

The Venaria Reale and the Mandria: historiography and bibliography

by Samantha Pani

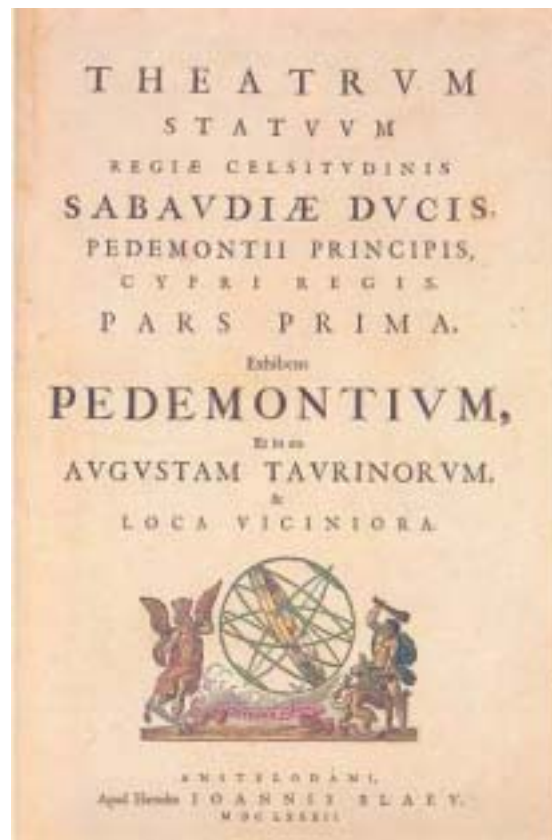
Tutors: Vera Comoli, Mauro Volpiano

A rich bibliography and several documents kept alive the history of the Venaria Reale since its realisation. Therefore it was chosen to examine through the study of various sources, how the view of it has changed through the centuries. The researching work led to consulting more than two hundred volumes among 17th-century, modern and contemporary books.

Castellamonte's volume, the "manifesto" books of Savoy house's power, Audiberti's *Theatrum Sabaudiae* and *Regiae Villae* were examined. The Venaria Reale was considered both through the eyes of the foreigners who decided to visit it and described it in their *travel diaries*, and through the *guide books* written with the precise aim to guide the travellers along the paths of artistic interest. Furthermore, it was analysed through the essays of the first 19th-century authors and through the studies of the contemporaries.

The bibliography of the Venaria Reale, which will extend through nearly three centuries, has its start just five years after the beginning of its building: yet in 1663, in fact, Valeriano Castiglione describes it in his volume on Savoy house's wedding celebrations.

In the second half of the 16th century, the period of maximum splendour for the Royal Palace, important publications about it are printed: in 1674 the Earl of Castellamonte, Amedeo, publishes his famous volume *Venaria Reale Palazzo di Piacere e di Caccia*, still today a very important document, being the only original source reporting the whole project of the Venaria Reale. Another significant 17th-century book is *Theatrum Sabaudiae*, published in 1682, in which a wide description is made of this Royal Residence, considered Savoy house's jewel.



In the 18th century the Venaria Reale is known through the reports of foreign travellers visiting our Country. From the “travel diaries” different opinions emerge: there is who, visiting Turin, chooses not to include it in his *Grand Tour* – perhaps considering it of secondary importance, or to save time – like Charles De Brosses; there is who recalls it just with a mention, without paying particular attention to it, like Maximilien Misson and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; there is who admires its beauty like Jerome Joseph De Lalande and Charles Nicolas Cochin; there is who evaluates its economical aspects, like Charles De Secondat Montesquieu; and there is who criticises its architectural structure, like the English Edward Gibbon.



The 19th century is characterised by the publishing of various *Guide books*, mostly written by local personalities, with the aim to “guide” the foreigners coming to our Country. It can be noted that the descriptions of the Venaria Reale are short and inaccurate: the authors, for instance, remembering the architects who participated in the realisation of the palace, never mention the architect Michelangelo Garove; he may have been considered less important with respect to the Earl of Castellamonte, Filippo Juvarra and Benedetto Alfieri, or more probably his drawings, being kept in Paris, are more difficult to consult, or even not yet known.



The first deep historical and artistic studies on the Venaria Reale are made at the end of the 19th century by a few authors, among who Earl Gianazzo di Pamparato who dedicates a whole volume to this Residence, Gaudenzio Claretta, who writes several essays on the Savoy house, and Camillo Boggio, author of a monograph on Carlo and Amedeo di Castellamonte.

Starting from the first decades of the past century, notable is the contribution of authors as Albert Erich Brinckmann, Lorenzo Rovere, Vittorio Viale, Augusto Telluccini, and in the second half of the 20th century others as Richard Pommer, Augusto Cavallari Murat, Ada Peyrot, Andreina Griseri, Maria Grazia Vinardi and Vera Comoli conduct historical and critical studies greatly deepening the knowledge on the Venaria Reale.

Therefore, by the painstaking consultation of a wide amount of bibliographic material, the changes in the view of the Venaria Reale through the centuries emerge, from the period of its greatest splendour, when it represented and celebrated the power of the Savoy Court, up to the years when, turned into barracks for the Fifth Artillery Regiment, its slow decadence began.

This work is proposed as a useful tool for a further deep study on this royal residence, also in view of the repairs that it is undergoing in these years.

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