

# The fragment 279 ab of the *Forma Urbis Romae* A proposal for the partial demolition of *Regina Coeli*<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Following an established methodology, the study of the formation process of the urban fabric of a complex and multi-layered context such as Rome, allowed us to position the fragment 279 ab of the *Forma Urbis Romae* and to understand the history of the site as the necessary premise to its contemporary transformation. The paper examines in detail the formation process of *Via della Lungara*, in particular of the block now occupied by the *Regina Coeli* prison. We inferred the rules for the contemporary design from the analysis of the formation process of urban tissues, following the prevision of the dismantling of the prison. This hypothesis, proposed for the first time by the governorate of Rome in 1930, has been waiting for nearly a century. It is necessary to verify different strategies for the transformation of the *Regina Coeli* prison: is it preferable to recover the old buildings, or to propose the partial or total demolition of the complex for a complete re-design of the urban fabric of the area? A design proposal, based on the partial demolition of the old buildings, is exposed. Despite the new type adopted for the prison design, we found some elements of continuity with the former monastery of *Regina Coeli* and adopted them as the base of the contemporary design.

*“L. Quinctius trans Tiberim contra eum ipsum locum ubi nunc navalia sunt, quattuor iugerum colebat agrum, quae prata Quinctia vocantur”*

**Key words:** Via della Lungara, morphology and typology, Regina Coeli, prison design, urban fabric.

## *Morphology and typology for the history of Rome*

The city of Rome is a unique example of continuity of the processual evolution of the urban fabric, for the considerable amount of *written documents* available, for the presence of *material documents* coming from archaeological excavations and overall for the scientific studies on the evolution of urban fabric conducted by the Roman school of Muratori and Caniggia.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the research on urban morphology in analyzing the medieval urban fabric (V-XV cent.) has not taken into the necessary account the historical continuity in the implementation of the method, for the scarcity of sources on the medieval city or for the lack of archaeological data. Until a few decades ago, archaeologists when excavating to reach the layer of the classical city, often obliterated and did not document properly the medieval stratigraphy. Similarly, early morphological studies gave less attention to the medieval city focusing mostly on the Roman times. The case of *via della Lungara* is documented with continuity

1. Published in Italian as *Lettura e progetto di via della Lungara. Il frammento 279ab della Forma Urbis Romae e il processo formativo del tessuto urbano medievale a Roma*, “Architettura e città”, n. 7, 2012, pp. 49-54.

2. TITUS LIVIUS, *Ab urbe condita*, Liber III, xxvi, 8.

3. MURATORI ET AL. 1963; CANIGGIA 1997; BASCIÀ, CARLOTTI, MAFFEI 2000; STRAPPA 1995.

from the Republican period to the present day and is here studied with an innovative methodological approach, considering also the notarial quantitative sources and their topographic data, along with the traditional morphological analysis, in order to build a comprehensive procedural typological framework, which is essential for the contemporary transformation project. This text shows some results of a research project<sup>4</sup> on the formation process of the urban fabric in Rome and ends with a didactic application held in the seminar “architecture and city” directed by the writer in the design studio 2 prof. Giuseppe Strappa, Faculty of Architecture, Sapienza, University of Rome, A.A. 2013/2014.

