'eccezionale qualità delle fonti, una circostanza che lo distingue della gran parte dei viaggi nel Levante quattro e cinquecenteschi. Le fonti consistono essenzialmente in tre gruppi di testi, tutti conservati alla Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF):

1) Il resoconto di viaggio di Bonsignore, contenuto nel ms. Magliabechiano XIII.93, cc. 9r-53v (d'ora in poi: *Itiner.*; [Fig. 1]).

2) 15 lettere *in itinere* di Bernardo a Niccolò Michelozzi, ripartite fra il ms. Ginori Conti 29.55, cc. 42r-59 (d'ora in poi: GC 29.55) e la Cassetta Nuove Acquisizioni 1395/22, cc. 1r-3v (d'ora in poi: CNA 1395/22).

3) 14 lettere *in itinere* di Bonsignore a Niccolò Michelozzi nel ms. Ginori Conti 29.99, cc. 2r-18r (d'ora in poi: GC 29.99).

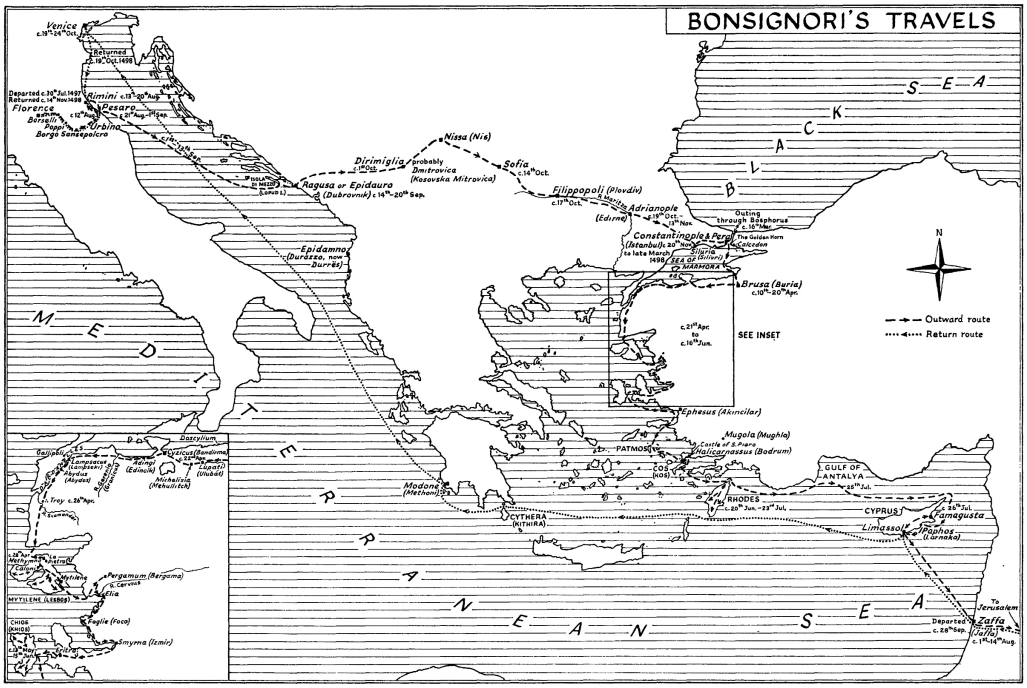
L'*Itinerario* del Magliabiechiano porta il titolo di *Viaggio di Gierusalemme*, | *fatto e scritto da prete Buonsignore di Francesco Buonsignori, fiorentino, nel 1497,* | *e sue memorie di cose*

seguite in Firenze fino all'anno 1554. Fa parte di una cronaca di Firenze, la cui prima annotazione risale al 26 dicembre 1489 (c. 1r). Dopo la descrizione del viaggio la cronaca riprende fino al 27 dicembre 1525 (cc. 54r-133r). Morto il Bonsignori, il codice passò al nipote Francesco di Andrea Bonsignori. Costui ha annotato la data di morte dello zio, il 6 gennaio 1530 (c. 129r), e ha riempito le carte bianche con ricordi che proseguono fino al 1554, più un'annotazione isolata del 1565 (cc. 134-180). La parte di Bonsignore è autografa, scritta con il medesimo inchiostro, quindi verosimilmente copiata da una precedente minuta. Il codice è ora disponibile in libero accesso nella collezione BNCF di Internet Archive; descrizioni: Figliuolo 2009, 25-26, nota 1; Manus online, Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Magliabechiano, XIII.93.

L'itinerario è stato composto, secondo quanto Bonsignore annota nella clausola finale, per compiacere un amico ("ho voluto ad satisfactione d'uno amico descriver tutta questa gita in le chose più notabile": c. 53r). Copre l'intero viaggio, ma la scrittura è molto posteriore, forse di dieci e più anni. Le annotazioni di carattere antiquario e archeologico vi sono abbastanza frequenti, ma le tappe sono riportate in modo talora vago, spesso senza data, e comunque le date raramente coincidono con quelle che si ricavano dalle lettere. Per la ricostruzione del percorso è utile fino a un certo punto, tranne che per le parti non coperte dalle lettere, dove è fonte unica.

Le lettere di Bernardo sono in latino con inserti in volgare. Eve Borsook, infastidita dal tono supponente, definisce la lingua "a stuffy mixture of Latin and Italian" (Borsook 1073, 148). È raro, in effetti, che esse contengano elementi interessanti. Vi leggiamo per lo più notizie sulla salute dello scrivente, richieste e invio di saluti, proteste contro la pigrizia di Niccolò nel rispondere. Di rado Bernardo si prende la briga di riferire al fratello "*quae viderit de coelo, de locorum incolis, de moribus, coeterisque id genus*", e solo nella prima parte del viaggio. Questo compito, del resto, spettava a Bonsignore e al "nipote", cioè al Maringhi (Bernardo a Niccolò, da Costantinopoli, 20 marzo 1498: CNA 1395/22, c. 3).

Le lettere di Bonsignore sono le prime 14 delle 238 che costituiscono il suo epistolario (elenco: Figliuolo 2009, Appendice, 89-97, nrr. 1-238), nel quale i soli destinatari sono Bernardo e Niccolò, a parte tre lettere del 1517, una delle quali a Leone X (nrr. 211, 228, 233). Le lettere *in itinere* coprono un arco cronologico compreso fra il 12 agosto 1497 (nr. 1, da Pesaro: GC 29.99, cc. 2r-3r) e il 9 novembre 1498 (nr. 14, da Badicroce: GC 29.99, c. 18r-v). In origine erano certamente di più: sono frequenti i richiami a lettere con date diverse da quelle conosciute. Poiché in base a un preciso accordo tra i viaggiatori e i loro amici tutta la corrispondenza era inviata a Firenze in doppia copia, una via terra, l'altra via mare, in alcuni casi si conservano entrambi gli originali (Borsook 1973, 146). Le lettere di Bonsignore, al contrario di quelle di Bernardo, sono esclusivamente in volgare, lunghe, vivaci e circostanziate. Il giovane riferisce le vicissitudini e gli imprevisti del viaggio; parla del cibo e degli alloggi; descrive i luoghi, il carattere degli abitanti, le risorse economiche delle città. Le annotazioni di carattere archeologico sono inizialmente sporadiche, poi aumentano progressivamente, fino a culmina-



2 | Itinerario del viaggio nel Levante di Bernado Michelozzi e Bonsignore Bonsignori, 1497-1498. Ricostruzione di E. Borsook (da Borsook 1973, 147).

re nella lunghissima descrizione del tempio di Adriano a Cizico e della città di Troia. Sono fonti preziose per la storia dei siti durante l'età di mezzo (*infra*, § 4).

Il destinatario delle lettere, Niccolò Michelozzi (1444-1526), è stato un personaggio di rilievo nella storia fiorentina fra Quattro e Cinquecento (Isemberg 1982; Viti 2010a; Viti 2010b). Giovanissimo, nel 1466 dovette raggiungere il padre a Chio, che vi si trovava al servizio dei Giustiniani ed era malato, andando incontro a notevoli traversie durante il viaggio di ritorno (Rubinstein 1976). Dal 1469 risulta iscritto all'Arte dei Giudici e dei Notai, di cui nel 1496 fu Proconsolo (Viti 2010b, 257-258). Dal 1471 è attestato al servizio di Lorenzo il Magnifico e dal 1476 ebbe il titolo di segretario all'interno della cancelleria privata medicea, svolgendo probabilmente un ruolo fondamentale di collegamento con le autorità pubbliche (Arrighi, Klein 1994, 151-155). Nel 1512, col ritorno al potere dei Medici, prese il posto di Niccolò Machiavelli nell'ufficio di segretario della Seconda Cancelleria pubblica. Fino al 1520, quando per ragioni di età lasciò l'incarico, fu protagonista di quasi tutti i principali eventi politici. Per quanto ci riguarda, le risposte di Niccolò, sia a Bernardo che a Bonsignore, sono tutte perdute, tranne due (BNCF, Mss. Ginori Conti 29.67, cc. 24, 64).

III. L'itinerario

La ricostruzione dell'itinerario è agevole per i primi due terzi, ovvero fino all'arrivo a Chio nel maggio del 1498. In seguito, mancando le lettere di Bonsignore dal 18 maggio al 20 ottobre 1498, le cose si fanno più difficili. Per l'arrivo in Palestina, la visita dei luoghi santi e il viaggio di ritorno fino all'arrivo a Venezia il 19 ottobre occorre basarsi sul racconto dell'*Itinerario*, che, come detto, è spesso fastidiosamente vago. Eve Borsook ha ricostruito in modo attendibile la sequenza delle tappe (Borsook 1973, 152-174), illustrata nella carta [Fig. 2]; la sua cronologia richiede invece qualche correzione (v. Yerasimos 1991, 121-122) che da essa dipende. La scansione temporale è riassunta di seguito. La sequenza completa e corregge la tabella pubblicata in Rebaudo 2016, 645-647. Per ciascuna tappa sono indicate le fonti.

1497

29 luglio | partenza da Firenze: Bonsignore, 12 agosto (GC 29.99, cc. 2v-3r); *Itiner*. c. 9r: partenza 3 agosto, errato.

30 luglio | Poppi: Bonsignore 12 agosto (GC 29.99, cc. 2v-3r).

31 luglio | Borgo San Sepolcro: Bonsignore, 12 agosto (GC 29.99, cc. 2v-3r).

1 agosto | Urbino: Bonsignore, 12 agosto (GC 29.99, cc. 2v-3r).

2-11 agosto | Rimini: Bernardo, 2 agosto (GC 29.55, c. 45r); Bonsignore, 12 agosto (GC 29.99, cc. 2v-3r).

12 agosto - 1 settembre | Pesaro: Bonsignore 12 agosto (GC 29.99, cc. 2v-3r); Bernardo 16 agosto (GC 29.55, c. 43r); 27 agosto (GC 29.55, c. 44r); 1 settembre (GC 29.55, c. 45r); *Itiner.* c. 9r: a Pesaro fino al 5 settembre, errato.

1-11 settembre | Navigazione da Pesaro a Ragusa, via Isola di Mezzo: Bonsignore, 16 settembre (GC 29.99, c. 4r); Bernardo, 16 settembre (GC 29.55, c. 49r).

11-21/22 settembre | *Rauga* [Ragusa/Dubrovnik, HR]: Bonsignore, 1 ottobre (GC 29.99, c. 5r); *Itiner.* c. 10r: partenza 13 settembre, errato.

1 ottobre | *Dirimiglia* [Mitrovica, Kossovo]: Bonsignore, 1 ottobre (GC 29.99, c. 5r).

? ottobre | *Nissa* [Niš]: *Itiner.* c. 11r. ? ottobre Sophia [Sofia/Sofija]: *Itiner.* c. 11r.

17 ottobre | *Philipopolis* [Filippopoli/Plovdiv]: Bonsignore, 5 novembre (GC 29.99, c. 20r); *Itiner.* c. 11r.

19 ottobre - 13 novembre | Andrinopoli [Adrianopoli/Edirne]: Bonsignore 5 novembre (GC 29.99, c. 20r); 4 dic. (GC 2.99, c. 6v); *Itiner.* c. 12r: "stemovi un mese con assai satisfactione".

15 novembre | *Siluria* [Selimbria/Silivri]: *Itiner.* c. 15r.

18 novembre | *Pera/Chostantinopolis* [Istanbul]: Bernardo, 5 dic. (GC 29.55, c. 53r).

1498

18 novembre 1497 - 20 marzo 1498 | Pera/Chostantinopolis [Istanbul]: Bernardo, 25 gen. (CNA 1395/22, c. 2r); 27 gen. (GC 29.55, c. 54r); Bonsignore, 28 gen. (GC 29.99, c. 8r); 20 feb. (GC 29.99, c. 9r); Bernardo, 20 marzo (CNA 1395/22, c. 3r).

