

Medieval and modern Canavese: the Oglianico case, a rural community from feoff through commune

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The study relates to the modern and medieval Canavese, particularly to the settlement (shelter) of Oglianico.

The work was developed and structured through three different parts:

- conformation and geographic/ historical boundaries of the Canavese area and of some noble families who had great influence on the territorial management;
- research about the Piedmontese medieval structure and operational policies;
- analysis about the collective medieval fortifications, such as the shelters, focusing on the Oglianico one.

Actually, it was easy to draw an historical description of the zone, while it was definitely more difficult to understand the features of the buildings erected during the medieval period, and the way they were organized.

In order to understand it, I started a research about the noble families living in these zones as lords or landowners, the sponsors of the settlement forms. Having thus found few books on this issue, I had to focus my attention on archive documents, particularly on medieval consignments.

It was discovered that the noble consortium of the Canavese zone was not forthcoming in declaring the feudal property extent to the Savoy, since they were received as franchised from the Empire and not from the Savoy, whose arrive in Canavese was belated.

The consigned material follows the methods imposed by the Savoy bureaucracy, according to a prearranged notarial form that requires an accurate interpretation of the terms in use in order to understand both the relationship between feudal lord and vassal, together with the quality and the legal/ material situation of the properties. Thanks to Ilo Vignono's translation I found the names of the Canavese feoffs within these Savoy consignments. I already knew that these names belonged to ancient noble families, such as San Martino, Valperga, Castellamonte, Rivarolo and their ramifications.

I could therefore restore the time situation.

Discovering that the Canavese zone was dominated by local lords increased my interest about the feoff, the organization of the community in the Piedmontese region and the dominant settlement forms.

This was performed in order to reach the main aim: the reconstruction of the shelter of Oglianico.



Tower-Gate. View of the entrance tower of the shelter of Oglianico



Front view of the typical watch-tower, the only preserved example in the whole Canavese zone

The construction period of the shelter dates back to the 12th and the 15th centuries, driven by the beginning of the communes and by laical and ecclesiastical feudatories. The shelter still shows its almost intact entrance tower, fortified by the typical watch-tower, the only preserved example in the whole Canavese zone.

The main aim was the reconstruction of the cadastral map of the shelter, dated 1624, and the study of the ancient building cells on the inside.



A typical, preserved building cell inside the shelter, made up with two rooms

I made thus use of a manuscript about “Consegnamenti di beni a registro di Oglianico” (*Property consignments registered in Oglianico, T.N.*) preserved at the communal archives of the aforementioned town. The register quotes all the Oglianico consigners declaring: “*case, ricetti, stalle, travate, ayre, canaperie, terreni, cassine, casiamenti, corti, boschi ed alten*”.

I consequently reported the consignments of the locals.

This transcription was organized as table.

I tried then to realize a concise reconstruction of a part of the cadastral map of the shelter.

The base of my two possible reconstructions was the most ancient cadastral map we came into possession, related to the built-up area of Oglianico (the Rabbini map of 1863), and the reconstruction of the map of the aforementioned shelter performed by the scholar Carlo Nigra.

This aim was partially reached, since the map (1863) was more recent than the cadastral register I analyzed, and it presented lots of changes. It was thus difficult to set the consigned properties inside the shelter; therefore the construction was just partial.

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