#### *From the Republic to the Forma Urbis*

We will begin the history of this place in 458 BC, with *Lucius Quintius*, also known as *Cincinnatus*, in this year the Roman Republic called him for a provisional military dictatorship during the war against the *Aequi*. The quotation from Livy recalls that *Cincinnatus*, when the messengers of the Republic came to recruit him and cross the Tiber using the *trajectus* at the expense of the Republic, lived in this very same place, at those times called *Prata Quinctia*, where he owned four acres of cultivated land. The territory between the slope of the Janiculum and the Tiber, in Republican times was outside the city walls. The Servian walls ran parallel to *via Aurelia*, which crossed the *Janiculensis* ridge and went downhill, passing the *Arx*, to the river where there was a bridge. Here the Aurelia and the Servian walls crossed a *valley route* parallel to the river, today *via Flaminia*, although this road went on the opposite side of the river after crossing the pons *Milvius*. This *territorial valley route* on the right of the Tiber in ancient times passed *Trastevere* reaching the sea with the name of *via Portuensis*. During Caesar’s time, this area outside the walls was included in the *pomerium*. Julius Caesar planned a river diversion, which probably was never realized, to remedy the problem of flooding in the *Campus Martius*, and designed a new *pomerium*, which shared the same path of *via della Lungara*. The *pomerium* was a sacred border, different from the city walls, within which no one could carry weapons. The Roman Republic had confirmed the royal prohibition to enter in arms within the city, and whoever would disobey would be executed; the same myth of Romulus’ foundation reports that Remo entered with the weapons in violation of the sacred boundary of the *Roma quadrata* and for this very reason he was killed. A series of boundary stones, placed at regular intervals and bearing engraved topographic data defined the *pomerium*. This was therefore in this stretch a territorial rectilinear infrastructure with an existing road. In Augustan times, the city grew outside of the ancient Servian perimeter and in this area, and along the matrix route following the *pomerium*, tombs, *horrea*, a wine cellar, *thermae* and some villas appeared. Beginning in 270 AD emperor Aurelian built the second city walls, deviating from *via Aurelia* and crossing the existing *via Septimiana*, with the *porta Septimiana*. In this stretch

4. Sapienza Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Architettura e Progetto, Ricerca di Università Anno 2012, *Metodi di progettazione per i tessuti storici: processo formativo e ipotesi di trasformazione del Carcere di Regina Coeli*, prof. G. Strappa.

outside of *porta Septimiana*, naturally defended by the *janiculensis* ridge, the city did not have any protection walls. Not by coincidence, every attack to the city in history happened here. The romans fought the social war on this side, the Goths besieged Rome from here, the Saracens arrived in Rome in this area, Charles V entered to sack Rome in 1527, passing from here and the same battle of the Janiculum in 1849, between the Republican partisans and the French troops, took place in this area. Of course it was the morphologically weakest point and therefore quite suitable to enter in the city. We also know from Procopius<sup>5</sup> that in the sixth century in this point, two parallel walls surrounded the river, one on the bank of the *Campus Martius*, and a second one along the current path of *via della Lungara*, built to protect the many water mills along the river. From Lanciani's archaeological map<sup>6</sup>, we learn that in Roman times this road had a stone paving. During the works for the construction of the embankments of the Tiber, at the end of the nineteenth century, archaeologists found the street paving stones, together with the ruins of the tomb of *Sulpicius Platorinus*, now reconstructed in the museum of the Baths of Diocletian. Along this same road, archaeologists found also several *termini tiberini*<sup>7</sup>: the river margins required maintenance, especially in this constantly flooded area. These stones fixed at a regular distance of 240 feet, bearing the year, the distance in feet from the next milestone, the *consul* and the emperor defined the Tiber banks. Archaeologists found in the area of *via della Lungara* a total of six *termini tiberis*.<sup>8</sup> We should acknowledge that in Roman times this was a suburban area subject to flooding, flanked by the *pomerium*, with a series of *termini tiberini*, a fortification built along the river and a road, with a territory probably cultivated until the imperial era. Later, joining the iugeral network of the *pomerium*, of a module of 240 feet (about 71 meters), first a serial urban fabric of warehouses and mills developed, and in the Middle Ages it gradually it transformed into a residential urban fabric. Luck has it that in this area there is an even more accurate documentation. One of the fragments<sup>9</sup> of the Severian marble plan<sup>10</sup> is, according to our positioning hypothesis, a part of *via della Lungara*, or whatever the straight paved road already present in the imperial era was called. The positioning of the fragment was possible by comparing different sources<sup>11</sup> including the GIS *Aquae Urbis Romae*.<sup>12</sup> In particular, the presence of two *trajectus* reported in the fragment, corresponding to the two ferries documented in medieval times, one of

5. DEWING 1924, p. 187.

6. LANCIANI 1893-1901; LANCIANI 1902-1912, p. 161.

7. *Cippus of Gallus and Censorinus*, CIL VI, 1235 F., MARCIVS.L.F.CENSORINVS / C.ASINIVS.C.F.GALLVS / COS / EX.S.C.TERMIN.R.R.PROX.CIPP. P.XX / CVRATORES.RIPARVM. QVI.PRIMI.TERMINAVER / EX.S.C.RESTITVERVNT.

