

sous la direction de
LAMIA HADDA
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Villages et quartiers à risque d'abandon

*Stratégies pour la connaissance,
la valorisation et la restauration*

TOME 2

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THE VILLAGE OF MONTERANO: IDENTITY FEATURES, AND RESTORATION

Barbara Tetti

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G. B. Cingolani, *Topografia geometrica dell'Agro Romano, 1692*, in P. A. Frutaz, *Le carte del Lazio, Roma 1972*, vol. II, XXXII.1d; detail.

The contribution aims at examining the significant case of the ancient village of Monterano, located in the neighbourhood of Rome, in Canale Monterano municipality, perched on the plateau of a tufaceous hill, west of Bracciano Lake, uninhabited. The initial layout of Monterano is attributable to the Etruscan era; between the Sixth and Seventh centuries, it acquired a relevance that ensured prosperity until the end of the Eighteenth century when, due to political events, it was abandoned: the population settled in the plain below, giving life to the urban centre called Canale Monterano. Its morphological characteristics and the state of abandonment were generating a sense of detachment of the population from the ancient village, until recently. A new awareness raised in the Seventies and Eighties of the Twentieth century, by studies and researches came to the recognition of the historical-architectural and naturalistic heritage, so that they were finally perceived as identity values by the community. At the same time, Monterano Regional Natural Reserve was established, to protect over a thousand hectares of the Canale Monterano area, including the ancient village. Moreover, starting from the early Nineties, significant reinforcement and restoration projects of the ruined structures have been carried out. In this frame, recent actions on today's system have been undertaken, trying to escape the dualism of Monterano-Canale Monterano couple. Regarding this, the institutional initiatives contributed the projects drafting of the paths to reach and visit the naturalistic glimpses and ancient remains; the task involved researches and experimental works conducted by the Sapienza University of Rome and by the University of Tuscia, by the Regional Natural Reserve, the Municipality of Canale Monterano, as well as by local associations and citizenship. The synergy pursued, looking at the confluence of the various disciplines, is contributing to define the action on heritage, considering that conservation and innovation are the founding terms of the safeguard-development issue. In this regard, Restoration discipline can indicate values, report risks, and direct the project approach based on the recognized degree of transformability.

Keywords: heritage, restoration, safeguard, development

Memories and perceptions

The contribution aims at examining the significant case of the ancient Monterano at present time uninhabited, located in the neighbourhood of Rome. Its initial layout is attributable to the Etruscan period; living through Roman and medieval Era, during the VI and VII centuries it acquired a relevance that ensured prosperity to people. At the end of the XVIII century, due to political events, it was abandoned, and the population settled in the plain below, giving life to the urban centre named Canale. Contemporary, the state of ruins contributes to some particular significances inside and with surrounding. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1
The ancient settlement in a view looking from east to west; main architectures emerge from the tuffaceous hill, surrounded by greenery. Ph. by A. P. Bambolo, published in F. Cesarano, B. Tetti, 2018, cit.



Within the Tolfetano-Sabatina region, west of Bracciano Lake, Monterano stands perched on a plateau of a tuffaceous hill, close to the Mignone torrent: in this area small settlements, around the springs and along the waterways, were already in existence in prehistoric times. Around the VIII century b. C. the territory was occupied by *Caere*, becoming part of the *Lucumonia Ceretana*; during the Etruscan era, structured villages were built located on upland plains, usually at the confluence of two waterways: so was Monterano, called *Manthura*. Being the Etruria region conquered by Romans, the routes network radically changed, referring to the Capital centrality, so Monterano remained along a secondary path and lapsed into a small suburban village. The territory was crossed by consular roads, some of them still existing: Aurelia, Cassia, Clodia, Flaminia, and Cornelia passing the countryside, connecting Rome to Tarquinia, entering Monterano neighbouring by Ponte del Diavolo.

During the Middle Ages, it returned to its former role as a military stronghold and refuge, flourishing until the Modern age, once more along a favourable itinerary: «*Riding through steep slopes, passing the Mignone, crossing those mountains with clear and very fresh waters, we entered the vague and delightful town of Monterano, famous for its excellent wines, verdant for its thick and very dense grains*»¹.

