

Methodological study on the application of the stratigraphic analysis to the New Villages of Middle Age.

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Abstract

New Villages are little villages that grew up in the Middle Age, as a result of a sharp increase of population, in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. These new settlements were not born spontaneously, but they were the result of the initiative of territorial lords, in order to extend their control over a certain territory and increase their revenue.

The object of the research is the definition of an Atlas of urban history, a study on the representation of the history of the city in its early stages of growth, depression and rebirth, in order to identify a method of graphic rendering applicable to the New Towns of subalpine area because, currently, there is a total absence of historical atlases city of Piedmont, while these interventions are available in other parts of Italy and especially in the central and northern Europe.

This study is also supported in Italy by Francesca Bocchi and Gina Fasoli for the cities of Bologna and Bassano del Grappa. A similar work is curated by Enrico Guidoni for the city of Talamone. On the international field is remarkable the work edited by Dany Sandron and Philippe Lorentz.

The aim of the work is to find a method of restitution of all tissues stratified over the years, applicable to Villae Novae, analyzing the relationship between historical and cartographic analysis, with the intent to regenerate the memory of places and encourage a program of cultural action, recovery or protection.

Keywords: New Towns, Villae Novae, Middle Age, Stratigraphic analysis

1. The New Villages: birth and development.

This paper proposes a study on some of the new subalpine villages. The subject of the PhD research is the definition of an atlas of urban history, a study on the representation of the history of the city in its early stages of growth, depression and eventual rebirth, identifying an effective protocol of graphic rendering. The choice of the geographical area reflects the state of the art: currently there is a total absence of historical atlases city of Piedmont, while these interventions are available in other parts of Italy and especially in the central and in the northern Europe. Unfortunately, documentary sources are often deficient, so it's almost necessary use exclusively material sources visible in the architecture of buildings.

Between the twelfth and fourteenth century the western and central Europe was hit by a wave of recovery: it were built new villages and cities, and, at the same time, existing population centers developed, the population grew up and the agricultural landscape spreads in natural landscape¹. To meet the needs arising from urbanization and the need to supply the city, new lands were colonized, while the subsistence economy became economy of exchange for products and goods. In northern Italy, the transformation

process was promoted, initially, by local people, but in the second half of the twelfth century, the lords replaced ordinary citizens, that manage to escape the political power and the possession of the territory to the *domini loci*. The need to attract or retain the men of the county determines the formation of "New Villages" and "Borghi Franchi."

These new settlements, also called *Villae Novae* did not grow spontaneously, but they were always the result of the initiative of the great gentlemen landowners, who wanted to extend their control over the surrounding territories, increasing their revenues. They inclined farmers themselves to joined in the new centers, providing them with a less heavy taxation or exemption of their for a certain period of time, giving them more rights and deductibles. They obtained an increase in production and the extension of crops even in marginal areas, not sufficiently exploited. The maximum increase of foundations planned was between the beginning of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century, with the expected growth in the Piedmont of the Savoy, the Marquis of Monferrato and Saluzzo. The new foundation was not always automatically a settlement with geometric preordained plants, and besides the recognition of morphological tracked regularly does not imply the existence of a moment or an act of foundation². These settlements were divided into two categories:

- New Villages of communal age: promoted by the great lords landowners in order to make available marginal production areas through reallocation of the population and to increase revenue;
- New Villages of ladylike age: promoted by the great lords landowners, since the early decades of the thirteenth century with the intent to consolidate its rule over the territory. The focus, therefore, was pinned on existing settlements, that, contrary to what was recorded in the communal age, were fortified at the time of foundation.

So a New Village is, therefore, an agglomerated settlement structure, built from nothing or totally rebuilt where it was previously in other locations, with or without the intervention of an authority which orders or favors the foundation.

Overall villages founded in Piedmont, that it is possible to document their origin, are 66, some of that (for exemple Fossano, Mondovi, Avigliana) were quick to assume the role of ordinary citizens in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The vast majority of the population centers formed in the period under review demonstrates the intelligence given to the choice of locations for the new settlements. It was presided over the good sense and the perfect knowledge of the places from those who had the task of providing for their development. Not always, however, it could happen to have a site considered impregnable. The choice could be influenced by the orientation, by the goodness of the land, the ability to easily find the site in the necessary material for the construction of the case³.

It's important to highlight the link between these centers of new foundation and the religious buildings: it is not uncommon to encounter cases where, in fact, the only thing that kept its own centrality, in addition to the pole of the noble, the castle, was the church or churches. It is possible to show a systematization of this approach that various promoters, in time, showed against social structures and territorial consolidated at their establishment.

The religious building could not punish in the choice of the site where the New Village was founded, losing its symbolic value: it is the first case, named of "indifference" to the site: often the formation of new places of worship led to the destruction of preexistence. This approach was typical of the communal age. This is the example of Mondovi, La Morra, Fossano, Busca.