8. CIL VI, 1235 F; CIL VI, 1239 B; CIL VI, 1239 D; CIL VI, 1239 E; CIL VI, 1239 G.

9. Plate II-8, fragment Stanford 279 ab; Copyright © The Stanford *Digital Forma Urbis Romae Project*.

10. *Forma Urbis Romae*, Marble plan of Rome (203-209 AD), scale 1:240 (one foot corresponds to two actus), South-East above.

11. BELLORI 1673; CARETTONI ET AL. 1960; RODRÍGUEZ ALMEIDA 1981.

12. *Aquae Urbis Romae*, published by the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, University of Virginia, project director, K. Wentworth Rinne, Copyright 1998-2012.

which was probably the same one used by the messengers of the Republic to bring to Rome *Cincinnatus*. The fragment that we positioned<sup>13</sup> corresponds, superimposing it on the urban cadaster of Rome (1818-1824) at the same urban fabric of the nineteenth-century Rome. We can recognize the obliquity of some building on the opposite side of the street in the two mentioned cartographic sources, also an alley going towards the *Janiculum* is recognizable, clogged in time, but perfectly readable in the diachronic comparison of the two land registers at a distance of more than 1500 years<sup>14</sup>. The discontinuity of the urban fabric given by the transition towards the river is also clearly readable. In this research, the placement of a fragment of the *Forma Urbis* gives us information on the formation process of the modern urban fabric. We could identify a nineteenth century notarial document<sup>15</sup> of the row house, near the *trajectus*, that is of the same stretch of urban fabric represented in the fragment of the *Forma Urbis*. The title 54 of the Capitoline archive of Rome, published by Spagnesi<sup>16</sup>, reports numerous surveys and proposed projects for the transformation of the buildings. It is an *atrium* row house with the entrance facing the river and connected with a building, possibly a warehouse or a mill, double the width of the house, which seems to coincide with the building represented in the *Forma Urbis* building.

#### *The early and late medieval urban fabric*

In the early Middle Ages, all those who came from the North settled in the plain below the hill around the Vatican basilica of St. Peter, the point of arrival in Rome of the *via Francigena*. Here, along the old Roman road network, the Germans founded all their *scholae*: the *schola francorum*, the *schola langobardorum*, the *schola frisonum* and the *schola saxonum*.<sup>17</sup> The name of *Borgo*, used today for this area, is a word of Gothic origin (*baurgs*, in Gothic fortification, city<sup>18</sup>), derived from a fortification built by Totila here for the siege of Rome during the Gothic war<sup>19</sup>. In 848 Pope Leo IV build here a defensive wall, called the Leonine wall, after that the Saracens in 846 during the attack had poured on the left bank of the river entering *Borgo* and violating the tomb of Peter. The Leonine walls intersected the road of *via della Lungara* with the *posterula Saxonum*. It was the same king of Wessex Ina to found here the *schola Saxonum* in 727 after a pilgrimage to Rome, and today the church complex and the hospital of *Santo Spirito in Saxia* keeps the memory of the ancient name (*in Saxia*). Even the drawing attributed to Sangallo in the late fifteenth century,<sup>20</sup> with the project for the new gate of *Santo Spirito* and the new bastion, represented a *via recta* coming out of the city through that gate. *Via della Lungara*,

