



**Politecnico  
di Torino**

# **Honors Thesis**

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**Master's degree Architecture for Heritage**

## **Abstract**

**The commendatory system of the Order of Malta in the Eighteenth Century: the  
Cabrei of the Commandery of Giorgio Giuseppe Valperga di Masino**

**Tutor and Correlator**

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**Candidate**

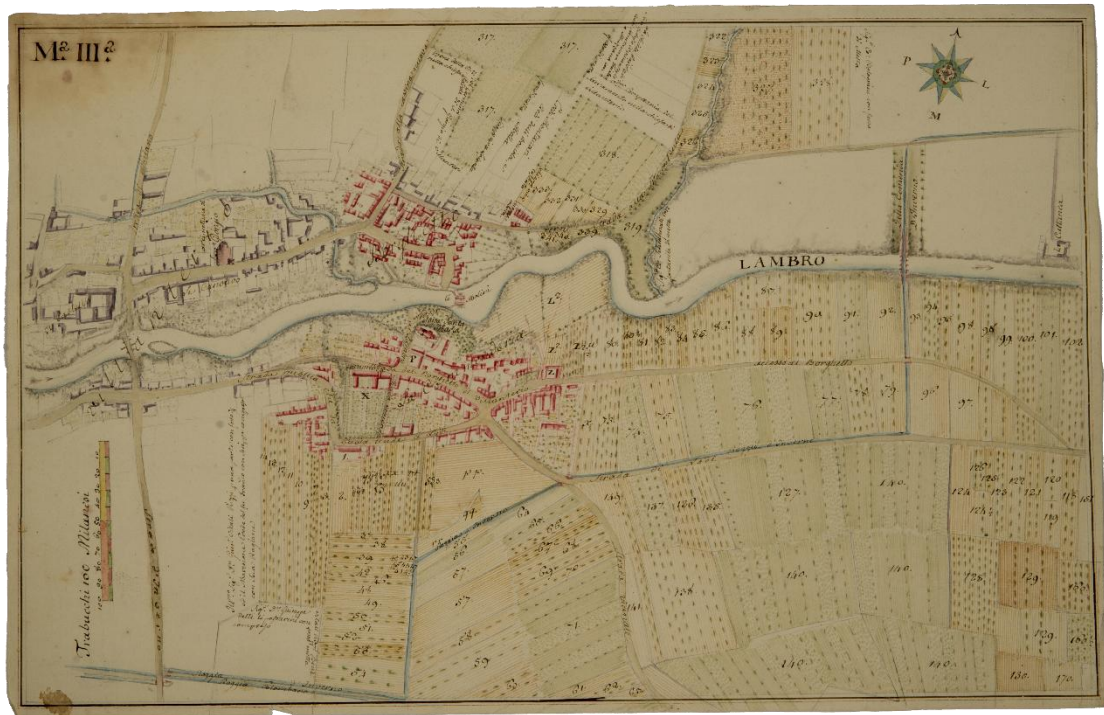
**Melany Vignone**

**December 2025**

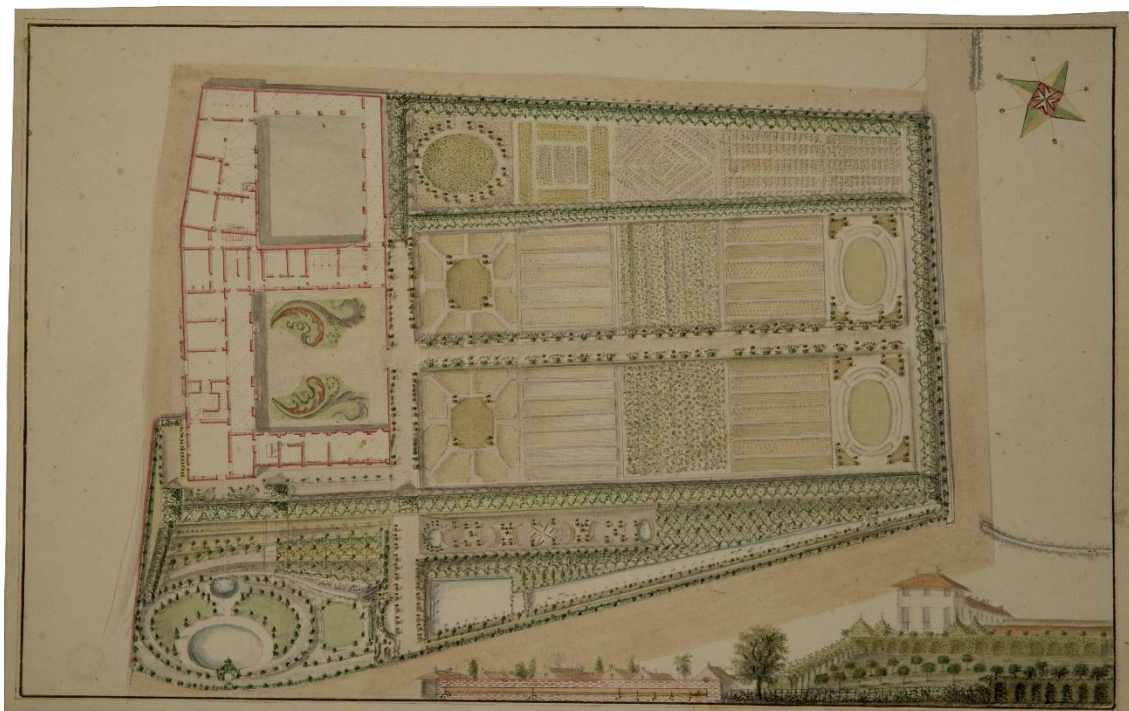
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The present thesis aims to investigate the figure of Giorgio Giuseppe Valperga di Masino (1732-1813), Knight of the Order of Malta and member of the Valperga di Masino family, whose activity within the Institution took place during the second half of the eighteenth century. The main objective of the research is to analyse the role he held as Commander of two Commanderies located in the Pavia area: the Commandery of Santa Maria del Borghetto in Villanterio and the Magistral Camera Commandery of San Giovanni d'Inverno. Through the use of archival documentation from the Valperga Archive at the Castle of Masino, the State Archives of Milan and Turin, and the Drawings Collection of the Castle of Masino, it has been possible to reconstruct an unpublished biographical profile of the Knight and to shed light on a still little-explored aspect of the Order's history: the commendatory system. The analysis of documents, letters, registers, Cabrei, improvement visit reports, and iconographic sources has made it possible not only to outline the personality and role of Valperga, but also to understand the methods of administration of the Commanderies and the architectural features that distinguished them. Particular attention has been devoted to the dynamics of the commendatory system within the Priory of Lombardy, examined in relation to the center-periphery framework, which serves as the interpretative key for understanding the functioning of the Order within the European context. Special emphasis has been placed on the cabree, fundamental instruments for property management, through which the effective administrative work of Giorgio Giuseppe Valperga di Masino clearly emerges. The investigation of the Commanderies has made it possible to understand their integration within the surrounding territory and to assess their impact on the landscape, economy, and architecture, highlighting how they represented genuine centers of power of the Order of Malta in Europe. This power was expressed not only at the political, administrative, and religious levels, but also through architecture, which became a tangible manifestation of Melitense authority. The study also reveals an unpublished portrait of Giorgio Giuseppe Valperga di Masino who, by employing his expertise and knowledge, contributed to the improvement of the Commanderies, demonstrating particular attention to architectural quality and property management. The in-depth analysis of the commendatory system, still little explored today, allows for a better understanding of how the Order of Malta exercised its power in its European peripheries, highlighting the relationships of dependence and interconnection between center and periphery, and showing how such power also found expression in the architectural, territorial, and landscape dimensions.