Monterano was scarcely documented until the XVI century when some changes of ownership wereregistered involving noble Roman families -such as Anguillara, Colonna, Mellini, Della Rovere, Cybo and Orsini-. Starting from late XVII century it was administrated by the Altieri family, to whom the last significant city guise, witnessed by ruins still existing, is to be attributable, including the Baronial Palace and S. Bonaventura

¹ Chronicle describing the journey made by Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini «...cavalcando per chine scoscese, passato il Mignone, che con chiare e freschissime acque attraversa quelle montagne, entrammo nel vago e dilettevole paese di Monterano, famoso per gli ottimi vini, verdeggiante per gli spessi e foltissimi grani», J. A. F. Orbaan, Documenti sul barocco in Roma, Roma 1920.



complex, located west, out of the walls. The palace was built enlarging the fortified structures situated on the highest point of the tuff spur; around it, modest houses and the churches of S. Maria Assunta and S. Rocco were located. Altieri palace became a pivotal in the reformed layout: the ancient fortress area came to be the city centre, through a new arrangement of a square, Piazza Longa, characterized by the cliff fountain, and the secret garden.

The village was protected by walls -formed by the “bastioned houses”- and gates, illustrated in the plate by Giovanni Battista Cingolani dated 1692; outside the walls S. Bonaventura convent, the mill and the granaries stood ². The view by Giuseppe Barbieri describes the town at the time of its abandonment, occurred between the end of the XVIII and the beginning of the XIX century³. The Papal Land Registry compiled in 1818, records it as an Altieri family undivided property, named «*Monterano dirocato*» [ruined], informing that it was mostly inhabited and decayed.⁴ (Figg. 2-4)

The abandonment occurred during the Roman Republic period, due to the political events of the years 1798-1799: people leaving settled down in Canale and Monteverginio, for whose improvement Monterano provided construction material. The uneasy morphological characteristics and the state of decadence were generating a sense of detachment from the village, until recently: still during the early XX century, inhabitants of the region were naming it *Monteranaccio* [bad Monterano] because of its inhospitable appearance, war event memories, and epidemics: the epithet shows as it was felt separated by historical positive reminiscence. ⁵

² G. B. Cingolani, *Topografia geometrica dell'Agro Romano*, 1692

³ G. Barbieri, *veduta di Monterano in Palazzo Altieri di Oriolo*, 1782.

⁴ Archivio di Stato di Roma, *Catasto Gregoriano*, 1818, Civitavecchia, mappa 24.

⁵ On the history of Monterano and its region L. Barelli, *Monterano «città diruta»*, in *Riserva Naturale Monterano: lavori di restauro e consolidamento*, a cura di F. De Cesaris, A. Di Muzio, M. Morbidelli, Vetralla (VT) 2016, pp.13-24; F. Stefani, *Monterano, Appunti sul territorio e la storia*, in “*I Quaderni di Monterano*”, 1., Canale Monterano 2014; F. Stefani, *La storia del rinnovamento urbanistico di Monterano nel Seicento*, “*I Quaderni di Monterano*”, n.2 Canale Monterano 2015; F. Stefani, *Le strade antiche nel territorio di Canale Monterano*, in *Il Borgo di Monterano, Caratteri identitari e prospettive di valorizzazione*, a cura di B. Tetti, F. Cesarano, Vetralla (VT), 2018, pp. 21-28; L. Gasperini, *Monterano: un centro minore dell'Etruria meridionale*, Louvain 1963; H. Hager, Bernini, Mattia de