13. CAMIZ 2012.

14. RODRÍGUEZ ALMEIDA 1977.

15. Casa alla Lungara vicino la Barchetta de Covoli, TR I, Trastevere, Isola 99, part. 1177.

16. SPAGNESI 1974.

17. LEPRI 2004.

18. STAMM, HEYNE, WREDE 1896, p. 247.

19. GUIDONI 1990, pp. 3-36.

20. BAV, BARB. LAT. 4391 f. 4;

that many historians<sup>21</sup> wanted to attribute to Bramante (1503), existed already in the Middle Ages, and so did its gate (*posterula Saxonum*) and the gate on at the other end, the *porta Settimiana*. As mentioned by others,<sup>22</sup> Bramante's project concerned more likely a rectification of an existing street, or in our view the enlargement of an existing road. Along this same street the church of *S. Giacomo in Settimiano* (*St. Jacobi in Settimiano*), was built most probably in the ninth century, even though it is documented only since 1198. Along this road, also called *via sancta*, every year the procession of the *corpus domini*<sup>23</sup> would follow the pope from St. Peter to St. John in Lateran, crossing the river on the *pons Senatorius*. Along this road in the Middle Ages the urban fabric developed gradually, and facing the church a square was probably used to house a processional station. After the close examination of the medieval and modern cartographic sources, we could find a city view<sup>24</sup> of 1493 showing part of the retaining wall that surrounded the city of Rome and a sewer discharging into the river the water descending from the hydraulic structure behind it, maybe a spring, a sewer system or perhaps the *naumachia Domitiani*. Over several centuries, an urban fabric of warehouses and mills, and subsequently of row houses, with some paths stemming uphill to the *Janiculum*, replaced the original agrarian *iugerale* network of Republican times. Between the river bank and the hill-edge there was also an alternative piedmont route older than the straight Caesar's *pomerium* and street, used when the area was flooded. In this part of the city, the relationship between *iugeratio* and urban fabric becomes exemplary. By overlapping the *iugerale* grid of 240 feet (about 71 mt.) to the current urban fabric it is possible to underline the matrix formation of this urban fabric, based on the *iugeratio* employed by Caesar for the construction of the *pomerium*.

#### *Orazio Torriani and the masterplan for via della Lungara*

Furthermore, a project designed by Orazio Torriani in 1617<sup>25</sup> provided for a large housing development of the area with two new internal parallel roads between *via della Lungara* and the *Janiculum*. In Torriani's design of you can easily notice the obliquity of certain property limits and of some of the lateral roads following the same direction. We also outlined the rotation of two roads and their orthogonal system of paths being parallel to the piedmont ancient path. The block of the monastery of Regina Coeli, transformed at the end of the nineteenth century into a prison,<sup>26</sup> is shaped by this rotation, where two implantation paths are orthogonal to the *via della Lungara* and two other one are orthogonal and stemming from the *janiculensis* track. During the construction of the embankments of the, Tiber half of the urban fabric facing the Lungara street along the river was completely demolished.

21. Cfr. BIANCHI 1999, p. 136, fig. 14; BRUSCHI 1969, p. 628; TAFURI 1984, p. 69.

22. SPAGNESI 2001, p. 64.

23. The procession is represented in Stefano Dupérac, *Veduta delle sette chiese di Roma*, Antonio Lafréry editore, Roma 1575.

