

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE
Degree in Architecture
Honors theses

Cesare Bertea (1866-1941): notes on the restoration works in Piedmont at the beginning of 20th century

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Cesare Bertea (1866-1941)

This study focuses on the figure and the experiences of engineer Cesare Bertea (1866-1941) and synthesizes his working practices which were strictly connected with the restoration cultural contest between the 19th and 20th centuries.

The research is based on a detailed investigation in libraries and archives that allowed us to discover a series of unpublished documents in the *Archivio di Stato di Torino*, in the *Archivio Storico della Città di Torino*, in the *Archivio Storico della Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici del Piemonte* and in the *Archivio Storico dell'Ordine Mauriziano*.

Cesare Berteza was born in Turin on June 23rd, 1866. He was the son of Eleonora Vicino and Ernesto Berteza (1836-1904), landscape painter of the Rivara school and was the first of six brothers. He studied at the *R. Liceo Classico Gioberti*, where he graduated in 1883; he subsequently matriculated at the *R. Scuola di Applicazione* for engineers of Turin and there he was awarded the degree in civil engineering on December 23rd, 1889.

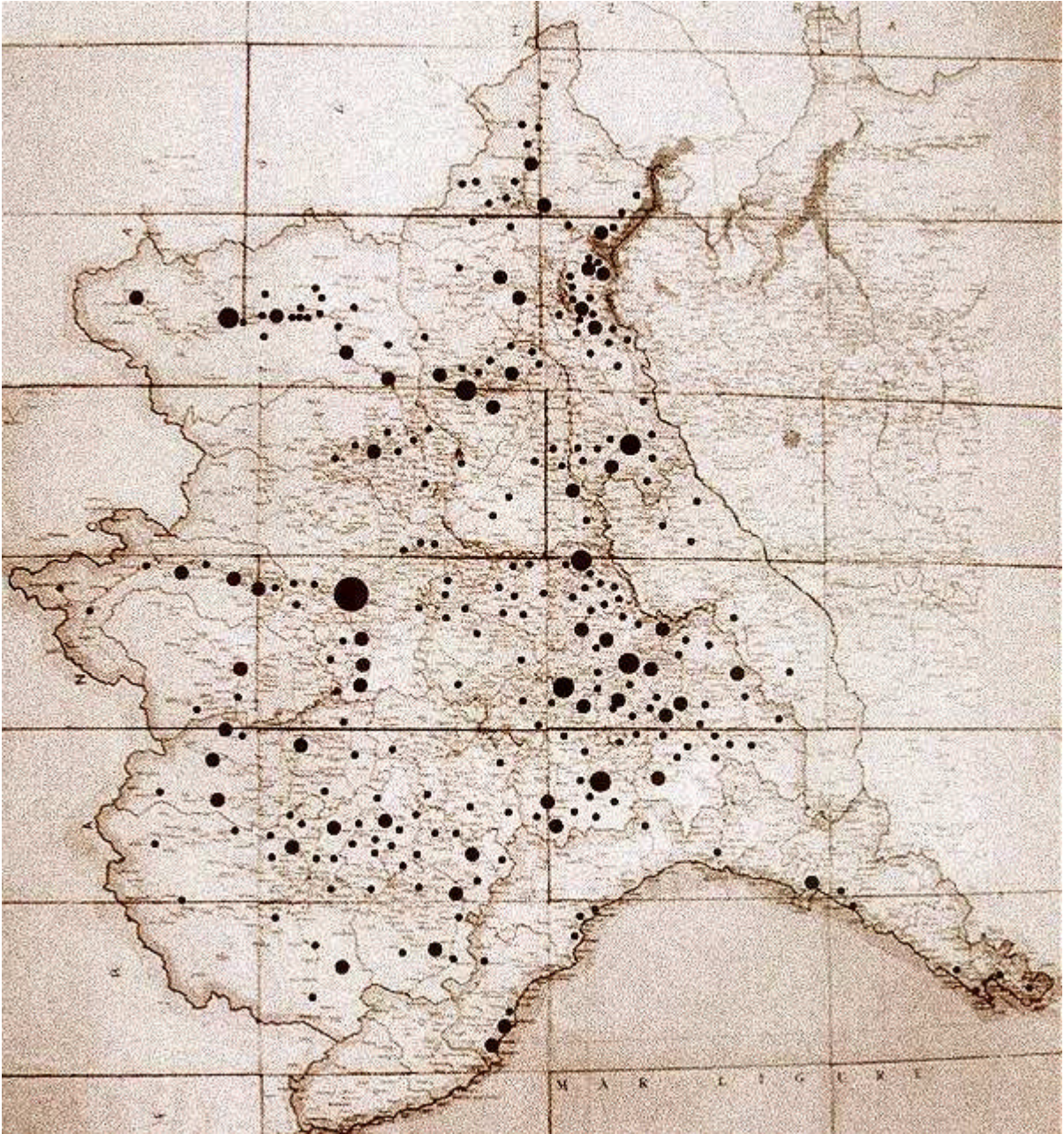
In 1891 he was appointed *architetto-ingegnere* (engineer-architect) at the *Ufficio Regionale per la Conservazione dei Monumenti del Piemonte e della Liguria*, whose director at that time was Alfredo d'Andrade (1839-1915), a good friend of Ernesto Berteza. When d'Andrade died, Cesare Berteza became the new director of *Ufficio Regionale*, which had meanwhile turned into *Soprintendenza ai Monumenti del Piemonte*. Between 1891 and 1931 Berteza devoted himself to the protection and preservation of the Piedmontese artistic and architectonic heritage. He took seven hundred works into consideration – he started from archaeological reliefs - and supervised many important restoration works, such as *Porta Palatina* (1907-1915), *Abbazia di S. Antonio di Ranverso* (1909-1920), *Chiesa di S. Andrea di Vercelli* (1917-1927), *Chiesa di S. Giovanni di Saluzzo* (1917-1929), *Palazzo Madama* (1919-1924), *Abbazia di Santa Maria di Staffarda* (1923-1928), *Duomo di Torino* (1926-1928). He also planned and realised the Piedmontese Pavilion for the *Esposizione di Roma* in 1911: this was a great opportunity to illustrate the history and art of his region.

In general, we can consider his works sort of *restauri filologici, storici, stilistici*, linked with the cultural context of the time. Cesare Berteza himself studied every single work and consequently speculated on the history of each monument. His practice aimed to restore the ancient aspect of buildings and he had to make some choices that are unavoidably considered questionable at present.

However, there were some modern elements characterizing his practice. When he was on the construction-sites, he worked in a team; he wanted to co-operate with skilled people; he used reinforced concrete for structural consolidation and was always aware and respectful of the historical and natural environment.

Cesare Berteza was decorated with many titles and was a member of different public institutions: *Commissione Igienico Edilizia del Municipio di Torino*, *Commissione Provinciale per la Conservazione dei Monumenti ed Oggetti d'Antichità*, *Società Piemontese di Archeologia e Belle Arti*, *Museo di Arte Antica ed Applicata all'Industria*, *Commissione Diocesana per l'Arte Sacra*.

Cesare Berteza retired in 1931 and died in Turin on January 18th, 1941.



Location of the repairs managed by Cesare Berteza between 1891 and 1931.

This description is based on "*Pianta geografica del Piemonte e della Liguria – Comunicazioni Postali del Regno d'Italia dell'Istituto Geografico De Agostini, s.d. [ante 1920]*"

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