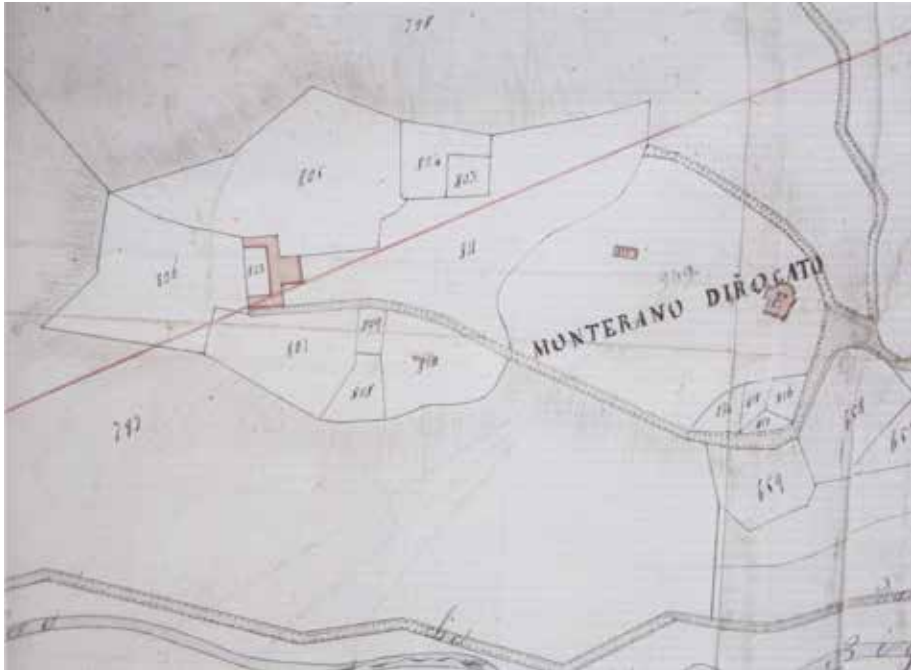
Fig. 3
G. Barbieri, view
of Monterano in
Palazzo Altieri di
Oriolo, 1782.
Published in L.
Barelli 2016, cit.,
Fig 14, p.18.



Fig. 4
Archivio di Stato
di Roma, Catasto
Gregoriano, 1818,
Civitavecchia,
mappa 24, detail.
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Barelli 2016, cit.,
Fig 15, p.19.

A new awareness raised during the second half of the XX century, looking at the identification of the historical-architectural and naturalistic heritage, so that the still existing testimonies of the past begun finally to be perceived as a common identity by the community. Studies and exploration of Monterano were revitalized: the area hosted cinematographic settings, archaeological researches, historical and artistic studies contributing to the recognition of historical and environmental features, calling the attention to the close bond between history and nature. As a consequence, starting from the early Nineties, significant reinforcement and restoration works were carried out, including those on S. Bonaventura and S. Rocco churches, Palazzo Altieri, and city walls and gates. Moreover, in 1988 a Monterano Regional Natural Reserve was established to protect

Rossi and the church of S. Bonaventura at Monterano, in "Architectural history", 21.1978, 68-78; M. Benucci, G. Romagnoli, La chiesa di San Bonaventura a Monterano: documenti, immagini, strutture materiali, Vetrala (VT), 2009; L. Gasperini, Il Braccianese nell'antichità dalla preistoria al medioevo, in "Tuscia Archeologica" 2, 5-6.1971, 4-11; A. Pinelli, Bemini a Monterano, in Il Seicento/documenti e interpretazioni, in "Ricerche di Storia dell'arte", 1-2.1976, 172-188; L. Di Salvo, La chiesa e il convento di S. Bonaventura a Monterano, Bracciano 1980 (Quaderni della Forum Clodii, 7); E. Debenedetti, Giuseppe Barbieri, un diario vivo idealmente dedicato alla famiglia Altieri, in "700 Disegnatore: incisioni, progetti, caricature, a cura di Elsa Debenedetti, Roma 1997 (Studi sul Settecento Romano, 13), pp. 183-227; F. Stefani, Monterano: appunti sul territorio e la storia, Canale Monterano 1998; L. Gasperini, Archeologia e storia del territorio canalese, Canale Monterano 1999; M. Piccioni, Nella venuta che fecero li francesi. Il feudo Altieri e il Patrimonio tra insurgenti francesci e giacubbini loro partipanti 1789-99, Canale Monterano 2003 (Quaderni della Riserva naturale regionale Monterano, 5).