7-17 aprile | *Prusia* [Prusa/Bursa]. Bernardo, 7 aprile (GC 29.55, c. 58r); Bonsignore 17 aprile (GC 29.99, c. 11r; *Itiner.* cc. 20v-22r.

18 aprile | Castello sul lago di Lupati [Uluabat Gölü]: Bonsignore, 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc.

13r-15r).
19 aprile | *Michelizia* [Mihaliç, oggi Karacabey]: Bonsignore, 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13v).
20 aprile | *Cizicho* [Cizico/Bandirna]: Bonsignore, 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r); *Itiner.* c. 22v.
21 aprile | Adingi [Edincik]: Bonsignore 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r).
22 aprile | *Lansachi* [Lampsaco/Lâpsechi]: Bonsignore 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r; *Itiner.* c. 23r.
23-24 aprile | *Abido* [Çanakkale] e Troia [Truva]: Bonsignore 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r; *Itiner.* c. 23r.
25-26 aprile | *Metinna* (Metimna/Mithymna], La Pietra [Petra], Lo Caloni [Kal-loni] in Lesbo, GR: Bonsignore 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r); *Itiner.* c. 25r.
27-28 aprile | *Metellino* [Mitilene/Mytilini] in Lesbo, GR: Bonsignore 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r).
30 aprile - ca 10 maggio | *Bergamo* [Pergamo/Bergama], Elea [Elea, presso Kiliseköy], Foglie [Focea/Foça], Smirne [Smirne/Izmir]: Bonsignore, 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r); *Itiner.* c. 28r: "infino lì [i.e. Chios] mettemo da Bursia XXII gorni".
ca 10 maggio - 15 giugno | *Scio* [Chio/Chios]: Bonsignore, 18 maggio (GC 29.99, cc. 13r-15r).
15-17-18 giugno | *Patmos* [Patmos]; Coos ovvero Langho [Kos]: *Itiner.* cc. 29r - 30v.
ca 18 giugno (?) | *Caria* ovvero *Castel San Pietro* [Alicarnasso/Bodrum]: *Itiner.* c. 30v. (il testo sembra suggerire che il sito venne visto durante il passaggio a Kos ma non toccato).
18 giugno - 23 luglio | *Rodi* [Rhodos, GR]: *Itiner.* cc. 30v-35v.
23 luglio | Imbarco per Cipro: *Itiner.* cc.36r-v.
ca 25 luglio - 1 agosto | *Papho* [Paphos], *Le Saline* [Salina], *Limissò* [Limassol], *Famagusta* [Famagosta/Ammochostos] a Cipro, CY; partenza e navigazione per *Zaffo*/Ioppe [Jaffa/Yofa, IL]: Bonsignore, 20 ottobre (GC29, 99, c. 16r); *Itiner.* c. 36v: partenza per Zaffo 31 agosto, errato.
1-14 agosto | *Zaffo/Ioppe* [Jaffa/Yofa, IL] fino al 14 agosto a bordo della nave, senza sbarcare; il 14 agosto sbarco; muore di febbre Luca de' Libri ed è seppellito a Jaffa: Bonsignore, 20 ottobre (GC29, 99, c. 16r); *Itiner.* c.
19 agosto (?) | *Ibid.*, muore di febbre Giovanni di Antonio Ninni ed è seppellito a Jaffa: Bonsignore, 20 ottobre (GC 29.99, c. 16r). La notizia è incompatibile con quanto segue.
15 agosto | *Rama* [Rameh, IL]: *Itiner.* c. 39r.
16 -20 agosto | *Ierusalem* [Gerusalemme/Jerusalem, IL] e dintorni (Santo Sepolcro e Monte Calvario, Monte Oliveto, Mone Sion: *Itiner.* cc. 39r-49r.
20-21 agosto | *Betlem* [Betlemme/Bet Leḥem, IL]: *Itiner.* cc. 49r-50v.
21 agosto | *Ierusalem* [Gerusalemme/Jerusalem, IL]: *Itiner.* c. 50v.
22 agosto | Partenza per *Zaffo* [Jaffa/Yofa, IL]: *Itiner.* c. 50v.
fine agosto | *Zaffo* [Jaffa/Yofa, IL]: *Itiner.* c. 50v.
ca 4-13 settembre | Partenza da *Zaffo* [Jaffa/Yofa, IL] per *Le Saline* [Salina] a Cipro, nove giorni di navigazione: *Itiner.* cc. 50v-51r.
13 settembre | Arrivo a *Le Saline* [Salina] a Cipro: *Itiner.* c. 51r.

14 settembre | Partenza da *Le Saline* [Salina] per Rodi, otto giorni di navigazione: *Itiner.* c. 51r.
15-22 settembre | Rodi, soggiorno di otto giorni: *Itiner.* c. 51r.
22 settembre | Partenza per *Modone* [Methoni, Messenia GR], lunga navigazione costeggiando a nord l'isola di Creta: *Itiner.* c. 51r.
fine settembre | *Isola della Sapienza* [Sapientza], il giorno successivo sbarco a Modone [Methoni]: *Itiner.* c. 51v-52r.
fine settembre - 5 ottobre | *Modone* [Methoni]: *Itiner.* c. 52r.
5-19 ottobre | Navigazione da *Modone* [Methoni]a Venezia: *Itiner.* c. 52r.
19-24 ottobre | Venezia: Bonsignore, 20 ottobre (GC 29.99, c. 16r) 24 ottobre (GC 29.99, c. 17r); *Itiner.* c 52v: 17 ottobre, errato.
24 ottobre | Partenza in nave per Pesaro: Bonsignore, 24 ottobre (GC 29.99, c. 17r). Sbarco a Rimini: *Itiner.* c. 52r.
9 novembre | Arrivo alla Badia di Croce presso Arezzo, beneficio di Bernardo, via Urbino: Bonsignore, 9 novembre (GC 29.99, c. 18r); *Itiner.* c. 53r.
14 novembre | Ingresso a Firenze: *Itiner.* c. 53r.

IV. Le tappe 'archeologiche'

IV.1. *Filippopoli* (Plovdiv).

La prima tappa significativa è *Filippopoli*, l'odierna Plovdiv. Lungo il tragitto da Sofia a Adrianopoli di Tracia, oggi Edirne, dopo aver costeggiato per un breve tratto la *Maritsa*, l'antico Hebros, i viaggiatori transitano il 17 ottobre da *Philipopolis*, "el quale messer Bernardo afferma essere dove furno le guerre civile di Ceseri et di Ponpeo (Bonsignore, 5 novembre 1497: GC 29.99, c. 20r). Bernardo confonde Filippopoli, capitale dei Traci *Bessoi* (sui quali: Sayar 2020), con Filippi, che si trova in realtà più a sud, nel comune di Kavala, periferia greca di Macedonia Orientale e Tracia. All'interno dell'abitato ci sono frammenti antichi e alcune rovine: "terra antichissima [...] sono parechi belle moschee coperte a piombo, et molti antichi marmi si truovano per epsa, et maxime graniti; et qualche vestigi di muraglie antiche" (cfr. Borsook 1973, 157; Popova 2012, 137). È la prima notazione 'archeologica' comunicata a Firenze. Taluni interpreti intendono che i marmi erano murati nelle pareti moschee. Per quanto possibile, ciò non è nel testo. Il complemento di luogo ("per epsa") è ovviamente riferito alla città ("terra"). La menzione è troppo vaga per tentare l'identificazione di specifiche presenze, che nella moderna Plovdiv sono numerose (Topailov 2012; carta archeologica interattiva: *The Ancient Stadium of Philippopolis - Preservation, Rehabilitation and Urban Renewal* 2011-2015), soprattutto per la fase tardoantica (Martinova-Kyutova 2021).

IV.2. *Adrianopoli* (Edirne).

Bernardo e Maringhi vi giungono il 19 ottobre, in compagnia di un viaggiatore originario di Ragusa; Bonsignore e gli altri membri della comitiva li raggiungono il giorno successivo. Il gruppo gode dell'ospitalità di Giovanni Giusti, un agente di Alessandro degli Albizzi, che li tratta con riguardo (Bonsignore, 5 novembre 1497: GC 29.99, ca 20r; Borsook 1973, 157, nota 70). Edirne era una città imponente [Fig. 3]: fino al 1458 era stata la capitale dell'Impero otto-

3 | Edirne, una delle porte della città in una litografia del XIX secolo (da Kuran 1996, fig. 6).

mano. Bonsignore è ammirato dalle dimensioni: "gira con le mura circha un miglio, et dentro tutta piena; et è circhundata intorno da tante case che quasi in tutto si distenda quanto Firenze". Come spesso gli accade, Bonsignori è colpito dalle manifatture, che in questo caso sono soprattutto tessili. Quanto ai monumenti, la sua attenzione è rivolta principalmente alle moschee. Nota che sono circa cinquanta, e due fra esse spiccano. La prima, che attribuisce al "signor vecchio", cioè a Mehemet II (1432-1481), è ornata di quattro minareti. Secondo Borsook (1973, 158, nota 73), seguita da Dijkema (1977, 42-44, cat. 23) e Popova (2012, 137), sarebbe la moschea dedicata da Mehemet alla terza moglie Sitt Ḫatun (ca. 1435-1467), terminata nel 1486. Si tratta invece senza dubbio della moschea di Üç Şerefeli, innalzata da Murat II (1404-1451) fra il 1438 e il 1447, la sola quattrocentesca ad avere quattro minareti (Freely 2010, 20-22; 69-70; Кононенко 2016). La seconda, "che l'ha facta questo", ovvero il sultano regnante Bayezid II (1447-1512), è la moschea del complesso ospedaliero costruito fra il 1484 e il 1488, uno degli edifici più significativi del tardo Quattrocento ottomano (Godwin 1971, 97; Kuran 1996, 122; Freely 2010, 70; Sengul 2015).

Nella lettera del 5 novembre Bonsignore osserva che in città non si vedevano rovine antiche, a parte il circuito dei bastioni. Nell'*Itinerario*, invece, descrive i tumuli che si trovavano intorno alla città o lungo la strada proveniente da Plovdiv:

> una bellectissima pianura, che dicono andava insino in sul Danubio. Et è piena di monticelli alti X o XII passi, tucti facti a posta, li quali sono sepulture di signori antichi et di Romani insino al

> tempo di Iulio, secondo dicono, affermando quelli essere e' campi farsalii. A me non pare, perché mi dimostrono troppo alti (*Itiner*. c. 11v).

È la più antica menzione dei grandi tumuli funerari della Tracia orientale, la cui tradizione copre un periodo che va dal Bronzo Medio al IV secolo d.C. (Kitov 2004; Evstatiev *et alii* 2005). Bonsignore si rende conto che si tratta di strutture artificiali e che la loro funzione è funeraria. La misura dell'altezza in passi anziché in braccia è inusuale e non facilmente interpretabile. Se Bonsignore fa riferimento all'antico passo romano, di circa 74 cm, i tumuli sarebbero alti in media fra i 6 e i 7,5 metri, una misura leggermente al di sotto della media, stimata fra i 7 e i 10 metri (Evstatiev *et alii* 2005, 158). Se intende il passetto fiorentino di due braccia, ovvero 1,16 metri, l'altezza sale fra i 9 e gli 11,5 metri, forse la misura più ragionevole. Se infine il passo è quello che si ricava dalla successiva descrizione delle mura di Rodi, il cui il perimetro complessivo, compresi il porto e il palazzo del Gran Maestro degli Ospitalieri di San Giovanni, è da lui stimato in 6500 passi, pari 2,17 miglia (*Itiner.* c. 32v), per cui si tratterebbe di un passo di circa 1,7 metri (dando per assodato Bonsignore intenda il miglio fiorentino di poco meno di 1654 metri), l'altezza dei tumuli sarebbe compresa fra i 13,5 e i 17 metri: non inverosimile, dato che i tumuli più alti raggiungono i 30 metri, ma al di sopra della media (Evstatiev *et alii* 2005, 158-159). Bonsignore registra la leggenda locale secondo cui i tumuli risalirebbero all'epoca di Cesare, perché il luogo coinciderebbe con i *campi Pharsalii*, ovvero con il luogo della battaglia di Farsalo (9 agosto 48 a.C.) fra Cesare e Pompeo, che in realtà si trova in Tessaglia. La sua obiezione, per cui i tumuli sarebbero troppo alti per poter ospitare i morti della battaglia cesariana, non è facilmente spiegabile.

IV.3. *Costantinopoli* (Istanbul).