There is a second instance called "selective indifference": the site where the new village was born was indifferent to the place of worship, but it maintained its symbolic value. This is the case of San Maurizio Canavese, Frossasco, Demonte, Saluzzo, Priero.

The third case is linked to the choice of a place of worship as a "Polo" of reference: it is the example of Canale, Bra, Barge.

The last case is quite exceptional, and therefore, difficult to place in any category. It corresponds to an attitude of substantial "indifference" towards the site but accompanied by the award of a high symbolic value in certain religious buildings of the area, to the point of determining the transfer in the New Village; it is the case of Cherasco.

The birth of Cherasco occurred in 1243, because of a merger of some nearby settlements. The settlement is characterized by a smooth and orderly urban plant, which develops according to a strict geometry quadrilaterals defining blocks of constant modulus, starting from the intersection of two main streets, forming secondary roads parallel to the axes generators (Fig.1). The village is divided into districts: St. Peter, St. Margaret, St. Iffredo and St. Martin.

Although the urban grid was of absolute rigorous, the track wall was not so smooth because of the orography of the site, located upstream of the confluence of the two rivers (Stura and Tanaro), so it could be defended by two parts, it was an appropriate choice that allow, until the eighteenth century, the use of fortifications almost exclusively on the southern front. Most important was the *Platea*, designed as a way of trade and then a parade where palaces of ruling families lined up to frame the center of power⁴.

In this design the organization of civic life prevailed on the ancient custom of focus settlements in function of sacred buildings. The center, marked by crossing the main road, focuses the attention on the civic center and the market, with almost the same determination of the past, where new plant were made to gravitate to the temple and on the hole. The churches were also transferred with the family groups, from the surrounding villages, to the individual districts of relevance, in the direction of the original villages. Around their, lived people with the same origin, resulting in four districts with their identity.

A striking example is the parish of St. Peter (Fig. 2), which took part part of the noble families coming from the original village of Manzano, it was attested for the first time in 1259, a few years after the founding of Cherasco. About the original building is still visible the facade, a part of the south side adjacent to the bell tower and the same tower⁵.

The church was built in the first flowering of the gothic is a deliberate reference to the past because of some of its archaic characters visible in the facade, one of the finest examples of late Romanic in Piedmont. The central portion of the facade is one that, over the centuries, has undergone several transformations; most recently, in 1933, it were restored the central mullioned window and the four arches of the underlying registry.

The elevation seems marked by a rigid mesh composition determined by pilasters and horizontal bands; the first divides it into three fields corresponding to the internal allocation, with centerpieces that are longer in the high crowning square; the second, made of stone pieces of reuse, divided the facade into three registers, the last one is topped with a blind gallery. The decorative bands are complemented by horizontal strokes survivors of eaves, while the upper band is made up of marble recovery. Additional strips are located at the entrance, in the piers and in the overlying arc.

The church has several renovations, the most significant enlargement was the addition of the side chapels. In the seventeenth century, those were built on the left and on the right in the next century. Subsequently it was raised the roof and the columns were replaced by pillars. There is no evidence of the original shape of the apse, because it was completely changed since the early years of the eighteenth century

The reuse of St. Peter, although composed by cut and decontextualized pieces, was not a destructive reuse but conservative. In this case the reuse seems to take on a dual function: at first it updates classic pieces by placing them in the medieval fabric, then it makes a "reliquary" use of the pieces from the St. Peter church in Manzano. The reuse, therefore, is a fundamental emotional towards the church in which communities are identified⁶.

Since the second half of 19th century, the grandiose phenomenon of the population and the new urban design intrigued historians medievalists. The first scholar who took charge of the New Villages was the notary from Vercelli, Vittorio Mandelli, who consulted the codes and statutes of the thirteenth century, preserved in the municipal archives and transcribed the acts of liberation of twenty villages placed in the territory between Dora, and Po Sesia; nobody before him had ever dealt with this theme⁷.

The first systematic operation of graphic rendering of the structures of the New Villages of Piedmont is attributable to the pioneering work undertaken by Giampiero Vigliano, an urban planner and protagonist of the debate on planning the Piedmont between the Second World War and the passage to the regions to the competence on the territorial government. Combining technical expertise and historical sensitivity, Vigliano had the merit of including within the planning regulations the "Cultural Heritage Environmental", in particular environmental goods such as New Villages, shelters, squares and arcade streets⁸.

The synthetic schemes proposed by Vigliano in the mid sixties espoused different representation techniques: identification of plots roads and important buildings on the current plot or historical plot documented by cartography, return of intuitive schemes system, synthetic reconstructions divided into phases.