over a thousand hectares of the most representative and intact habitat of the Tuscia Romana region, rich in biodiversity, also including the ancient village; enlarged in 1993, the Reserve today protects over 1,000 hectares of land, most of which collectively owned and managed by Canale Monterano Agricultural University.⁶

Former and present identity: values to conserve, features to enhance

Monterano today constitutes a *unicum*, actualizing matters concerning landscape, environment, building ruins, architectural remnants, cusp border areas, paths; not an immutable but a dynamic spot, enclosing construction and re-construction periods succeeded one another: it expresses the synthesis of a continuous modification process, still in progress.

Achieved a consciousness regarding the whole of qualities embodied by Monterano, closely bonded between ruins and wild, a new question raised, regarding how to manage such

⁶ F. Stefani, Monterano: riserva naturale, Rivista militare 1989; La Riserva Naturale Regionale Monterano: ricerca e gestione, a cura di Ufficio tecnico della Riserva Naturale Regionale Monterano, Canale Monterano 2011; <http://www.monteranoriserva.com>. The Agricultural University of Canale Monterano (Agricultural Association) was established in 1906; it administrates, manages and enjoys goods deriving from civic easements, regarding harvesting, sowing, grazing and wood; <http://www.agrariacanale.org/statuto>



Fig. 5
Border areas:
wild and built
components
firmly bonded,
generating an
indivisible new
whole.

a heritage. Main issue is the memory perception by people living this area, heiring a place now disconnected from current daily life but increasingly present as a business opportunity, primarily because of its touristic vocation. To encourage an enhancement plan, including economic profits, able to keep protected the recognized significances, not making use of natural resources and vestiges inherited as a deposit to take advantage of, gratifying financial interests trading upon them, come out as a chancy balance.

For the reasons mentioned, a deep investigation about the 'values issue' is to be pointed out, looking at achieving guidelines to plan a project aimed at safeguard memories, still existing or not, tangible or not. Pursuing this crucial objective, leading ambition is knowledge acquirement and spread, in order to promote the comprehension in approaching such a complex topic. The today-settlement of the village is characterized by border elements, qualifying the perimeter, determined by the peculiar geomorphological characteristics, also decisive for the city shape.

Actually, its layout shows up the urban and territorial logic, clearly visible from outside and internalsights, revealing green systems settled around the plateau, depending on the ground height variations and on the hydrological system of the valley. (Fig. 5) On the north-east limit, on a large floor, generating a profound suggestion, the complex of S. Bonaventura stands out, including the church and the convent, attributable to the second half of XVII century, in a state of ruin. The convent opens toward the eastern outlook; at side, a large open space links other building -the granary and the city walls-, creating a connective net of high value, asking for a vegetation regeneration. The church faces the village with its Berninian façade; it has no roof, but the central plan and apse survived; at its very center, a tree of considerable size rises, occupying the entire hall, with a dome



Fig. 6
S. Bonaventura
church façade,
looking the open
space, upwards
to the village.



shape crown: the image is commonly considered an iconic and mnemonic symbol of the decay. (Fig. 6) This peculiar case reveals a main point, namely the infesting plants: on one hand it constitutes a distinguishing quality of the present image, on the other hand it causes severe damages and makes maintenance operations difficult. For this reason, during the restoration works, vegetation thinning was strictly limited, in order to preserve a place main feature, consisting of architectures deeply involved in landscape. On the opposite side of the plateau, Palazzo Altieri and S. Rocco church remains emerge, immersed in the verdant plot and visible from near and distant sight, highlighting values of relationship with the close and wider context: between them, squares and free spaces open, where once the social life took place. Regarding this a remark arises upon Piazza Longa, still conserving its vocation as a distributive element of the urban system, expressing a significant testimonial interest. (Fig. 7) In the actual asset, difficult to perceive are the ancient city walls, making hard the urban layout understanding (inside-outside of the buildings), as the relationship with main architectures (S. Rocco, Palazzo Altieri, Santa Maria Assunta) and the territorial configuration. In addition to paths having both functional and structural historical value, nowadays spontaneous tracks, connecting each other's various elements, can be followed. Their arrangement should be re-configured, to define an open-air museum itinerary, on the traces of the civilizations who populated the area -from prehistoric artifacts, Etruscan and Roman, up to the XVIII century-; it should include attention to environment qualities and landscape perception.