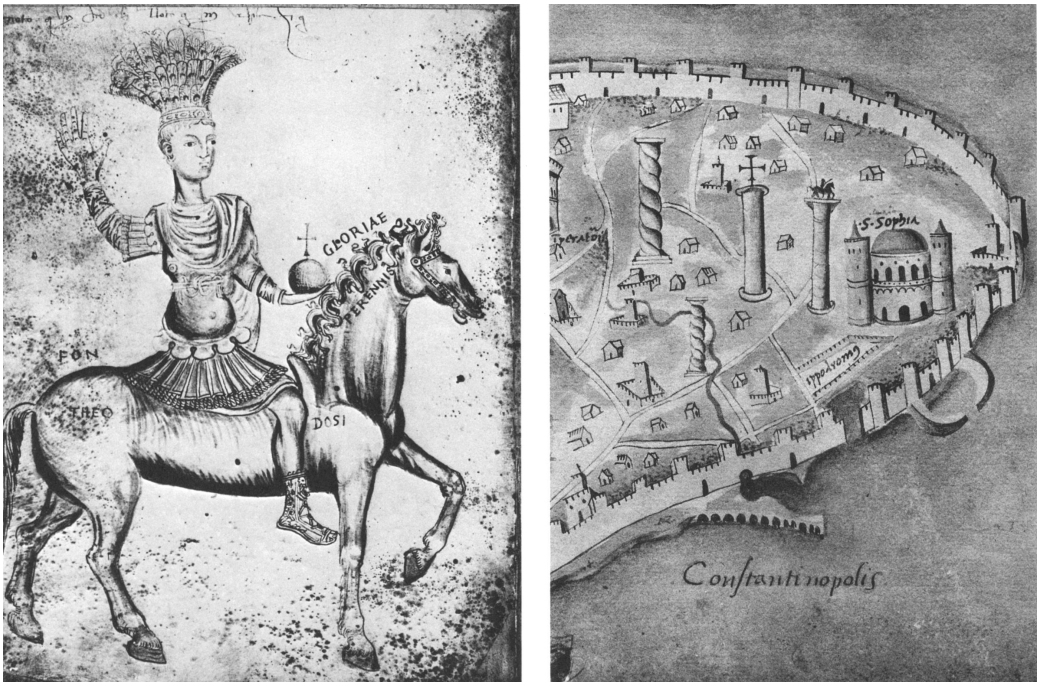
Principale tappa intermedia del viaggio, è raggiunta il 18 novembre 1497, premessa per un lungo soggiorno favorito dalla presenza di una comunità mercantile fiorentina, di cui Maringhi era membro importante (Bonsignore, da Costantinopoli, 4 dic. 1497: GC 29.99, c. 6v). Nell'*Itinerario* (c. 15r) come in altri casi la data di arrivo è errata, ovvero anticipata al 15 novembre, ma vi troviamo dei particolari topografici che mancano nella lettera: "entramo in Constantinopoli, per la porta ch'è presso al castra del signore, dove sono in su una punta di Constantinopoli cinque o sei torre". La porta, data la presenza delle torri, è senz'altro la Porta di Silivri (Silivri Kapi), presso lo Yedikule Zindanları ("Fortezza delle sette torri"), nella zona sud-ovest della città (Müller-Wiener 1977, 287, pianta A7; Philippides, Hanak 2011, 321-323).

A Costantinopoli, nel quartiere di Pera, la comitiva trascorre l'inverno, fino al 20 marzo 1498, visitando la città ripetutamente [Fig. 4]. Per la prima volta troviamo nelle carte la notizia che dei testi epigrafici greci sono stati trascritti e tradotti in latino: "in colonne et pyramide habiamo visti et scripti alchuni epigrammi greci che da messer Bernardo son facti latini; et de' greci et latini habiamo la copia" (Bonsignore, in Pera, 20 marzo 1498: GC 29.99, c. 10v). Il fatto che i testi fossero "in colonne et pyramide" autorizza a pensare alle iscrizioni degli obelischi dell'ippodromo, ma malauguratamente fra le carte Michelozzi le traduzioni non si trovano.

4 | Carta di Costantinopoli (a sinistra) e Scutari (a destra) all'inizio del XVI secolo. La carta è orientata con il sud in alto. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Orientabteilung, Carta XXVIII, 1-2, dal manoscritto *Kitabi Bahriyye* di Piri Reis, ca 1520 (Bildportal der Kunstmuseen, Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin).

Le notazioni più interessanti sono nell'*Itinerario*, anche se la scelta dei monumenti non brilla per originalità, in linea con quelle dei viaggiatori contemporanei. Fra le chiese, a parte Santa Sofia, la sola identificabile è la *Pammakaristòs*: "un altro [tempio] che hoggi lo chiamono 'el patriarchato', dove sta il patriarcha greco con tutti i suoi canonici et altre dignità" (cc. 17r-v). Assegnata al patriarcato di Costantinopoli con l'annesso complesso claustrale nel 1390, la *Pammakaristòs* era stata innalzata da Gennadio II Scholarios a sede patriarcale dopo il sacco del 1453. Vi si conservavano le reliquie di S. Eufemia di Calcedonia, di S. Salomé e di Giovanni Cristostomo. Il complesso sarebbe stato poi trasformato in moschea (Fethiye Camii) da Murad III (1574-1595) alla fine del XVI secolo (Müller-Wiener 1977, 122-124).

Le antichità ricevono da Bonsignore meno attenzione di quanta ci saremmo aspettata: "in decta città sono aqueducti, colonne coclide, obelischi, archi triumphali, ippodromi et altre molte antichità notabili et antiche" (c. 17r). Per un simile elenco non occorreva un viaggio. Circa ottant'anni prima, Cristoforo Buondelmonti (1386-1430), che fra il 1415 e il 1418 aveva



5 | Colonna di Giustiniano e statua equestre, entrambe demolite dopo la conquista ottomana di Costantinopoli nel 1453. A sinistra: disegnatore italiano, *Statua Equestre*, prima metà del XV secolo. Budapest ELTE Egyetemi Könyvtári [ELTE University Library], ms. 35, fol. 144v. A destra. C. Buondelmonti, Pianta di Costantinopoli, ca 1420 con successive rielaborazioni. Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, ms. Lat. Cl. X, 123, c. 22r. (da Lehmann 1959, figg. 1-2).

visitato Costantinopoli almeno tre volte, era stato più sensibile (Barsanti 1999). Colpisce soprattutto la mancanza di citazione delle grandi colonne onorarie imperiali, che costituivano la parte più vistosa del patrimonio antico della città, alle quali il Buondelmonti aveva dato risalto sia nella descrizione (Buondelmonti 1824, 123-124), che nella mappa allegata all'opera: la Colonna Gotica, a nord del Topkapı Sarayı, che deve il nome alla dedica a Fortuna Redux "ob devictos Gothos" (CIL III, 733), in cui gli specialisti riconoscono una possibile allusione alla vittoria di Costanzo II del 332 (Müller-Wiener 1977, 53; Sodini 1994, 47); la colonna porfiretica di Costantino, nota come Çemberlitaş ("colonna cerchiata") per la presenza degli anelli di ferro a rinforzo dei rocchi, che sorgeva al centro del foro ovale sulla Mese (Mango 1981; Mango 1990; Sodini 1994, 44-47; Calia 2013, 00); la colonna di Marciano, in marmo proconnesio, che sorge tutt'ora nei pressi dell'acquedotto di Valente e che porta una delle poche iscrizioni latine di Costantinopoli, la dedica del prefetto *Tatianus* (CIL III, 738; Müller-Wiener 1977, 54-55; Sodini 1994, 77-80); la colonna coclide di Arcadio sullo Xerolophos, nota in epoca ottomana come Dikilitaş o "Pietra conficcata", demolita nel 1715, dopo i gravi danni subiti negli incendi del 1633 e del 1660 (Kelly 2017).

6 | L'ippodromo di Costantinopoli nel 1574. Da sinistra: S. Sofia, l'obelisco di Teodosio, la colonna serpentina di Platea, il Colosso. Cambridge, Trinity College Library, ms. 0.17.2 (*Freshfield Album*), dis. 21 (Yerasimos 2000, 84).

Manca anche un'altra menzione attesa: quella della statua equestre, *auri splendore fulgens*, che sormontava la colonna di Giustiniano, il monumento costantinopolitano più noto in Italia, non solo dalle mappe del *Liber Insularum*, ma anche dai disegni di Ciriaco d'Ancona, copie del quale devono ben aver circolato a Firenze (Mango 1959, Mango 1993; Boeck 2021; Berger 2021, 15-17: [Fig. 5]). L'interesse di Bonsignore si concentra sull'ippodromo, lo Atmeydanı, la "piazza dei cavalli", che conservava il ruolo di spazio pubblico per eccellenza (nella sterminata bibliografia v. almeno Müller-Wiener 1977, 64-71; i numerosi saggi in Pitarakis 2010; Dagron 2011; da ultimo: Akyürek 2021):

> Nel mezo dello ippodromo sopradetto erono molte colonne. Sonvi due a guglia, ciò è obelischi: uno murato di pietre, che si vede sta coperto di piastre di rame; l'altro di granito, con le base di marmo biancho, con due epigrammi grieci. Et qui, sculto di mezo intaglio, el modo et ingegno chome si rizzò et fu ritto al tempo di romano inperatore. Sonvi anchora tre serpi di bronzo, | volte insieme con mirabile arte, che da alto fanno con le teste et parte di busto chome un roccetto, et sono alte circa VI bracci. Nella testa di detto ippodromo sono molte colonne, che fanno mezzo cerchio, tutte di marmo, con altre antichità assai. Ma non si possono troppo bene considerare, perché e' Turchi hanno gelosia, et saria dubbio ti facessino qualche iniuria (cc. 18v-19r).

I monumenti citati da Bonsignore sono canonici: il *Colosso*, l'obelisco di Teodosio e la colonna bronzea serpentiforme di Platea. Alla fine del Quattrocento questi famosissimi pezzi erano curiosità note a tutti i viaggiatori (Guberti Bassett 1991; Bardill 2010) ed erano ben presenti nella tradizione iconografica ottomana (Kafescioğlu 2009, 143-178; Akyürek 2021, 61-64).

L'obelisco "murato di pietre", ovvero il cosiddetto Colosso [Fig. 6], era un pendant dell'obelisco di Teodosio realizzato in blocchi di calcare e collocato sulla spina in un momento imprecisato (Pitarakis 2010, 266). L'iscrizione che ne commemora il restauro da parte di Costantino VII Porfirogenito (CIG 8703; cfr. CIL III, 1, p. 138; cfr. Mango 1951, 62-63), in occasione del quale furono applicate le lastre rame menzionate da Bonsignore, fornisce il *termine ante quem* per la sua erezione, che deve essere appunto anteriore al regno del Porfirogenito (905-959). Il testo dell'iscrizione è giunto in Occidente nel 1562 con il D*e topographia Costantinopoleos* di Pierre Gilles (1490-1555), che contiene una lunga e intricata descrizione del monumento (Gyllius 1562, 88-89, su cui Origone 2004). Bonsignore e Bernardo potrebbero averne anticipato la conoscenza di oltre mezzo secolo, almeno a Firenze, ma la trascrizione non ha lasciato tracce.

L'obelisco egizio di Teodosio [Figg. 5-6] è il gemello di quello che Augusto fece installare a Roma nel Circo Massimo e che è oggi in piazza di S. Giovanni in Laterano (Bruns 1935, spec. 30-39; Crkvenjakov 2016). Bonsignore ignora i notissimi rilievi del dado superiore, che mostrano su tutti e quattro i lati membri della dinastia imperiale in una cornice architettonica, in genere interpretata come il *kathisma* (Safran 1993, 410, 414-419; Kiilerich 1998, 33-67). Ricorda invece il rilievo della faccia nord del plinto inferiore [Fig. 7], che rappresenta le operazioni di raddrizzamento curate dal prefetto urbano Proclo (Kiilerich 1998, 69-85).

L'operazione, che deve essere parsa memorabile ai contemporanei, è descritta anche nell'iscrizione bilingue. Il testo greco parla 32 giorni di lavoro (CIG 8619; cfr. *Anth. Pal.* VI, 689 Dübner), il testo latino 'solo' di 30 (CIL III, 737). In entrambe le redazioni il nome di Proclo è stato eraso e reinciso, una singolarità messa in relazione con la sua temporanea *damnatio memoriae* del 392-395, che costituirebbe, se l'ipotesi fosse esatta, un preciso *termine ante quem* (Wrede 1966; Safran 1993, 410). La menzione ha una sua importanza. Se l'obelisco è infatti spesso citato come monumento, e già il Buondelmonti ne aveva trascritto la dedica latina (non quella greca: Buondelmonti 1824, 122-123), abbiamo qui la più antica citazione dei rilievi del plinto inferiore. L'interpretazione corretta del soggetto non è spiegabile se non con la lettura delle dediche, nelle quali la grandiosità dell'impresa è assai enfatizzata (Kiilerich 1998, 87-92; Crow 2007, 260-261, Pitarakis 2010, 249). Sono del resto più d'una le occasioni in cui Bernardo e Bonsignore gettano la spugna nell'interpretazione (v. §§ 4.5, 4.6)

L'ultima opera citata è la celeberrima colonna serpentina in bronzo di Platea (*Yılanlı Sütun*), oggi mutila delle teste, una delle quali si conserva al Museo Archeologico di Istambul (Menage 1964; Calia 2013, 293-394: [Figg. 5, 8]).