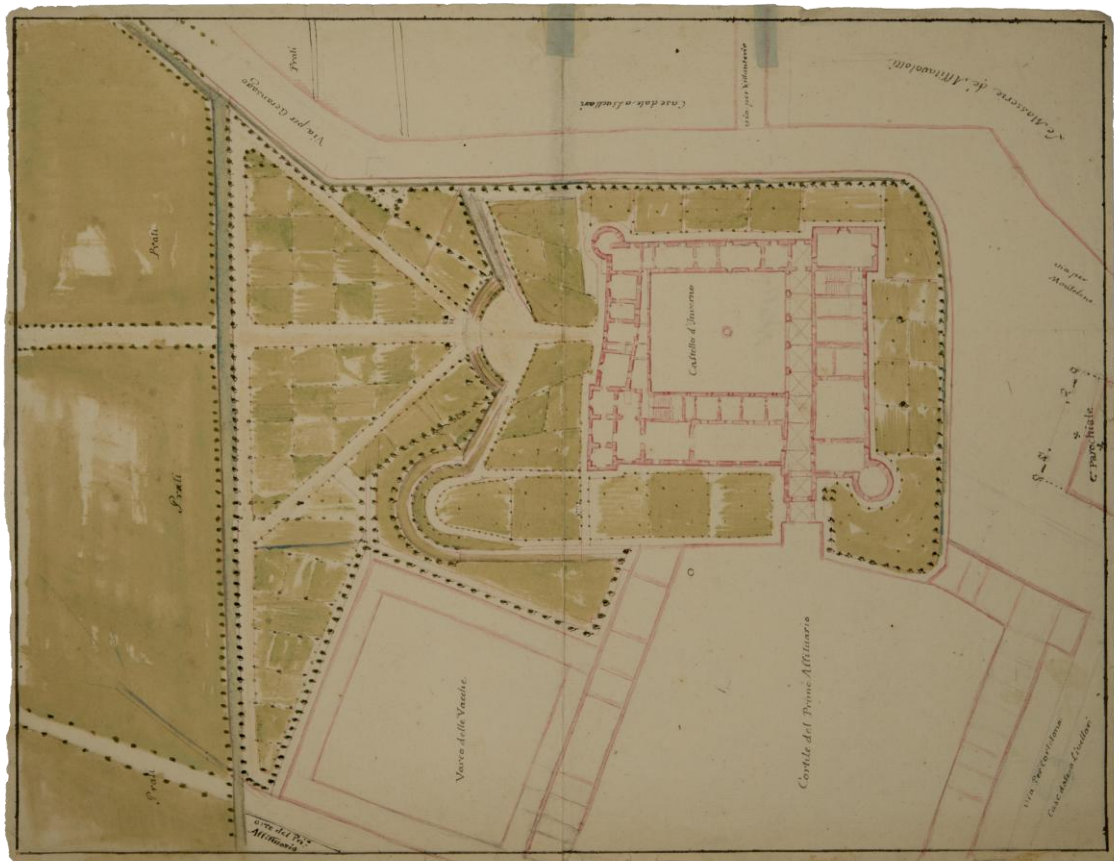
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Anonymous draftsman, Map of the Territory of Borghetto di Villanterio, drawing on paper, 285 × 442 mm, second half of the eighteenth century, FAI, Castello di Masino, Drawings Collection, I/293.



Anonymous draftsman, Design for a Park with Villa Plan, drawing on paper, 279 × 438 mm, second half of the eighteenth century, FAI, Castello di Masino, Drawings Collection, I/282.



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