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Abstract

**The castle of Battifollo (CN):
the archaeology of architecture applied to
a case study**

Tutor

Prof. Carlo Tosco

by

Simone Vallero

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This thesis has studied the castle of Battifollo (fig. 1), the ruins of an ancient defensive structure of the homonymous municipality located in the province of Cuneo between the Tanaro and Mongia valleys. The main purpose of this work has been to reconstruct the major historical events that affected the structure, which have produced significant modification to the architectures of the building, and later to list this modifications. Such a thorough study had never been done before and it was therefore necessary to execute it in its entirety.



Fig.1 – The castle today

The procedures of the archaeology of architecture have been used to better organize the building analysis; this method uses a categorization of the information which can be discovered during the analysis, spacing from the indirect sources, such as documents and maps, to the more direct ones, for instance the typology of building materials and their use.

As for the historical part of this thesis a careful archive research has been made about all the sources that mention the settlement and the castle of Battifollo; the first known presence of the structure is documented in 1142, but thanks to the study of the town's name it is plausible to assert that even before this date there was another element, commonly named “battifolla” (a building used for sighting and defensive purposes, made of

perishable materials such as wood). After this date the defensive element changes owner, passing under the property of the Bishop of Alba and back again into the properties of the Marquis of Ceva, who ruled the area in question, between the late XIII and early XIV century. The structure is lastly abandoned and destroyed at the turn of the XIX century, more precisely between 1796 and 1805 after the French conquest of the area.

All the events that have affected the structure have left clear evidence of them on the structure's walls that can be observed nowadays. The observation and the study of the decoration on the upper part of the castle's tower (fig. 2) is of great importance since it's the only element that has survived partially intact and can be dated. This decoration strongly resembles the ornamental schemes used in the Ligurian area at the end of the XIII century known as Ligurain Romanesque Architecture (for instance such a decoration can be found on the Embriaci Tower in Genoa). This correlation can be explained through the hypothesis of a shift of workers from the coastal area to the inland; this two areas (the Ligurian one and the Marquis of Ceva) are therefore to be considered in strict correlation, not only under a geographical point of view but also for political and economical reasons (it's known that part of the mercantile exchanges between coastal area and inland took place in this area).



Fig.2 – Detail of the decoration on the upper part of the tower

As mentioned before the historical research didn't stop at the study of the documents and the maps but went beyond this point, focusing also on the documentation and filing (on appropriate forms) of all the material remains of the structure that can still be observed nowadays, in order to preserve their memory. The result of this procedure is a collection of various types of masonry techniques, labeled by the material used. The portions of the walls built in stone are sometimes different one from each other while the structures built with bricks are very similar, suggesting a relative contemporaneity of this parts (due to

their form and dimensions). After this walls segmentation, a chronological sequence of the parts was created for each observable facade using appropriate schemes called matrix (defining therefore relations of anteriority, posteriority and contemporaneity between this units). In conclusion, comparing all the information acquired during the study (both direct and indirect sources), a dated chronological scheme of all the structures was created. This scheme describes four major steps by which the building evolved. The biggest of all this events was the edification of the elements build with bricks, dating between the end of the XIII and the beginning of the XIV centuries. This element could be explained giving the fact that in that period the castle was recaptured by Nano of the marquis of Ceva after years of dominion of the Bishop of Alba.



Fig.3 – Example of subdivision of one wall of the castle and, on the right side, the matrix