Si tratta di una base costituita da tre serpenti intrecciati (Her. 9.81.1; τοῦ τρικαρήνου ὄφιος), le cui teste guardavano in direzioni diverse, in modo che ciascuna sostenesse uno dei piedi di un tripode monumentale che le città greche dedicarono a Delfi dopo la vittoria sui persiani nel 479 a.C. (sugli aspetti archeologici: Gauer 1968, 75-96; Ridgway 1977). Una lista delle città combattenti a Platea, di cui sopravvive solo una parte, è incisa sul fusto (Liuzzi 2012). Non sappiamo quando il monumento sia giunto a Costantinopoli. Si suppone che sia

7 | Il plinto inferiore dell'obelisco di Teodosio con il rilievo rappresentante alcune operazioni di raddrizzamento da parte del Prefetto Urbano Proclo. 379-395 d.C. Situazione attuale (foto M. Cadario).

avvenuto in età costantiniana, ma non esiste alcuna menzione sicura prima della fine del XIV secolo. In ogni caso, dal punto di vista ottomano è stato per secoli l'oggetto più prezioso di Costantinopoli per il suo ruolo di talismano apotropaico. R.H.W. Stichel ne ha esemplarmente ricostruito la storia fino alla fondazione della Repubblica turca, con un eccellente corredo di fonti (Stichel 1997; sulle fonti più antiche: Mansel 1970; da ultimo, ma meno utile: Stephenon 2016). Bonsignore si limita a una succinta descrizione, ma sotto questo aspetto si trova in ampia compagnia. Nell'insieme, questa descrizione di Costantinopoli risulta un po' deludente. Oppure, forse meglio, del tutto ordinaria.

IV.4. *Cizico* (Kúzikos).

Il 20 marzo 1498, il giorno prima dell'equinozio di primavera, Bernardo, Bonsignore e i loro compagni di viaggio lasciano Costantinopoli dopo il lungo riposo invernale. A Bursa si unisce a loro Giovanni Battista Larchario, un mercante genovese che parlava perfettamente il greco e il turco. Con due cavalli e due cammelli il gruppo parte in direzione di Cizico (Kyzikos), nei pressi di Aydıncıḳ. Oltrepassati Mihaliç (Karacabey) e Bandirma, il 20 aprile 1498 raggiungono la città antica. Le cospicue rovine suscitano per la prima volta in Bonsignore un interesse genuino. La lettera che ne parla è stata scritta più di un mese dopo, a Chios (Bonsignore, 18 maggio 1498: GC 29.99, cc. 14v-15r; *Itiner*. c. 22v), non si tratta quindi di una testimonianza

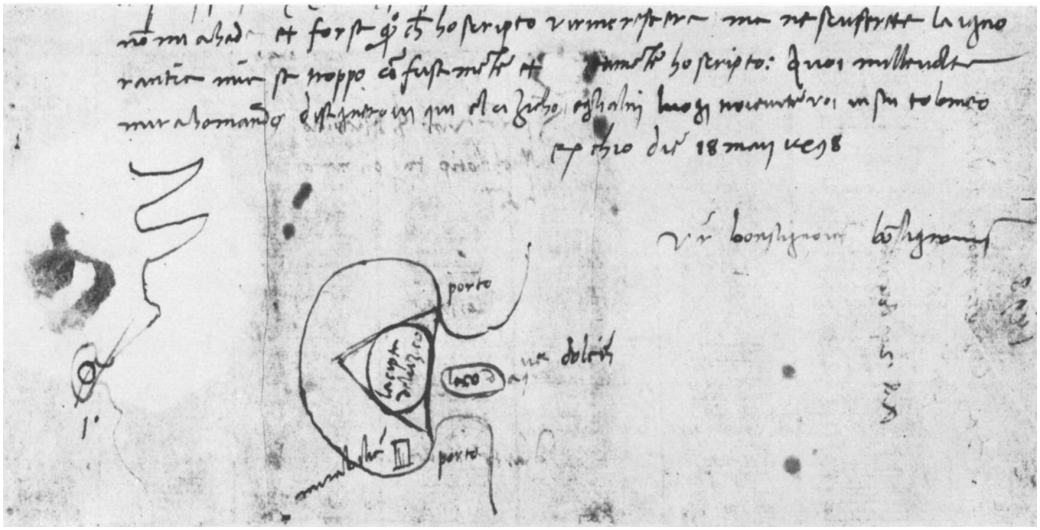
8 | La colonna serpentiforme di Platea. Situazione attuale (foto: ©CC).

dettata dall'emozione del momento, ma la descrizione presuppone comunque una visita lunga e accurata.

Cizico era colonia milesia fondata intorno la metà del sec. VIII a.C. L'abitato occupava le pendici meridionali della penisola di Arctonneso, oggi Kapıdağ, unita al continente da un istmo paludoso, non lontana dall'isola di Proconneso, dove si trovavano le cave del marmo omonimo (storia e topografia: Sève, Schlosser 2014, spec. Prêteux 2014). In età imperiale era stata la capitale della provincia di Mysia, e un porto importante.

Dal IV secolo a.C. Cizico era caratterizzata dalla presenza di due porti, uno a nord e uno a sud del Kapıdağ, collegati da un canale che attraversava la penisola [Fig. 9]. Bonsignore comunica agli amici fiorentini la singolare situazione topografica con uno schizzo in cui evidenzia la posizione delle mura triangolari rispetto agli approdi (Bonsignore, 18 maggio 1498: GC 29.99, c. 15r; Schulz 1991, 114-115). La prima parte della descrizione è dedicata all'abitato:

> La terra, secondo arbitramo, circundava quatro miglia o più, della quale si veghono quasi tutte le mura, molto belle, in triangholo; le quali pigliono parte del piano et parte del monte. Et dentro vi si veghono grandissime ruine, et molte di grandissimi edificii di marmo molto bello; ma lettere nessuna vi si truova per la quale si possa intendere che chose siano state. Entro vi sono dua chasali di Turchi, et per tutto si veghono cholonne di marmo assai (*ibid*.).

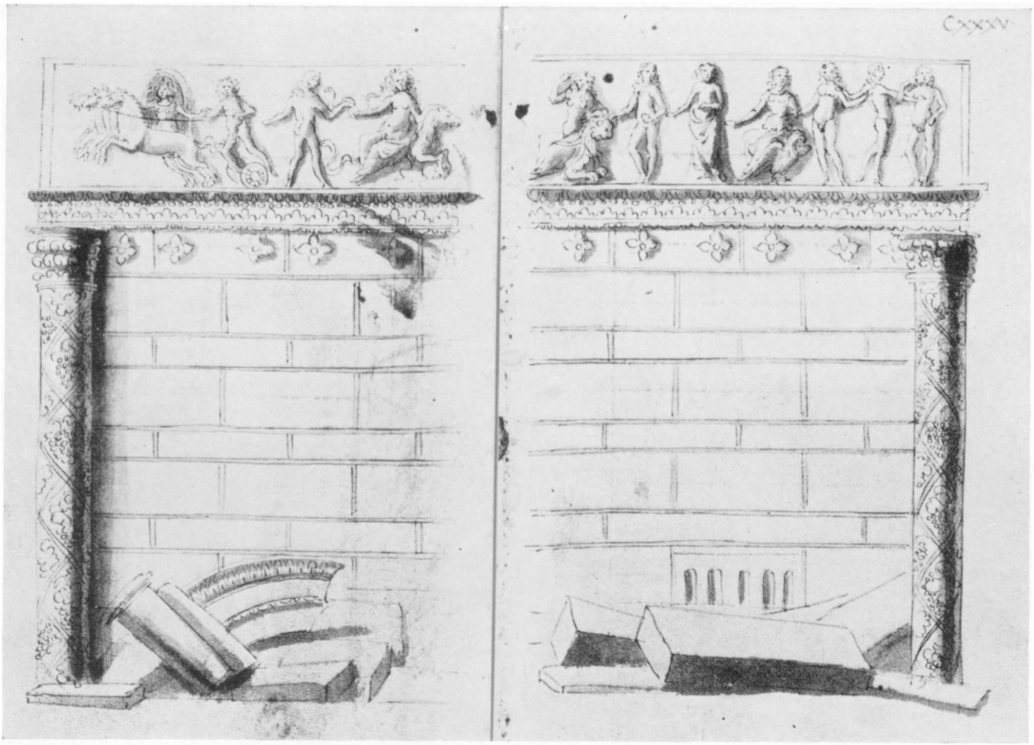


9 | Schizzo della posizione della città di Cizico fra i due porti. Bonsignore, 18 maggio 1498: GC 29.99, c. 15r (da: Borsook 1973, tav. 29a).

La presenza di case turche all'interno della cerchia ellenistica conferma la notizia riferita all'inizio del XIV secolo dal nobile catalano En Ramon Muntaner (1265-1336), governatore della città di Gallipoli fra il 1303 e il 1307. Secondo Montaner nel 1303 l'esercito ottomano aveva posto il campo invernale dentro le mura antiche (Schulz 1991, 113). La lamentata mancanza di iscrizioni all'interno della città ("lettere nessuna vi si truova") presuppone che i viaggiatori le abbiano cercate inutilmente. Senza iscrizioni, nessuna speranza di poter interpretare le rovine, al contrario di quanto abbiamo visto per l'obelisco di Teodosio.

Fuori dalle mura Bonsignore cerca i resti del tempio che oggi chiamiamo di Zeus o di Adriano (Burrell 2002-2003; Burrell 2004, 86-94). Il tempio, che sorgeva sopra un'altura la cui funzione cultuale è attestata già in età ellenistica, era uno pseudo-diptero di 46×80 m, con 8×15 colonne corinzie di ca 21 m, la cui prima fase, rimasta incompiuta, dovrebbe risalire all'età di Antonino Pio (migliore ricostruzione: Winter, Schulz 1990; più recentemente: Koçhan 2011, 22; Koçhan 2014). Lo accompagna la reputazione infondata, spesso un po' superficialmente ribadita (Ashmole 1959, 35-36; Borsook 1973, 165), di tempio più grande del mondo antico. Le sue dimensioni erano in realtà cospicue ma non eccezionali, in linea con altri templi colossali della prima età imperiale, ad esempio il tempio di Zeus Heliopolitanus a Baalbek, per non parlare del tempio di Venere e Roma sulla Velia (DeLaine 2002, 208-210).

Il tempio era comunque noto a tutti gli umanisti per essere uno dei *Mirabilia Mundi* citati nel canone interpolato del VI secolo d.C. (*Anth. Pal.* IX, 616; Malal. 279 Bonn; Nic. Chon. e *Anon. de sept. Spect. Orbis* in Phil. Byz. 41-44 Orelli). Era stato visitato nel 1431 e nel 1444 da Ciriaco d'Ancona, che ne ha lasciato due significative descrizioni (Ashmole 1956; Bodnar, Mitchell



10 | Fonzio da Ciriaco d'Ancona, *Interno del naòs del Tempio di Adriano a Cizico: colonne a rilievo e fregio*, 1490-1500. Collezione privata, ms Ashmole, cc. 34v-35r (da: Ashomole 1956, tav. 38b).

1976, 27-31; Bodnar, Foss 2003, 72-75; Koçhan, Tercanlioğlu 2017, 206-210), accompagnate da uno schizzo della facciata e da alcuni notevoli disegni con particolari dell'alzato, del fregio e della trabeazione (Ashmole 1956; Brown, Kleiner 1983, 334; Günther 1988, 17-18: [Fig. 10]).

Bernardo e Bonsignore erano sicuramente condizionati nelle loro aspettative dalle lodi del *Panegirico di Cizico* di Elio Aristide (*Orat*. 27.20). Nessun dubbio che gli scritti del retore, ben noti a Firenze dall'inizio del Quattrocento, fossero risultati accessibili a Bernardo: nove dei ventiquattro manoscritti laurenziani provengono dalla biblioteca medicea (Fontanella 2013, 209-210). Questo spiega l'entusiasmo e l'acribia con cui Bonsignore esplora, misura e descrive le rovine.

