

Typology and language of noble houses in the XVIth AND XVIIth centuries in Turin. The square city

by Silvia Petiti

Supervising : Gianni Robba, Costanza Bardelli Roggero

This work analyzes some aspects of a little known period in the history of Turin, between the end of the XVIth century and the first half of the XVIIth. In 1563 Duke Emanuele Filiberto of Savoia chooses this little Square City as the capital of his little State, and this is the beginning of its transformation in a baroque city. This work concerns the passage of a particular typology of buildings, the noble houses, from the medieval period to the baroque one; the purpose is to describe some characteristics of Renaissance architecture in Turin.

The direct observation compared with ancient maps has permitted to outline a map of typological classification of the ancient Square City, according to the original function of buildings.

The noble house in Turin during the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries consists in the residence of the noble family and the rooms of servants. A representative way leads from the entrance to the hall in the first, higher floor, called "piano nobile". It has been considered another peculiar typology, the "architettura nobiliare e da reddito", which comprehends rooms to let. This kind of building is typical of Turin and very common in the XVIIIth century.

This study has led to single out nine noble houses which refer to the Florentine Renaissance models, between the medieval and the baroque buildings. Their examination, based on the survey of the present conditions and the historical searches, has allowed to define the transformation phases of each building during the last four centuries.



Fig. 1 – Casa Castellengo (1673?), via San Dalmazzo 7. The stuccoes are related to the ancient proprietors' coat of arms, but the top floors date back to the last century.



Fig. 2 – Casa Castellengo's court shows the remains of the ancient porch.

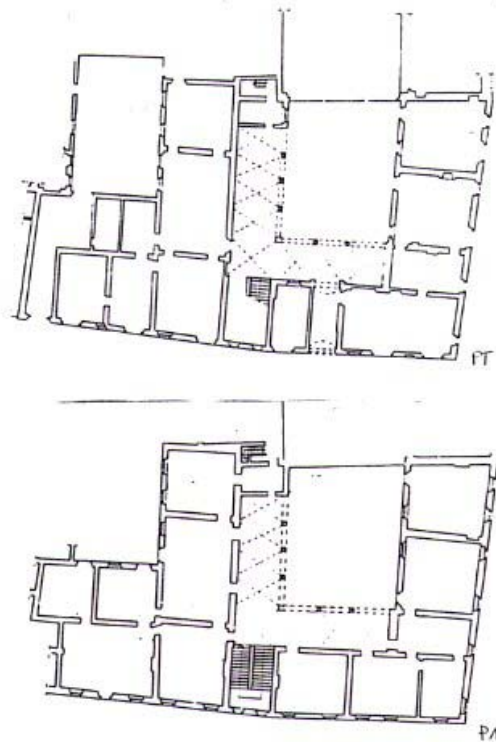


Fig. 3 – Casa Castellengo: the hypothetical original state. The former square lot was occupied by a "C" building; the stairs led to the upper loggia and to the side hall.

Comparing the original phases of the nine buildings, it is possible to try and describe the most important characteristics of the noble houses in Turin in XVIth and XVIIth centuries, which are: little and square lots; 30 meters long and three storey tall fronts; a representative way which starts in the entrance and goes on with the porch, the little stairs and the loggia, leading from the street to the hall, which is indifferently situated in front, on one side, or in the back of the house. The main front is moderately decorated; but the first floor is higher and more decorated. This buildings are all situated in the south side of the Square City, near the most important roads, and their blocks show medieval origins.

The final chapter compares this reality with similar models in other italian cities (Florence, Milan, Genoa). Turin is clearly backward compared to the Florentine noble houses, and historically, economically, socially far from the complexity and richness of Milanese and Genovese buildings.