24. Hartmann Schedel, *Liber Chronicarum*, Anton Koberger, Nuremberg 1493.

25. BAV, Archivio del Capitolo di S. Pietro, Mappa, 78 a, b, c; cfr. MANFREDI 1999.

26. ADINOLFI 1998.

*Marcello Piacentini: demolishing Regina Coeli?*

The history of the prison of Regina Coeli is one of the funniest episodes of Rome: it was built in place of the residential neighborhood planned in 1873, outside of the city walls, in a position that in a few years would become central. Morgini's in his project used a type of building in use at the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, forcing it into the enclosure of the monastery of *Regina Coeli*. The prison was born in the wrong position, outside the provisions of the Plan, using an architectural model already obsolete at the time. The restricted size of the cells, the lack of sanitation, the insufficient open air space for inmates, the high density of the detainees and the central location made immediately this structure inadequate. It is evident that the new capital of the Savoy reign needed instruments of repression and the *Regina Coeli* prison became immediately one of its symbols. Forty years later, in the late '20s, the governorship of Rome entrusted Marcello Piacentini to design an airy neighborhood of the Academies in the place of the prison, considered inadequate and inhuman. The project, of which a large plastic existed inside Palazzo Corsini, foresaw an urban axis from *Piazza della Chiesa Nuova* to the new top of the *Janiculum*, and the demolition of some urban fabric on the other side of the Tiber, between *vicolo della Moretta* and *Via Giulia*. That project, perhaps a rhetoric one, proposed a solution for a real problem and was therefore included in the master plan of Rome in 1931. As often happens in Italy, the municipality implemented only part of the planned project. It started with the demolitions along *Via Giulia*, but disregarded the prison's demolition until the beginning of the war. We arrive therefore to world war two and the complete oblivion of the problem. Since then the administration changed the prison in some parts, with the addition of restrooms, the modification of some cells, but despite all, the prison continues today to hold detainees. Now dilapidated, with some parts unsafe and closed, the building – considered inhumane by a regime that did not shine for the respect of human rights – survived the war, the long democristian hegemony, the communist administration of Rome, the center-left times of Craxi, the penta-party, Rutelli, the Jubilee, Veltroni, Alemanno and finally Ignazio Marino. All the available parties of the First and Second Republic have followed in the government of the city and of the country, but no one has ever raised again the both human and urban issue of the *Regina Coeli* prison. We hope that today the council will decide, finally, to close the prison. After moving the detainees to a new facility, there are several possible solutions: the restoration of the building, its partial or total demolition. There should be project to follow the formation process of the urban fabric, interrupted by the prison's construction, to continue the historical city – without imitating it – through the language of contemporary architecture.<sup>27</sup> Following the formation process of the surrounding urban fabric, but also considering the jail as an episode of the consolidated urban Roman landscape, we carried out some experimental design with the aim to verify the possibility of partial or total demolition, reconstruction or restoration of the prison building. The one shown here is a case of partial demolition and reconstruction,

27. CAMIZ 2013.

according to the formation process of the building that Morgini superimposed on the religious complex of *Regina Coeli*, keeping the name but also the main compositional axis. Faced with such a radical transformation, the designer still wanted to maintain a strong element of continuity with the context. The project proposal shown here is in continuity with that attitude, demolishing parts of the building, opening its enclosure and transforming it from a closed segregating enclosure into an urban place with a strong polar character. This *polarity reversal*<sup>28</sup> follows the axis of symmetry of the prison, as Morgini superimposed it on the entrance axis of the monastery, thus inferring from the context the rules for its transformation.<sup>29</sup> The project is part of a hypothesis of urban transformation of larger scale, redefining the urban axis from *Piazza della Chiesa Nuova* to the *Janiculum* across the Tiber, thus connecting the two urban polarities and retracing the slope existing between the river and the *Janiculum*.

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Fig. 1. Plan of the urban fabric of medieval Rome, S. Muratori, R. Bollati, S. Bollati, G. Marinucci, *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Roma*, Roma 1963.

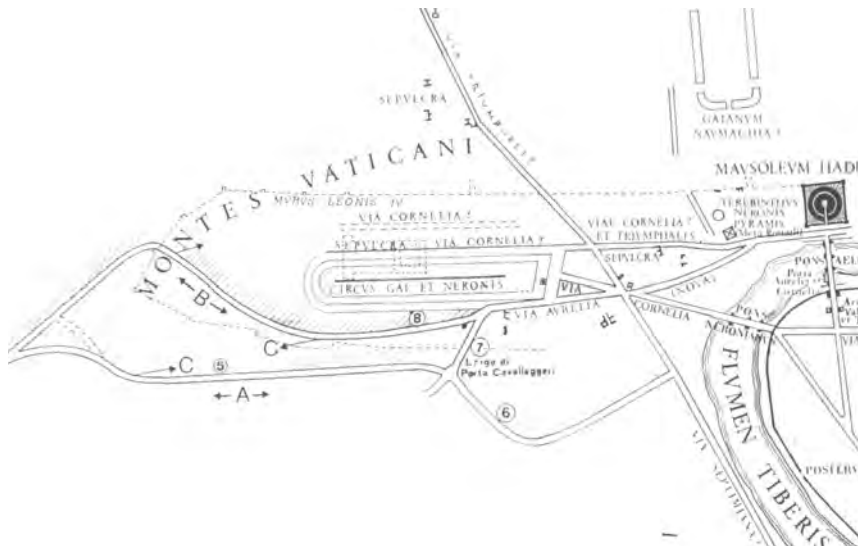


Fig. 2. N. Degrassi, *La datazione e il percorso della Via Aurelia e la Via Aurelia Nova nella zona del Vaticano*, «Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia», s. III, vol. LXI, (1988-1989), tav. I.