> El tempio detto è in loco eminenti alquanto, et vedesi quello essere stato schoperto della parte di sopra, et l'altitudine di quello si vede gudicamo essere bracca 50 la lungheza et bracca 60 la largheza passi circa 30, le mura tutte di marmo bellissime. Et drento vi sono meze colonne sculte tut-e con panpini, le quali fanno certi compassi et adornamenti dello templo. La porta è volta a tramontana, et nella testa del tempio è el muro doppio; fra el quale è 1 schala di marmo di largheza di bracca 1. Et sono 4 schaglioni per tutta, sempre insieme: cioè in 1 pezo di marmo 4; et

11 | Frammento di semicolonna a rilievo dal tempio di Adriano a Cizico, II secolo d.C. Kúzikos, area archeologica (Spatworth 2006, 188).

> chosì fanno in tutto la somma di 60 schaglioni. Dove nella sommità, benché non si vegha tutta, si sciende in su una parte del muro che sono pezi di marmo di bracca 5 o più, onde si vede 1 fregio di figure di rilevo che sono 14 o 16, che viene apunto nella testa del tempio. Drento, le due figure di mezo sono inmagine d'1 re et d'1 regina, et l'altre da ogni banda si vede esser imagine di dei. Vedevisi Erchole, Bacho et altri che non si conoschono. Le figure sono bellissime et quasi tutte nude, lunghe circa bracca 1½ el piano. El tempio drento non si può vedere, perché è ripieno di grandissimi marmi. Restavi anchora ritto 1 stipite della porta di marmo, lungo bracca 30 o più, intagliato intorno benissimo. Intorno a dicto tempio è 1 colonnato lungo passi 160 et largo circa 60, nel quale anchora sono in pie' 26 colonne di marmo, alte bracca 40 et grosse 10, le quale sono ciaschuna col captello et con la base da sotto, in 10 pezi, l'uno sopra l'altro, tutte lavorate a canali. Sopra vi sono e' capitelli, intagliati tanto sottilmente et bene che non si potrebbono descrivere. Et dal'una al'altra colonna sono cornice d'un pezo, che le coniungano insieme et fanno quasi 1 ballatoio, intagliate benissimo. Et questo è quanto m'è parso, benché idiotamente, di dicto tempio. È rente el mare poco più d'una balestrata, et presso vi si veghe certe ruine a lato al muro della terra, che ci par novo, quali di templi et quali di terme. Et hec de Cizico dicta sufficiant.

La descrizione è la più dettagliata che ci sia giunta prima del XIX secolo. Non per caso è stata la prima sezione del viaggio ad aver ricevuto un commento archeologico (Schulz 1991; ora Koçhan, Tercanlioğlu 2017, di minore utilità). Bonsignore dovette comunque trovare una situazione non facilmente decifrabile, dato che le misure che rileva sono problematiche. Se l'altezza di 50 braccia, ca 29 m, è plausibile, al contrario le 60 braccia di lunghezza per 30 passi di larghezza, ovvero ca 35,2 m per ca 34,8 m (in caso di passo di 1,6) o 51 m (in caso di passo di 1,7), non hanno alcun rapporto con la realtà. Quanto alle colonne, Bonsignore ne vede in piedi 26. Ciriaco ne aveva contate 33 nel 1431 e 31 nel 1444, il che dà la misura del

progressivo degrado del sito (Schulz 1995, 118). L'altezza, 40 braccia, ca 23,2 m, corrisponde approssimativamente a quella oggi stimata di 21 m. La larghezza di 10 braccia è invece implausibile, se il termine usato da Bonsignore ("grosse") si riferisce al diametro, risultando un esagerato 5,86 m. si riferisce invece alla circonferenza, il diametro sarebbe di ca 1,9 m, inferiore a quello stimato (Winter, Schulz 1990, 69-71). Le "meze colonne sculte tutte con panpini" sono senza dubbio le semicolonne a rilievo con tralci di vite di cui sopravvivono due frammenti (Winter, Schulz 1990, 67; [Fig. 11]). Ciriaco ne contò dieci, riproducendole anche in disegno a ridosso delle pareti del *naòs* [Fig. 10].

Il bassorilievo con 14 o 16 figure, di cui un re e una regina al centro, gli dei, Eracle e Dioniso è sicuramente una porzione del fregio, di cui Ciriaco ha disegnato diverse sezioni [Fig. 10]. A oggi nessun frammento sembra essere sopravvissuto. Doveva trattarsi di un fregio alto fra 85 e 90 cm, collocato all'interno del naòs, sopra le semicolonne con tralci. La porzione descritta da Bonsignore non coincide con quelle disegnate da Ciriaco, anche se sembrano riconoscibili negli schizzi delle figure appartenenti al tiaso dionisiaco e forse Eracle (Schulz 1991, 120). Nell'insieme, la descrizione di Bonsignore è un documento importante. Gli studiosi turchi che recentemente si sono occupati del tempio ne hanno fatto largo uso, a integrazione dei documenti numismatici e ai risultati delle campagne di scavo condotte negli anni Novanta, le sole di cui si abbia notizia (Koçhan 2014).

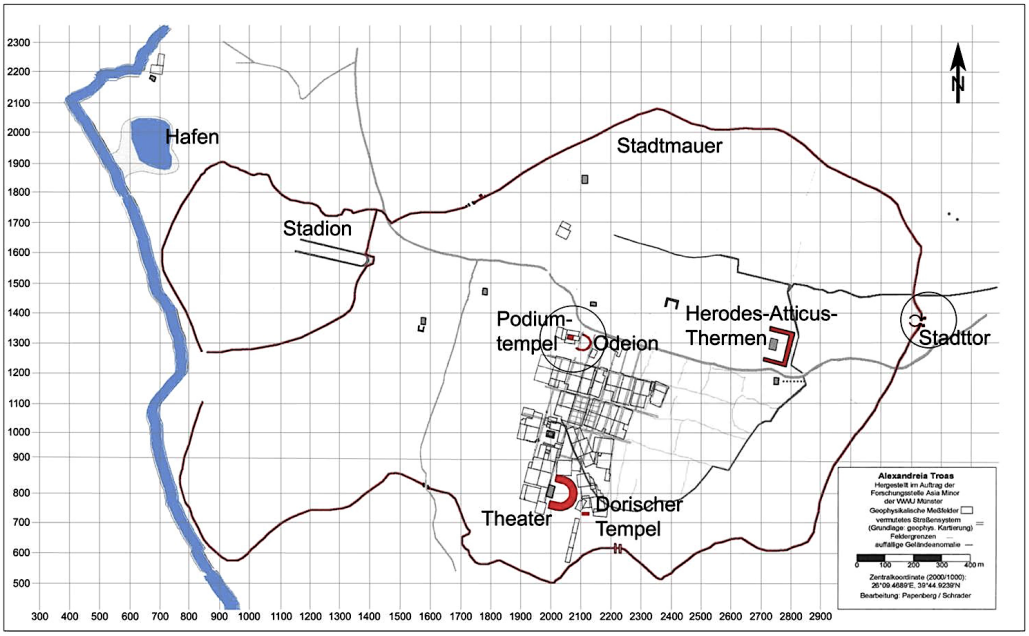
IV.5. *Troia* (Çanakkale).

Oltrepassata Cizico, Bernardo e Bonsignore percorrono la costa della Propontide, toccando le antiche città di Abido, vicino a Çanakkale sul promontorio di Nara Burn, e Lampsaco (Lapseki), passando prima il Simoenta (Dambrektschai) e subito dopo lo Scamandro (Karamenderes). Dopo quattro giorni di viaggio, con sistemazioni di fortuna, giungono al sito che loro credono essere la mitica città di Troia (Bonsignore, 18 maggio 1498: GC 29.99, c. 15r; *Itiner.* c. 22v; Borsook 1973, 167).

Non sono i primi europei a vedere l'antica città. Le condizioni di vento e di corrente all'entrata dei Dardanelli ostacolavano il transito delle navi e obbligavano a lunghe attese alla fonda all'imboccatura dello stretto, di modo che le occasioni per visitare la costa e la vicina Troia non mancavano. È tuttavia difficile dire quanti viaggiatori abbiano individuato il sito esatto. È tipico il caso del sacerdote tedesco Ludolf von Südheim (sul quale: Schnath 1987), che attraversò la Troade intorno al 1340. Costui riferisce di aver visto pochi muri in rovina sottacqua, oltre a colonne semisepolte e pietre,

> ipsa civitate [i.e. Constantinopoli] dimissa supra littus Asiae minoris pervenitur ad locum, ubi quondam illa nobilissima civitas Troia fuit sita, cuius aliquod vestigium non apparet, nisi aliqua fundamenta in mari sub aqua et in aliquibus locis aliqui lapides et aliquae columnae marmoreae subterratae (Ludolphi 1951, 29).

Nonostante sia di solito ritenuto il primo pellegrino occidentale a menzionare Troia, ciò che Ludolf in realtà vide è l'insediamento costiero di Alessandria di Troade [Fig. 12], l'odierna Eski Stambul. La città, che secondo Strabone (13.47) si chiamava originariamente Σιγία e ricevet-



12 | Pianta della città di Alexandria Troas. Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Grabung in Alexandria Troas.

te il nome di Αλεξάνδρεια Τρωάς da Lisimaco nel 301 a.C., veniva talora confusa con la Troia mitica anche nell'antichità (Weiss 1989, 153-154; Rose 2014, 283).

Ciò che oggi si vede sul terreno sono tuttavia soprattutto le rovine della città romana e bizantina (storia e topografia: Klinkott 2014; più brevemente: Öztepe 2010; Öztepe, Giese 2020). Fra i viaggiatori che si sbagliano c'è anche il Buondelmonti. Dato che, secondo quanto riferisce nel *Liber insularum*, Troia si trovava di fronte all'isola di Tenedo, è quasi certo che stia descrivendo Alessandria (Buondelmonti 1824, 117), cui si devono riferire quindi i "multa fragmenta antiquitatum" del noto disegno di cui si conserva copia nel ms. Chigiano Fv 110 della Biblioteca Vaticana. Al contrario, quando il sultano Mehemet II visitò Troia nel 1462 pronunciandovi un famoso discorso, probabilmente si trovava nel punto giusto, perché dichiara di vedere le tombe di Achille, Aiace e altri. La presenza di tumuli funerari è in effetti un elemento del paesaggio dei dintorni di Troia e della zona del Sigeo (Rose, Körpe 2016; [Fig. 13]).

Vale la pena di leggere la descrizione di Bonsignore:

> Atraversamola quasi tutta, et stimiamo, secondo si potea arbitrare, circundassi circha 12 o 13 miglia. Gran parte delle mura sono in pie': ciò è dove un pezo et dove un altro. Sono grosse 10 pie' de' mei, che così le misurai. Sono facte fuori et entro di pietre lavorate et ripiene di ghiaia et calcina. Le pietre di fuori sono abozolate, proprio chome la chasa vechia di Giuliano Ghondi, ma assai maggore. Entro vi sono moltissimi edifici antichi, tutti rovinati, e' quali non possiamo pensare sieno degli antichi di Troia, ma potius facti da qualche imperatore romano, perché vi ha-

13 | Dislocazione dei tumuli nella regione di Troia (Rose, Körpe 2016, fig. 3).

> biamo trovato in 4 o in 5 luogi lettere latine d'alchuno inperatore. Vero è che vi si vede una ruina d'uno grandissimo quadrato passi 400 o più, di pietre bellissime con bellissimi archi; et dalla parte della marina è molto alto, in modo per tutto si può vedere, et in alto ha certe cornice et fregi molto ben lavorati; et di questo dubitiamo o sì o no. Lo edificio mostra antichissimo; forse che è quello di che si dice: "quinquaginta illi talami etc. [Verg. *Aen*. II, 495]". Èvi un altro edificio, del quale si vede una volta che è lunga più d'una balestrata. E in sullo entrare trovamo in marmo lettere latine, et di queste e ditte altre habiamo copia. Alsì un altro edificio rotundo vedesi mezo non è molto grande, nel quale si vedeno luogi dove stavono statue, et sonvene dua chaschate in terra, di bracca 4 l'una o più, di marmo: bellissime, benché non molto per la antichità si possino considerare. Et in questo luogo sono lettere assai latine. Sonvi anchora molti altri edifici ruinati grandissimi, et molte volte, delle quali non si può investigare nulla. Sono le mura sua insino sulla marina, et dimostrone esser state altissime. Sonvi certi altri luogi quali informa indi teatri quali di naumachie et d'altre chose che non si intendono. Èvi certe ruine che dicono essere stati aqueducti, et di tutto a bocha meglio vi potreno raguagliare [...]. In sulla riva del quale, rente Troia, inverso Rodi, sono bellissimi bagni et callidissimi, con grandissime ruine et lettere latine. Ma fra l'altre chose, ci sono in pie' sei archi, che si vede essere stati edifici di decti bagni, e' quali et messer Bernardo et noi altri tutti affermamo mai haver visti più belli. Et alsì 1 ruina d'un gran tempio, con moltissime sepulture di marmo, de' quali ne mesurai de' lunghi bracca 5 l'uno (Bonsignori, 18 maggio: GC 29.99, 13v-14r).