After the experience carried out during the restoration works on main architectures, recently a wider reflection has been advanced, involving researchers of different study fields, promoting conferences and exhibitions to diffuse new acquisitions on the topic, then to share a common route to base future actions on. Hitherto, some actions have been undertaken, trying to escape the dualism of Canale- Monterano couple, seen as two opposing roles of daily present and identity past, merely functional to the economic-touristic development of the first one, based on the historical and naturalistic heritage of the second one. In this regard, the local community and the government have been trying to find conscientious suggestions to base the managing of the territory on. The task is involving investigations and experimental works conducted by Sapienza University of Rome and Tuscia University, by Regional Natural Reserve, Canale Monterano Municipality, as well as by local associations and citizenship.⁷ The synergy pursued, looking at the confluence of the various disciplines, is aimed at contributing the approach to heritage, considering that 'conservation' and 'innovation' are the founding terms of the *safeguard-development* issue. In view of future actions, Restoration as a discipline can indicate values, report risks, and supervise the project method depending on the degree of transformability identified. Considering the *safeguard development* dialectic, safeguarding the most ancient elements, constitutes an essential part of the development strategy concerning the whole urban and territorial system. To identify suitable procedures for heritage enhancement, considering space-environment and its pluri-dimensional character, deepening the aspects related to changing is necessary: the limits within the actions can take place are controlled by planning, as a result of analysis and considerations. The investigation upon the environment to deep the heritage in its wider sense, including the wild and anthropic components in their constitutive and transformation logic dynamics, can orientate transformations compatible with the whole of values.

⁷ The volume *Il Borgo di Monterano. Caratteri identitari e prospettive di valorizzazione*, edited in 2018, recollect essays proceedings from the conference held in Canale Monterano -Incontro di Studi- on October 29, 2017; it also include some project compiled by the students attending the Faculty of Architecture, Sapienza-Università di Roma, exposed in the exhibition *L'antica Monterano, Dati conoscitivi e prospettive di ricerca: alcune idee di progetto*, Canale Monterano October 29-November 4, 2017. Book contributions by P. P. Balbo, S. Cecchini, F. Cesarano, S. Ciferri, F.T. Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, F. M. Mantero, M. Nettekoven, G. Scarascia Mugnozza, M. P. Sette, F. Stefani, B. Tetti; Introduction by A. Bettarelli, D. Esposito, a cura di F. Cesarano, B. Tetti, Vetralla (VT), 2018.

⁸ M. P. Sette, *Per un approccio progettuale interrelato. Alcune esemplificazioni*, in F. Cesarano, B. Tetti 2018, cit., pp. 35-46; G. Miarelli Mariani, *Sviluppo, salvaguardia, e tutela nel paesaggio e Le azioni sul paesaggio*, in Piani, parchi paesaggi, a cura di C. Muscarà, Roma-Bari 1995, pp.239-256 e 247-256; M. P. Sette, *Restauro e tutela paesaggistica*, in "Palladio", N.S. 26.2013,52, 144-147.



Fig. 7

Piazza Longa, alongside Palazzo Altieri in a foreshortened view.

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Villages et quartiers à risque d'abandon sont aujourd'hui une problématique commune à des nombreuses régions de la Méditerranée, considérée comme un point stratégique dans les nouvelles politiques européennes. L'abandon progressif des zones internes est une constante dans les pays caractérisés par le sous-développement économique, avec les phénomènes d'émigration et de fragmentation du patrimoine culturel. Cela entraîne des problèmes d'architecture et de gestion du territoire. L'objectif principal de ce travail de recherche est de créer un espace de discussion qui comprend l'étude du patrimoine architectural et du paysage ainsi que les témoignages démo-ethno-anthropologiques.