

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
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Honors theses

Churches of Mendicant Friars Order. Franciscans and Domenicans in Piedmont.

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This thesis includes four chapters. The first two set a general frame on the subject by introducing the Mendicant Friars Order in their social-historical development and diffusion in Piedmont, in the XIII century.

With the aid of maps, chronological tables and schedules we go on describing how Franciscans and Domenicans, from simple pilgrim friars, became convent founders. We also supply news and information brought to us through legend and tradition: for instance, St. Francis' travels in Piedmont, and other studies and research work carried out on the first 27 franciscan and first 14 Domenican foundations.

All the informations gathered have been filed in alphabetical order, according to the name of the town which lodged the Mendicant convents.

In the second part of the thesis, we work in detail on the existing connections between the Franciscan and Domenican orders and the towns.

By analyzing the theoretical justifications which brought friars to convent building, we initially studied their effective settling in towns through an urbanistic point of view. We dealt with the problems of building convents outside the town walls or within the urban centres, trying to point out their common features: preferences for important towns, vicinity to main town streets, nearness to town gates, privileged and dominant positions within built-up areas, distance from other mendicant convents or other civil and religious power-holding centres.

IN THE WALLS		OUT OF THE WALLS			
		DISTRUTTE E TRASFERITE DENTRO LA CITTA'		INVARIATE	
ALBA	D F				
ALESSANDRIA	D				
ASTI	D	ALESSANDRIA	C	ACQUI	F
CHERASCO	D	CASSINE	F	ASTI	F A C
IVREA	F	IVREA	D	CEVA	F A
MONCALIERI	F	MONCALVO	F	CHERASCO	SM
MONDOVI'	F	MONDOVI'	D	CHIERI	D F
PINEROLO	F SM	NOVARA	D F A	CHIVASSO	F
SALUZZO	D	PINEROLO	C	CORTEMILI A	F
TORTONA	D	SAVIGLIANO	A	TORTONA	F
		TORINO	D	SUSA	F
		TORTONA	F		
		VERCELLI	A		
			D F		
<u>LEGENDA</u>				INGLOBATE IN CITTÀ' PER L'AMPLIAMENTO DELLA CINTA MURARIA	
D : Domenicani					
F: Francescani					
A: Agostiniani					
C: Carmelitani					
S: Saccati					
SM: Servi di Maria					
				ACQUI	F
				ASTI	F A
				CHIERI	D F

Verifying Guidom's theory on the existence of urbanization theoretical schemes, i.e. the triangular layout of several Mendicant buildings in the same town, we analyzed some centres in Piedmont and presented a map for each one of them, in order to point out convent localizations and changes occurred throughout different historical phases. In the same chapter we explain how important friars became in Piedmont and which was their role in a society that was divided among three powers: Clergy, Town Council and local Lords.

At this point we analyzed the Mendicant insertion in pastoral activities and the consequent friction created against the local clergy; the importance of Mendicant centres used as Communal meeting places, as neutral grounds for drafting documents or peace acts and also as family mausoleum for the Marquis of Monferrato and Saluzzo and the Savoy Princes.

The last chapter deals strictly with Mendicant architecture. We concentrated our work on three construction periods -following the Meersseman theory- according to which there exists a precise evolution both in practical requirements both in space conception, due to the rising number of friars and believers.

We started describing the first rules created and adopted by Friars and Dominicans in building convents in the XIII century, then went on analyzing the main existing building typologies (Hallenkirchen, shed-churches and step-churches), defining spaces and fundamental elements in the church interior (ecclesia laicorum, ecclesia fratrum, intermedia, chorus, pulpitum) and finally analyzing in detail some piedmontese churches. Comparing all gathered informations, a great difference arose between the XIII century churches and those whose construction started in the XIV century: the Franciscan church in Susa distinguishes itself for its modest dimensions, followed by Cassine's and Cuneo's buildings that are of similar dimensions (40x17 mt. approx.); all three have a straight ending apse and a marked difference in height between the nave and the aisle.

Churches of later periods, instead, are more similar to the 'hall-church' typology, as their dimensions increase (the Dominican constructions in Chieri, Turin, Savigliano, Alba are close to 50x20 mt) and have a polygonal apse.