Che Bernardo e Bonsignore siano transitati da Alessandria è fuor di dubbio. Lo dimostrano sia le mura che giungono fino al mare, che potrebbero riferirsi al porto augusteo, sia il riferimento al gran numero di iscrizioni latine di età imperiale ("lettere latine d'alchuno inperatore"), che

14 | Alexandria Troas, Terme di Erode Attico: arcata del grande ambiente centrale. II secolo d.C. (foto: ©CC).

in effetti sopravvivono in gran numero ad Alessandria. Due sono gli edifici riconoscibili nella descrizione: l'"edificio rotundo vedesi mezo non è molto grande, nel quale si vedeno luogi dove stavono statue", ovvero il teatro nella parte su della città; i "bellissimi bagni et callidissimi", con sei degli archi ancora in piedi, quasi certamente le rovine della Terme di Erode Attico (Klinkott 2014, 4-16), le cui arcate superstiti sono oggi in corso di restauro (Makalesi 2016; Fig. 13).

La presunta estensione del circuito murario, calcolato fra le 12 e le 13 miglia fiorentine, all'incirca fra 20 e 21,5 km, ovviamente esagerata, dimostra che con ogni probabilità essi si sono spinti nella loro esplorazione fino a Troia vera e propria, proiettandola in una dimensione mitica [Fig. 14]. L'individuazione dei monumenti citati è difficile, ma la ricerca specialistica ha finora trascurato questa testimonianza, che costituisce senza dubbio il più dettagliato resoconto che ci sia giunto prima dei viaggi degli antiquari ottocenteschi.

IV.6. *Metellino* (Mitilini).

Bernardo e Bonsignore sbarcano a Lesbo il 26 aprile, dopo aver costeggiato per due giorni l'Ellesponto, decidendo quindi di lasciare la terraferma, poco sicura anche per la presenza di focolai di peste (Bonsignori, 18 maggio: GC 29.99, 14r). Per alcuni giorni si dedicano all'esplorazione dell'isola. Visitano Metimna (Molivos), ove vedono poco. Le rovine di Mitilene nel XV secolo erano ancora abbastanza cospicue. Quattro secoli dopo, nel 1865, quando Alexander Conze esplorò Lesbo, erano praticamente scomparse (Conze 1865, 6-14). Bonsignore ci ha lasciato una breve ma non insignificante descrizione dell'isola:

> venimo al chastello di Metellino, el quale è in bello loco et forte, ma cosa notabile non vi è. Ha porto da dua bande, et vedesi in su 1 che si dice Porto Vechio certi edifici antichi et uno certo qu⟨a⟩dro di colonne marmoree che stimiano fussi un tempio et un archo triunphale con lettere latine, del quale habiamo copia. Et alsì uno edificio ruinato grandissimo, che non si vede quello

si fusi, et allato al porto un altro edificio che dicono essere stato la dogana del porto (Bonsignore, 18 maggio: GC 29.99, c. 15r).

La presenza di queste rovine era stata notata da Ciriaco nel 1444, ma dei monumenti descritti, né il "quadro di colonne marmoree che stimiamo fussi un tempio", né l'"edificio ruinato grandissimo" sono identificabili, a meno che quest'ultimo non sia il teatro. Riconoscibile è invece l'"archo triunphale con lettere latine", che nell'*Itinerario* è definito "un bellettissimo archo triomphale di Aurelio Antonino inperadore, con belli epigrammi greci et latini" (*Itiner*. c. 17r-v.). Come altre volte l'*Itinerario* è fuorviante: la tradizione non conosce archi con dediche a principi della famiglia degli Antonini o dei Severi, tanto meno con doppia iscrizione greca e latina, che peraltro nella lettera del 18 maggio, come abbiamo visto, è detta solo latina. Tutto lascia pensare che si tratti del monumento che Ciriaco aveva descritto come "conspicuum de marmore arcum, quem Tetrastilon dicunt" e di cui aveva copiato l'iscrizione (Di Benedetto 1998, 162). Dunque un arco onorario quadrifornte scomparso che risulta essere stato dedicato dal governatore della *Provincia Insularum, Aurelius Agathus Gennadius*, ai tetrarchi Diocleziano, Massimiano, Galerio e Costanzo (CIL III, 450; sul monumento: Labarre 1996, 140; cat. A 16; *The Last Statues of Roman Empire* (Database), nr. 938). Può darsi che il prenome *Aurelius* del governatore *Gennadius* (su cui: Jones *et alii* 1971, s.v. *Aurel. Agathus Gennadius* 2), noto anche per una dedica a *Mars Pater Gradivus* per la salute dei Tetrarchi nell'Isola di Kos (Vallarino, Cosentino, Beghelli 2011, 48-49), abbia generato l'equivoco in cui è caduto Bonsignori nell'*Itinerario*.

IV.7. *Bergamo* (Bergama), *Smirna* (Izmir), *Scio* (Chios), *Langho* (Kos), *Castel San Pietro* (Alicarnasso/Bodrum).
La mancanza delle lettere della seconda parte del viaggio, dopo la lunga missiva da Chio del 18 maggio, ci priva di una documentazione che doveva essere di grande interesse dal punto di vita archeologico. Fra l'altro, in corrispondenza dei mesi di giugno e luglio il racconto dell'*Itinerario* si fa particolarmente scarno e impreciso, lasciandoci con il sospetto che Bonsignore stesso non avesse più sottomano le sue carte. In quei due mesi i viaggiatori toccano luoghi archeologicamente significativi: Patmos, Kos, Bodrum, Rodi, Cipro.

Da Mitilene la comitiva ritorna in terraferma e si avvia verso l'interno. Il 30 aprile è in vista di Pergamo (Bergama). Bonsignore riferisce, con una punta di rimpianto, che poterono vedere la città solo da diverse miglia di distanza. La situazione non era delle migliori: "passamo per 1 luogo molto pericoloso, et 8 gorni inanzi vi era stato morto 1 merchante genovese e toltogli le robe da 1 fusta di Turchi". Il loro accompagnatore, genovese come il mercante assassinato, premeva perché non ci si allontanasse dalla strada maestra (Bonsignore, 18 maggio, c. 14 v).

Di Smirne (İzmir) Bonsignore riferisce che era "tutta piena di grandissime ruine" e circondata da lunghe mura, anch'esse in rovina: "la terra circunda delle miglia cinque o più, secondo si vede, ma tutte le mure sono ruinate" (*ibid*.). Nonostante il grande interesse, c'erano buone ragioni per non visitare la città: "né qui ci fermamo, perché vi era la peste. Dolseci assai, ma

più chara havemo la vita che vedere quelle ruine". Lo stesso nell'*Itinerario*: "sonvi molte antichaglie, ma non potemo intenderne verità" (c. 27r).

A Chio, dove giungono intorno al 10 maggio, si fermano per quaranta giorni, alloggiando in casa di Agostino Giustiniani, vicario arcivescovile (Bonsignore, 18 maggio, c. 15v; *Itiner*. cc. 29r-v). Il soggiorno inusitatamente lungo è motivato dalla necessità di attendere la galera veneziana che li porterà in Terrasanta con oltre un centinaio di altri pellegrini. Pur avendo visitato accuratamente l'isola, Bonsignore non registra né monumenti né rovine, e questo è piuttosto sorprendente. La sola notazione antiquaria riguarda l'abilità di Bernardo di saper leggere le antiche iscrizioni, traducendo dei diplomi imperiali dal greco al latino. L'attività gli procura molta considerazione presso gli eruditi locali (*Itiner*. c. 29v).

Castel San Pietro, ovvero il castello di Bodrum (Bodrum Kalesi) nell'antica Alicarnasso, quasi certamente viene visto solo dalla nave, dopo la partenza da Kos, all'inizio della navigazione per Cipro. Borsook (v. Borsook 1973, 164) e, di conseguenza, Yerasimos (v. Yerasimos 1991, 122) suppongono che Bernardo e Bonsignore vi abbiano fatto tappa e abbiano avuto modo di visitare le rovine della città e il Mausoleo. Il testo, tuttavia, sembra escluderlo:

> Partiti di lì [i.e. Chios], venimo nella isola di Coos, ora detta Langho, la quale è del Gran Mastro di Rodi. Et apunto a rinchontro è la Caria, et vi si veghono le gran ruine del sepulchro detto mausoleo, el quale la regina Arthemisia di quel paese fece a Mausolo suo marito; di tal mirabile maniera che si numera infra le septe mirabili chose del mondo. Et dicono gli scriptori che era alto XXV cubiti, et intorno era cinto di XXXVI colonne (*Itiner*. c. 30v).

La conoscenza del Mausoleo è limitata al testo pliniano (36.31) e al canone delle *Sette Meraviglie*.

Conclusioni

L'importanza del viaggio di Bernardo e Bonsignore come fonte per la storia dei siti levantini, soprattutto dell'Anatolia pontica, è indiscutibile. Tuttavia, considerare il viaggio di Bernardo e Bonsignore una vera e propria *peregrinatio archaeologica* (Sassi 2012), come la celebre *Jubilatio* di Andrea Mantegna, Samuele da Tradate, Felice Feliciano e Giovanni Marcanova, che fra il 23 e il 24 settembre 1464 percorsero la campagna del lago di Garda alla ricerca di sculture e iscrizioni antiche (Ricci 2006), sarebbe improprio (Sassi 2006). Bernardo e Bonsignore condividono l'orientamento dell'umanesimo fiorentino contemporaneo, in cui prevalevano la dimensione retorico-letteraria e un certo interesse per gli aspetti geografici ed etnografici, mentre l'entusiasmo antiquario che caratterizzava ambienti come Mantova, Padova e Roma era quasi assente. Lo scopo del viaggio dichiarato da Bernardo è, del resto, ben chiaro: "potete hac causa iter nostrum ad infedeles pretexere, che in Turchia andiamo per cerchar libri Greci et maxime ecclesiastici" (GC 29.55, c. 45r). Il modello di riferimento è la spedizione di Giano Lascaris, che qualche anno prima (1491-1492) aveva riportato a Firenze un bottino di circa duecento manoscritti, assumendo una dimensione quasi leggendaria (Müller 1884; Borsook 1973, 148; Yerasimos 1991, 120). L'esame delle lettere mostra che in Bonsignore, se l'interesse per le iscrizioni è grande sin dall'inizio, quello per le rovine an-

tiche cresce nel corso del viaggio. Le prime note sul patrimonio archeologico si trovano nelle lettere dell'ottobre 1497, dopo oltre due mesi di viaggio, quando la comitiva ha ormai raggiunto Plovdiv (§ IV.1) ed Edirne (§ IV.2) in Tracia. Il vero discrimine è, comunque, il soggiorno a Costantinopoli dell'inverno 1497-1498. La descrizione delle antichità costantinopolitane non brilla né per accuratezza, né per originalità (§ IV.3), ma segna un cambio di atteggiamento. Dopo la partenza le descrizioni del tempio di Adriano a Cizico (§ IV.4) e quella delle rovine di Troia/Alessandria di Troade (§ IV.5) sono fra le più significative testimonianze di interesse archeologico dell'età moderna, e continuano a essere utili anche per la ricerca archeologica contemporanea. Le recriminazioni per non aver potuto visitare le rovine di Pergamo e di Smirne a causa della peste o di altri pericoli (§ IV.7), sono eloquenti e testimoniano dell'interesse che aveva nel frattempo maturato il Bonsignore.

Bisogna però dire – ed è, tutto sommato, motivo di sorpresa – che dopo il picco registrato in Anatolia, l'interesse sembra scemare nuovamente quando i viaggiatori toccano le isole greche e Cipro, sia prima che dopo la visita in Terrasanta. I lunghi soggiorni a Chios (ca 10 maggio – 15 giugno 1498) e Rodi (18 giugno 23 – luglio 1498) corrispondono ad altrettante visite (a Rodi, peraltro, solo nei dintorni alla città), che alimentano la descrizione del paesaggio, delle risorse produttive e dei principali edifici moderni, ma nessuna osservazione riguardo alle antichità, che pure in entrambe le isole abbondavano. È come se, avvicinandosi la fine del viaggio, tornasse a prevalere l'atteggiamento iniziale, l'approccio retorico e letterario all'antichità che li aveva contraddistinti alla partenza. Il viaggio resta, comunque, un episodio eccezionale nella storia della conoscenza del mondo greco e levantino e la sua importanza merita, e continuerà a meritare il dovuto risalto nella storia dell'archeologia moderna.