Vigliano, therefore, does not limit its inquiry to the historical-analytical analysis, but he also focuses attention to the transformation of the settlements and their contemporary dynamism, based also on the ability to set systematic and comparative analysis⁹.

The comparison of the documentary sources, the reading material of settlements and the existent literature led Vigliano to the definition and representation of an abacus patterns of buildings of medieval New Villages, where he recognizes the following geometric patterns: rectangular and square with uniaxial two access doors (Villanova d'Asti, San Damiano d'Asti), rectangular biaxial and four gateways (Gattinara and Borgomanero), checkerboard biaxial (Cherasco, Frossasco) and without axes prominent (Villafranca) shaped trapezoidal uniaxial (Poirino), triangular (Bistagno) and three parallel axes (Nizza Monferrato).

The systematic nature of the representation and the comparative attention to the geometry of the forms led to overshadow the periodization of the transformative processes of organisms and the relationship between geometry and tissues, but it made clear, and effective, the interest in the theme of the geometric plants of medieval villages, becoming a shared basis for further historic research¹⁰.

A few years later, Pierre Lavedan, author of the first systematic investigation of the history of urban twenties, census and describes the French bastides making a clear distinction between urban history and architectural history; the latter was limited to analyze the monuments regardless of building and environmental context. He specified that it was not his intention to write an history of medieval cities, but he considered only a particular context: "Le plan de la ville", trying to show how knowledge of the plant is essential for understanding the history of a city; this was, therefore, a study of urban morphology in which the shape of the plant is subject to explanation and classification¹¹. Thanks to the work of Jeanne Huguency (1921-2008), there were redrawn, with stretch uniform, the planimetric patterns of 200 bastides. There were the studies on the persistence of the tracks in the medieval urban forms of the historical city of nineteenth century. Lavedan adopts an abacus more simplified than Vigliano, considering only three types: a single longitudinal axis, two perpendicular axes, and tringular shape¹².

During the studies of Lavedan and the work of Huguency on french bastides, or to the research of Maurice Beresford (1920-2005) on the New Towns of english foundation¹³, in Italy, Enrico Guidoni (1939-2007)¹⁴, between 1965 and 1967 sets the historical-urban medieval age, he was devoted to the analysis of the graphic centers foundation. Its focus was the cultural interpretation about urban forms, conducted through reconstructive graphic schemes reduced to grids of settlement systems and fragmented from cadastral maps on which the scholar casts geometric models of tracking. Of great importance is the study conducted for the city of Talamone: the work consists on a superposition of information concerning the land registry of today with that of Leopold 1756. Each element drawn on paper is numbered and each number is matched to a specific symbology. The structural elements of the village in question are: the tower, the villa,

the station, the church, the convent, the cemetery, the railroad, the paths made in the twentieth century and those existing in 1824, the old tracks and the municipal boundary.

Gina Fasoli (1905-1992)¹⁵ and Cristina Bocchi (professor at the University of Bologna)¹⁶, have carried out studies for the town of Bassano del Grappa and Bologna: the first work was based on the overlap of information relating to the land current registry to the Austrian one, while the second compares the Land registry today with the Papal States, dating back to 1833. In both cases, the structural elements of the current land registry are: parcelling, built, architectural work, porches, cultivated areas and gardens, public parks, avenues and flower beds, streets and squares, waterways; while structuring elements such registers historians relate the partition of disappearance, the built environment, the architectural, porches, walls, roads disappeared, the city gates.

In the international field is remarkable the work done by Dany and Philippe Sandron Lorentz¹⁷, professors at the Sorbonne in Paris; it was a representation of the historical evolution of the french capital, from the Middle Ages to 1850. For each period analyzed it was given an historical chronology of the major events, a card depicting the land uses and spatial evolution of the area from the previous period analyzed, and the map of land use overlapped with the current road conditions. In each study period are referred the structural elements, the lines of communication, private and public buildings, gardens and cultivated areas.

The goal of the research, as a result of the case studies, is to find a real strict protocol of restitution of all tissues stratified over the years, applicable to Borghi Nuovi of the subalpine area (with the emphasis on medieval built of Savoy's origin), because the research done to date have focused on a philological approach rather than a refund topographic data, analyzing the relationship between historical analysis and cartographic one, with the intent to regenerate the memory of places and encourage a program of cultural action, recovery or protection.

The case studies chosen are the city of Moncalieri and Rivoli: they both are locations of Savoy residences and Unesco sites, they are characterized by a different development: the site of Moncalieri develops earlier the birth of the castle, while the village of Rivoli takes shape around its pole of stately power, castle.

The hypotheses proposed are designed to systematize the criteria of representation not only of the geometric shape of the plant, but also the dynamics of settlement and the social value of the places. To ensure a first criterion of uniformity and comparatività, the support of the representation in all cases studied is constituted by the current plot register and it is assumed one dimensional scale of restitution. The cartographic support be adopted, report the historical analyzes to the current stays, both material and mapping, favoring an operational use of restorative schemes, at the end of the government of the transformations of the settlements and the enhancement of sites.