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English Abstract

The journey of Florentine clerics Bernardo Michelozzi (1455-1519) and Bonsignore Bonsignori (1468-1530) to Jerusalem, via Edirne, Constantinople, the west coast of Anatolia and the island of Chios (1497-98), is a well-known “humanist” pilgrimage of the early Renaissance. Michelozzi’s research of Greek and patristic manuscripts and Bonsignori’s attention to ancient sites and monuments have long attracted scholarly interest. Through a new transcription of Bonsignori’s letters and travel account (both made available to me by Bruno Figliuolo), the paper offers an “archaeological” commentary on the stages of the journey in the light of the most up-to-date literature.

keywords | Archaeology; Pilgrimage; Bernardo Michelozzi; Bonsignore Bonsignori; Jerusalem.

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Digging into a Display
The 'Voices' of the Bronzes from San Casciano dei Bagni

Jacopo Tabolli

Introduction

The 2021–2022 excavation seasons at the Etruscan and Roman thermo-mineral sanctuary of Bagno Grande at San Casciano dei Bagni (province of Siena) brought to light a votive deposit of bronze statues and statuettes exceptionally well preserved within a travertine pool (Mariotti, Tabolli 2021; Mariotti, Salvi, Tabolli 2023; Osanna, Tabolli 2023). This sacred pool filled by hot water and mud constituted the centre of the shrine, although the complete extent of the sanctuary has not been defined yet. Reading the complex sequence of ritual depositions into the pool, that took place from the III century BC to the V century AD, resulted in the identification of a series of well-defined actions performed by ancient social agencies that marked the life of the sanctuary for over seven hundred years. From Etruscans to Romans, from Paganism to Christianization, identities combined resilience and transformation. The stratification of multiculturalism and multilingualism is indeed one of the main characteristics of the sanctuary of Bagno Grande (Tabolli 2023a).

The intact archaeological context is allowing a large group of scholars involved in the excavation, study and publication of the site to undertake the complex process of unlocking this sacred site and its landscape. Alongside the scientific efforts to provide preliminary results on the excavation and its finds to the academic community, a consistent series of public lectures took place for the local community of San Casciano dei Bagni, as a way to thank the Municipality for taking on the responsibility of requesting the excavation permit, funding the dig, and hosting the student participants. The announcement by the Italian Ministry of Culture of the discovery in November 2022, followed by an intense period of conservation, allowed for the opening in June 2023 of the exhibition "Gli dei ritornano. I Bronzi di San Casciano [The return of Gods. The Bronzes of San Casciano]" (Osanna, Tabolli 2023) at the Presidential Palace at Quirinale, curated by the General Director of Museums of Italy Massimo Osanna and Jacopo Tabolli from the University for Foreigners of Siena, together with a scientific committee formed by Vilma Basilissi, Mauro Buonincontri, Gian Luca Gregori, Luigi La Rocca, Emanuele Mariotti, Giulio Paolucci, Massimiliano Papini, Giacomo Pardini and Ada Salvi. Guglielmo Malizia and Chiara Bonanni developed the architectural design of the exhibition.

1a-b| Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, First Room: the territory of Chiusi; a) the Etruscan period; b) the Roman period (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

Moving beyond the exceptionality of the Etruscan and Roman bronze statues and statuettes, this exhibition focuses on the cultural biography and the contextual potentiality of understanding bronze artefacts as a way to narrate the resilience of a sacred place and its thermo-mineral waters. Moreover, this exhibit focuses on the 'voices' recorded by the inscriptions on bronze statues and ex votos, bringing again to life the social complexity of ancient communities that recognized, through merging here, this peripheral sacred space as one of their 'centres'.

The exhibition is divided into two main sections. While most of the rooms are dedicated to the findings of 2022, the first two rooms present to visitors the landscape around San Casciano dei Bagni and the history of research. It is a spiral of space and time, that places Bagno Grande within the larger picture of the archaeology of the region and along the timeline of the I millennium BC and the first half of the I millennium AD.

The Exhibition

I. Chiusi: a landscape of sacred thermo-mineral waters

On the southern border of the province of Siena, along the slopes of Mount Cetona, the presence of hundreds of springs testifies to one of the richest areas of thermo-mineral waters in Italy (Tabolli 2023c). Historical sources mention the name of the *Fontes Clusini*, the springs of Chiusi (Osanna 2023). Bronze offerings have been dedicated to these springs since the Bronze Age (II millennium BC). The exhibition opens with the Late (Recent) Bronze Age sword from the Antro della Noce in Cetona (Cuda 2023). A biconical urn from the necropolis of Cancelli (Palmieri 2023) and a bronze belt buckle from the necropolis of Tolle (Bischeri 2023) introduce the visitor to the emergence of the proto-urban sites of Etruria, during the Early Iron Age, and then to the Orientalizing culture. Already in the Archaic period (VI century BC), in the territory controlled by the Etruscan city-state of Chiusi, there were many sanctuaries near the hot springs, such as the sanctuary of Sillene, in Chianciano Terme, where Aplu and Tiur (Apollo and the Moon) were celebrated (Paolucci 2023a; 2023b). Parts of bronze statues, a chariot and a lunar crescent were found within the hot spring. A second lunar crescent from the Borgia

Collection at the Vatican Museums is the first inscribed bronze on display, dating to the VI and V centuries BC. It is the first 'voice' in bronze in this exhibition (Sannibale 2018; 2018-2019; 2023). The inscription reads:

mi tiiurś kaθuniiaśul "I (am) of the Moon Kathuniaś".

During the Hellenistic period (III and II centuries BC), bronze anatomical votives (ears, eyes, and infants in swaddling clothes) testify to the medical practices that took place in these sanctuaries, such as at Campo Muri in Rapolano Terme, where a large healing complex was discovered (Salvi, Tabolli 2022; Salvi 2023b). In 89 BC, the population of Chiusi received the Roman citizenship. Compared to other regions in Etruria, in the area of Chiusi the clash with Rome was more gradual. In the center of the room, the statue of a man wearing a toga is on display (Papini, Maggiani 2023a). This statue had been looted from the area of Chiusi or Perugia and recovered in the illegal market by the Comando Carabinieri Tutela del Patrionio Culturale in 2007. The man in the toga represents the need to appear and dress 'like the Romans' while preserving Etruscan heritage and identity. The inscription (Wylin 2001; most recently Papini, Maggiani 2023a) on the lower part of the toga reads:

au.ceisina.la.eiser / aś.θuflθas. / turce.
Aule Ceisina, son of Larth, to the gods of Thufltha, has dedicated.

The continuity in the deposition of bronze offerings in the thermo-mineral springs during the Roman times demonstrates the continuation of ritual and cult activities. A bronze lamina, incised with a schematic male head in profile, was offered to the Nymphs and found at Ponte Rovescio, close to Chiusi, along the ancient via Cassia (Paolucci 2023c). The words incised are:

Sentius [L]ucilianus Nymphis aq[uae] Ogulni/ae d(onum) p(osui)t
Sentius Lucilianus gave this as a gift to the Nymphs of the sacred waters of Ogulniae.

Finally, three bronze mask-helmets from the territory of Rapolano, dated between the I and II centuries AD, probably corresponded to a votive deposit linked to Roman soldiers (Salvi 2023c). From the Late Bronze Age to the Empire, the visitor can see the continuity in this territory of the deposit of bronze offerings at thermo-mineral springs.

II. Previous discoveries at San Casciano dei Bagni

The territory of San Casciano dei Bagni lies on the ancient road connecting Chiusi with the city of Vulci and the seaside. Over forty hot springs are located in the valley of San Casciano along the River Elvella. The Bagno Grande (the Great Bath) corresponds to the richest spring, with 25 liters of water per second, at over 40 degrees Celsius. Shortly after the 1575 earthquake, the Medici built a pool and a small portico on top of the ruins of an Etruscan and Roman sanctuary (Mariotti, Salvi, Tabolli 2023). Two altars, dating to the end of the II century AD, located within the ruins of the sanctuary and dedicated to Apollo, Asclepius and Hygeia, were found in 1585 (Gregori 2021). One of these altars found in the Reinassance is on display in the second room. The inscription reads:

2 | Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, Second Room: history of archaeological research at San Casciano dei Bagni (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

> *Pro salute Cai et Pomp[o]= niae n(ostrorum) liberọ[ru]= m[q]ue eor[um], Aesculapio et Hygiae sacr(um). Ephaestas lib(erta) v(otum) l(ibens) m(erito) s(olvit).*
> For the health of our Gaius and Pomponia and for their heirs, sacred to Esculapius and Hygeia, the freedwoman Hephaesta discharged the vow freely, as is deserved.

Already in 2020, prior to the beginning of the excavation within the votive deposit inside the travertine pool, two additional inscribed altars were found on top of the rim of the pool. The first altar is sacred to Isis, while the second one is on display (Gregori 2023b) and reads:

> P(ro) s(alute) Asini Fabiani et Eruciae Triari= ae et liberis eor(um) Fortunae Primige= niae Abascantianus servos (!) actor d(e)d(icavit).
> For the health of Asinius Fabianus and of Erucia Triaria and their heirs, Abascantianus, administrator, dedicated as a gift to Fortuna Primigenia.

The occurrence of similar names between the altars suggests the predominance of senatorial families at the end of the second century, patrolling this lower part of the territory of Clusium and the sanctuary of Bagno Grande. In the sixteenth century, just one mile to the south of Bagno Grande, at the spring of Doccia della Testa, where another Roman sanctuary of the

3 | Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, Third Room: the fulgur conditum (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

area was located, a marvelous marble copy of the Aphrodite of Doidalsas, also known as the Bathing Aphrodite, was discovered and dates to the beginning of the II century AD (Ghisellini 2009). In the same locality, in 2004, a votive deposit with bronze offerings came to light (V century BC to the III century AD) (Iozzo 2014). On display are a breast, an ear, a snake, and two male figurines, possibly portraying male heroes or gods (Arbeid 2023b). In addition, this second room has three tombs on display. These are cremations from the local small necropolis of Balena (a toponym that comes from Balnea, the Baths), dating to the end of the II and early I century BC and were probably connected to the community working for and around the sanctuary (Maggiani 2014; Mariotti 2023). The tiles closing the cremations bear inscriptions in Etruscan and Latin that testify to the complex process of Romanization for this peripheral community. The inscriptions read as follow:

Dromos 4, loculus 82: *θana. veinei / crepesa / numsis.* Normalized Etruscan alphabet.
Dromos 2, loculus 24: *TANA / ORSMINEI / CASRTOS*. Etruscan inscription in Latin alphabet.
Dromos 2, loculus 104: *ARUSEIRLA /ALBONIA*. Latin inscription.

4 | Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, Fourth Room: the Spring (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

III. Burying the lightning bolt

The core of the Etruscan and Roman sanctuary came to light at Bagno Grande between 2020 and 2022. The ancient building encircled a sacred pool – over 4 meters deep – made of travertine blocks. An earlier Etruscan pool, located below the Roman one, was restructured and enlarged at the time of Emperor Tiberius (I century AD). Votive offerings were deposited into the water until the late IV century AD. The earliest statue offerings date to the III century BC and continue throughout the II and the I century AD. They were deposited all together at the beginning of the I century AD into the earliest pool, at a depth of more than three meters, underneath a compact layer of terracotta tiles. The only artifacts associated with the tiles are the representation of a thunderbolt in bronze and a prehistoric flint arrowhead. These objects probably symbolize a *fulmen conditum*, the 'burying' of a thunderbolt (Tabolli 2023b). According to the *ars fulguratoria* – the Etruscan tradition of reading the lightening – the objects struck by lightning within a sacred place had to be buried. The place of ritual burial – in this case the pool – became a *bidental*.

IV. The Sacred Spring

For more than 700 years, from the III century BC to the IV century AD, the thermo-mineral waters of Bagno Grande, collected in the sacred pool, received bronze and plant offerings. Despite the passage of centuries and the political transformations between Etruscans first and then the Romans, the rites had always focused on the hot water, testifying to its therapeutic benefits. Fortuna Primigenia and Apollo were the deities protecting the spring from its earliest times. At the time of the Roman Empire, one should add Asclepius, Hygeia and Isis. Nevertheless, the spring itself is at the center of rite and cult, at least since the II century BC. The name of the sacred spring appears in Etruscan and Latin inscriptions (Maggiani 2023; Gregori 2023a). On the skirt of a female goddess (dating to the mid-II century BC) wearing a crown resembling the towers of a city, and holding a snake and a patera, a beautiful inscription in Etruscan reads:

> *au.scarpe.au.velimnal.persac cver.flereś.havensl*
> Aule Scarpe, son of an Aule and of a Velimnei, from Perugia (gave) as a sacred gift to the Goddess of the Spring.

This is the first time that the name of the Etruscan city of Perugia is recorded on an inscription. Five dedications to the *Flere of Havens* in Etruscan can be read as "to the goddess of the Spring" (Maggiani 2023). The root for the word "Havens" is the same as in "Aventine", one of the hills of Rome. According to the Roman historian Varro, the River Avens existed once upon a time on the Aventine. The statue of a naked, sick man presents a Latin inscription on its right leg (Papini 2023a; Maggiani 2023). The inscription reads:

> *L. Marcius L.f. Grabillo hoc signu(m) et signa sex et femina ap pedibus ad inguen sex Fonti calidae v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*
> Lucius Marcius Grabillo, son of Lucius, (offered) this statue and other six statues and six legs, from the foot to the inguinal, to the Hot Spring of Calida, (and) discharged the vow freely, as is deserved.

In Latin, the dedication to *Fons Calidae*, to the spring of the hot water, possibly testifies to the Nymph/Lymph of the spring and especially to the transition from Etruscan to Latin of the sacred power of this spring.

V. A woman in the act of offering

The corridor that moves from the spring to its statues presents an AI image that portrays the statue of a woman in the act of offering, wearing a chiton and a mantle. This bronze statue is an Etruscan masterpiece of the II century BC (Papini 2023a), currently in conservation. The hair with thick wavy curls frames the face and two long twisted braids fall on the chest. Her ornamentation is rich: earrings with a rosette button and a conical pendant, a ribbon necklace, and bracelets on both wrists. The statue resembles other examples with a mantle that are widespread since the early Hellenistic period. Since the III century BC, similar female and male figures represented in the act of offering characterize the sanctuary as a space for meeting and praying.

5a-b | Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, Sixth Room: a-b) the toga wearer (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

VI. A man wearing a toga

Among the statues of deities, the statues of men and women in the act of offering had a fundamental role within the sanctuary. These images represented simultaneously the actor of the offer and the offering itself. The fact that for over seven hundred years the dedications in the hot water were mostly in bronze implies that alongside the dedicatory value of each statue, they were also offered because of their value in metal. The quantity of metal, in copper alloys, used to create the statues constituted the main currency of offerings to the sacred spring of the sanctuary. The young toga wearer (Papini 2023a; Papini 2023b) on display has a tunic and a mantle that wraps around the body. He has closed shoes with two *corrigiae* (boot-like shoes with leather bands) similar to the famous bronze of the Arringatore, exhibited in the National Archaeological Museum of Florence, but discovered in Pila, a locality close to Perugia. The statue from the Bagno Grande of San Casciano is contemporary to the Arringatore and is part of a group of about thirty specimens dating back to the transitional age, i.e., in the very first years of the I century BC. The height of this and of the other statues, about three Roman feet (just under a meter), represents the so-called "honored measure" – as described by Pliny – of the dedicated statues.

VII. Apollo and Medicine

Apollo or "Aplu" in Etruscan, is the deity that persists during the entire life of the sanctuary, both in Etruscan and Roman times. He is mentioned on the dedications inscribed on the II- and III-century AD travertine altars. Nevertheless, the earliest bronze statue depicting the god was discovered into the ritual filling of the sacred pool hit by the thunderbolt and closed at the beginning of the I century AD. This image of the deity follows a peculiar scheme, in a somehow unstable balance, with his feet partially lifted off the ground, as in a dance. The young god is portrayed in the act of shooting an arrow with an outstretched bow. The statue dates

6a-b | Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, Seventh Room: a-b) Apollo and Medicine (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

from around 100 BC (Papini 2023c). On Apollo's arms, as well as a short distance away, two exceptional bronze plaques were placed in the mud, characterized by 'polyvisceral' relief decorations. These representations of viscera appear as they would in a human body opened by a cut. On the base of one of the 'polyvisceral' plaques, a Latin inscription mentions a dedication to Fortuna (Tabolli, Gregori 2023).

> *Atimetus Sulpi/ciae Triariae / actor Fortunae / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*
> Atimetus, administrator of Sulpicia Triaria, to Fortuna has discharged the vow freely, as is deserved.

The discovery of a surgical tool in the deposit – a thin surgical gouge – confirms the reference to medicine. The presence of medical tools associated with anatomical ex votos and especially with the 'polyvisceral' plaques in a thermal and votive medical context constitutes an exception, when compared to contemporary deposits, and confirms the presence of medical doctors working at the thermal sanctuary of San Casciano.

VIII. The system of offerings

Bronze and plant offerings continued to be deposited atop the layer containing the thunderbolt until the end of the IV century AD and were sealed with tiles at the beggining of the I century AD. These are mostly in the form of coins; in fact, more than 5,000 specimens have been recovered (Pardini 2023; Pardini, Carbone 2023). The value of the offer that binds hot water and bronze remains the same. In this final part of the exhibition, we present the system of offerings, consisting of a complex series of depositions that took place over the centuries inside the pool. Two portrait heads represent the men and women who travelled to be healed and to pray at the sanctuary. A male portrait of the I century BC 'speaks' through the inscription on its neck (Papini, Maggiani 2023b):

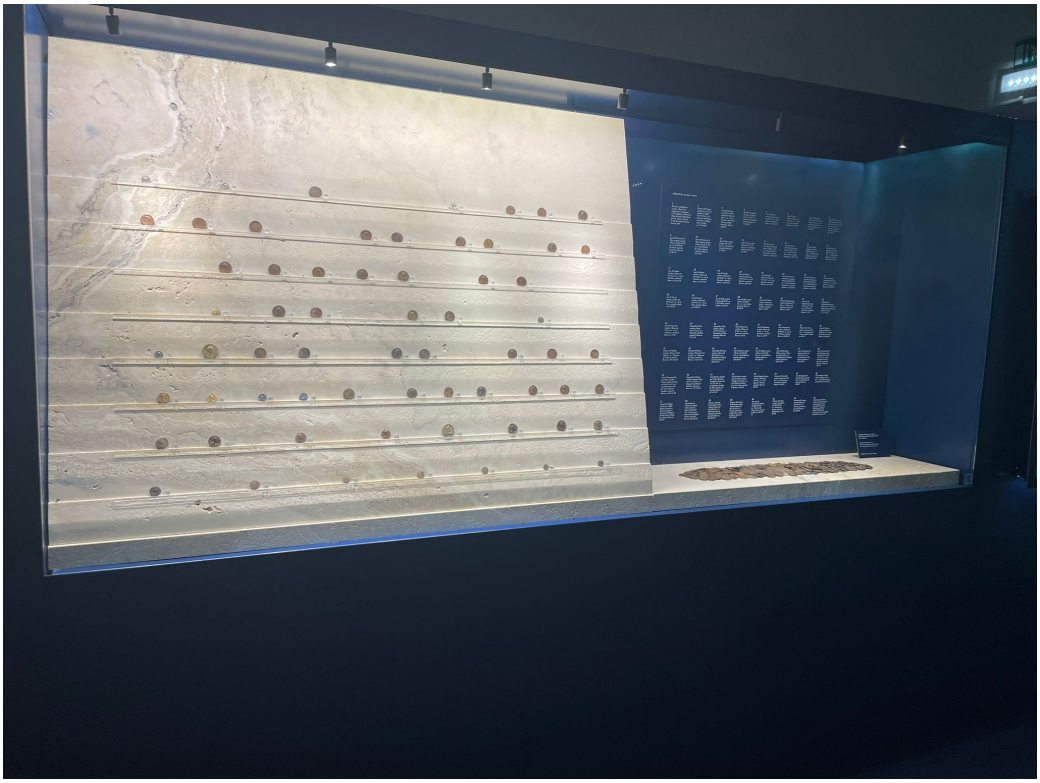
> *nufreśi: nufrznaś:ar persile:flereś.havensl tenine:tlenaχieiś*
> On behalf of Nufre, of the Nufrzna family, son of Arnth, from Perugia, to the Goddess of the Spring, it is placed as a vow to be discharged.

7 | Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, Eighth Room: the system of offerings (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

This inscription resembles in its structure the dedication of the statue of the Arringatore. The figures of small devotees are on display at the center of this final room. Especially the elegant statue of the putto of San Casciano testify to offerings of a smaller size (Tabolli, Maggiani 2023). The voice of the putto is indeed the voice of a mother, Ancari, for her baby represented with the characteristic bulla, holding a bird (lost) and a fruit.

> *persile.ancariale.amθnesle eca.cver. clen.ceχa flereś.havenśl tenine.tlenaχeiś*
> On behalf of Ancari (wife of) Amthne, this object, as a sacred gift, in favour of the child, to the Goddess of the Spring, was placed as a vow to be discharged.

Similarly to the votive deposit of Doccia della Testa, a few bronze animals were offered into the pool, as is the case of a lizard (Arbeid 2023a; Arbeid 2023b). From legs to arms and feet, from breasts to uteri and penises, from ears to masks and faces, the world of offering bronze body parts – the so-called anatomical votives – demonstrates the complex system of dedications for healing and, at the same time, testifies to the medical treatments that took place at the sanctuary (Pacifici 2023a; De Lucia Brolli 2023). A foot is talking through the inscription by a freed woman (Pacifici, Gregori 2023).



8 | Exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale, Eighth Room: the coins (photo by Silvia Viva, Quirinale).

> *[Fort(unae)] / Primogen(iae) / v(otum) s(olvit) / Minicia / Myrine.*
> To Fortuna Primigenia, discharged the vow, Minicia Myrine.

Similarly, an offering to Fortuna Pimigenia appears incised, in Latin, behind an ear.

> *A. Nonius A.f. Viscus v(otum) s(olvit) F(ortunae) P(rimigeniae) l(ibens) m(erito).*
> Aulus Nonius, son of Aulus Viscus, to Fortuna Primigenia has discharged the vow freely, as is deserved.

Together with the bronzes, this final room presents the exceptional organic finds. In fact, the thermo-mineral spring of Bagno Grande has preserved hundreds of organic offerings, mainly plants (Buonincontri 2023). Remains of different fruits, portions of branches and a wooden comb were associated with the depositions of coins that took place during Roman Imperial times, between the Flavian age and the beginning of the III century AD. The presence of a series of perfectly preserved stone pinecones is outstanding. A few specimens of peaches inside the sacred pool can be linked to ritual consumption and votive use of this fruit, which is considered to be of 'exotic' origin (coming from Persia since the I century AD). Finally, the parts of branches, found in the pool of the sanctuary, showed traces of artificial cuts. A decorated

comb was also found within the deposit. This set of evidence highlights the complex system of offerings "beyond bronze". It is important to stress that despite hundreds of plant offerings, no animal bones come from the deposit of the sacred pool, except for eggs, that were laid in contact with the statues.

The exhibition ends with the display of Roman coins in context (Pardini 2023; Pardini, Carbone 2023). Among the corpus of votive offerings, coins allow us to retrace the events that took place at Bagno Grande during the various phases of the Roman period, between the Late Republican age and the Imperial times. The specimens on display represent a small but significant selection of all the coins discovered in the sacred pool during the 2021 and 2022 excavation seasons, amounting to over 5,300 pieces and covering a vast chronological span that roughly ranges from the last decades of the I century BC to the IV century AD. The extraordinary characteristic of these coins lies mainly in their excellent state of preservation, many of them freshly minted. This circumstance suggests that these coins had not circulated or had circulated very little, i.e., that they left the mint in Rome and probably arrived in the sanctuary near their date of issue. This is the reason why we can hypothesize that uniform nuclei of coins, more or less chronologically consistent, were offered and deposited at Bagno Grande, between the Tiberian and Trajan times.

Back to Bagno Grande

The opening of the exhibit at Quirinale constitutes the end of a complex process of analyzing context and artefacts discovered between 2021 and 2022 at Bagno Grande. In late June 2023, the excavation began again under the guidance of Emanuele Mariotti, Ada Salvi and Jacopo Tabolli, and is focusing on understanding the spatial and chronological extent of the sanctuary. Back to the field, the sanctuary is again revived by the presence of more than fifty international students, a multicultural and multilingual environment where new voices encounter the complexity of this archaeological site. Excavation will continue until October 2023 and will be accompanied by public presentations of the results to the local community and by the workshop "Etruscologia_Medicina_Terme" (Etruscology_Medicine_Thermal sites), which will focus on the interaction between archaeologists involved in this research project and international scholars expert in ancient thermal complexes with medical doctors, in a continuous effort to bring new 'voices' for the understanding of the past of San Casciano dei Bagni.

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Abstract

This paper presents a general overview on the display of the Bronzes of San Casciano dei Bagni the on-going exhibition at Palazzo del Quirinale. It especially focuses on the ancient multiculturalism and multilingualism that characterized the Etruscan and Roman sanctuary of Bagno Grande as it appears in the inscription on the statues and statuettes. Moreover, this paper discusses the parallel narratives of the excavation and of the exhibition in order to stress the complexities as well as the potentialities of this archaeological context in order to unlock an ancient sacred site with its landscape.

keywords | San Casciano dei Bagni; Etruscan and Roman Bronzes; sanctuary; ancient medicine.

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