It will, therefore, be necessary, on the route of the existing urban fabric, highlights the road structures generating, distinguishing the historical routes of communication established (usually preceding the settlement preordained) from the axes rectors planned. From the relationship between axis and morphology of settlements will be highlighted isolates the relevant the building activities in villanova object (distinguishing axes recognized those conjectural) and tissues that recognize medieval structures, in particular the arcade streets.

The identification of the original settlement pattern will be recognizable by the use of autopsy methods (aerial photo, interpretation and consistency of the material built), but also from regressive reading cartography and historical iconography, made through the interpretation of documentary sources and the critical literature, both by projecting graphics of historical maps of the modern age on the current. It will

important to identify the poles structuring the identity and life of the settlement, such as the spaces of civic power (with indication of palaces and towers left), market areas, places of residences or territorial powers and higher level ecclesiastical centers.

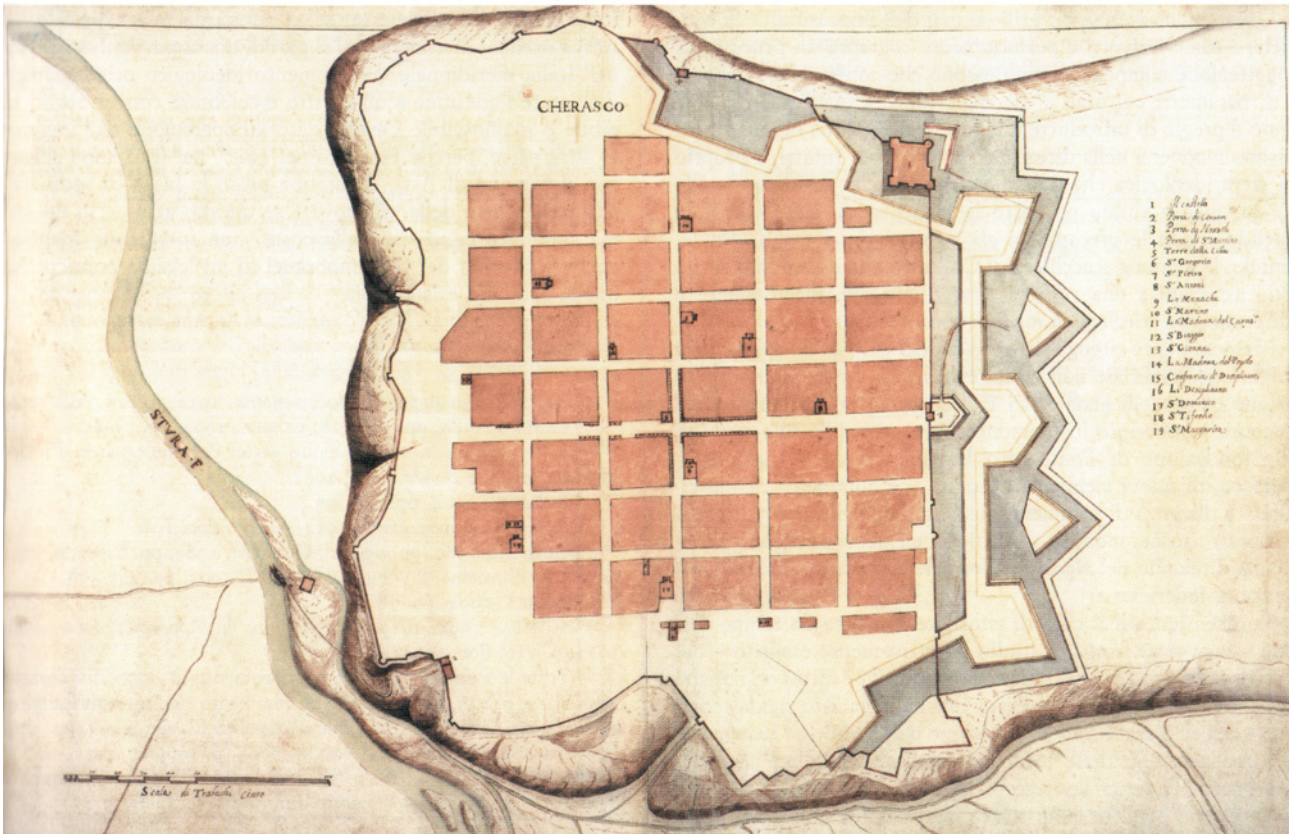


Fig. 1 Carlo Morello, Plant of Cherasco, 1656. (BRT, Manoscritti, Militari 178, 23).



Fig. 2 Facade of St. Peter's Church, Cherasco. (<http://archeocarta.org>).

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