Fig. 3. *The Vatican in carolingian times (750-850)*, G. Lepri, *Urbanistica di borgo e Vaticano nel Medioevo*, Roma 2004, fig. 22.



Fig. 4. *The Vatican in carolingian times (750-850)*, G. Lepri, *Urbanistica di borgo e Vaticano nel Medioevo*, Roma 2004, fig. 22.



Fig. 5. Plan of the urban fabric of medieval Rome, S. Muratori, R. Bollati, S. Bollati, G. Marinucci, *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Roma*, Roma 1963.

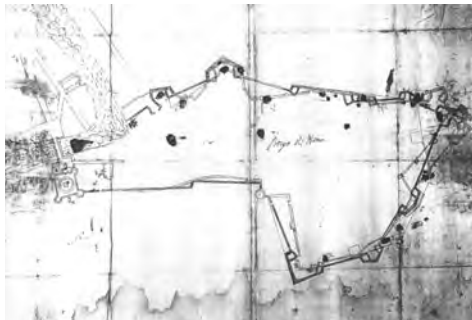


Fig. 6. Survey of the Leonine wall, by Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane, showing the project for the porta S. Spirito and the new bastions. Please note via della Lungara above (BAV, Barb. Lat. 4391 f.4).

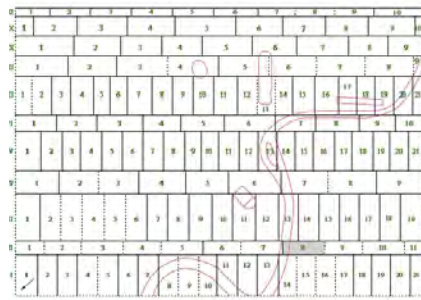


Fig. 7. Position of plates in the Forma Urbis Romae, in gray plate II-8, Copyright © The Stanford Digital Forma Urbis Romae Project.

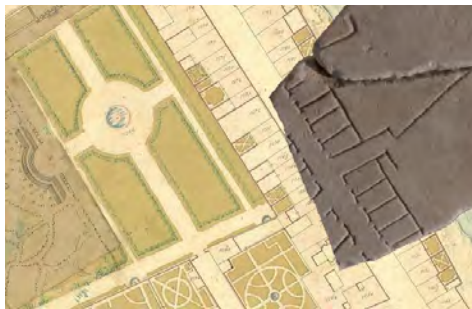


Fig. 8. Position of fragment 279 ab, Copyright © The Stanford Digital Forma Urbis Romae Project, on Archivio di Stato di Roma, Presidenza generale del censo, *Catasto Urbano di Roma*, 1824.



Fig. 9. Leonardo Bufalini, *Roma*, Roma 1551, ff. 20-21 (Courtesy of Kersu Dalal, Johnson Fain Partners, Los Angeles).



Fig. 10. Stefano Dupérac, *Veduta delle sette chiese di Roma*, Antonio Lafréry editore, Roma 1575.



Fig. 11. Orazio Torriani, *Pianta di via della Lungara*, 1617 (BAV, Archivio del Capitolo di S. Pietro, Mappe, 78 a,b,c).



Fig. 12. Elevation of the monastery and the church of Regina Coeli, drawing L. Teloni, engraving by E. Salandri, Cabinet of municipal prints, Rome.



Fig. 13. Plan showing the old urban tissue of Regina Coeli, S. Muratori, R. Bollati, S. Bollati, G. Marinucci, *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Roma*, Roma 1963, and Archivio di Stato di Roma, *Presidenza generale del censo, Catasto Urbano di Roma*, 1824.

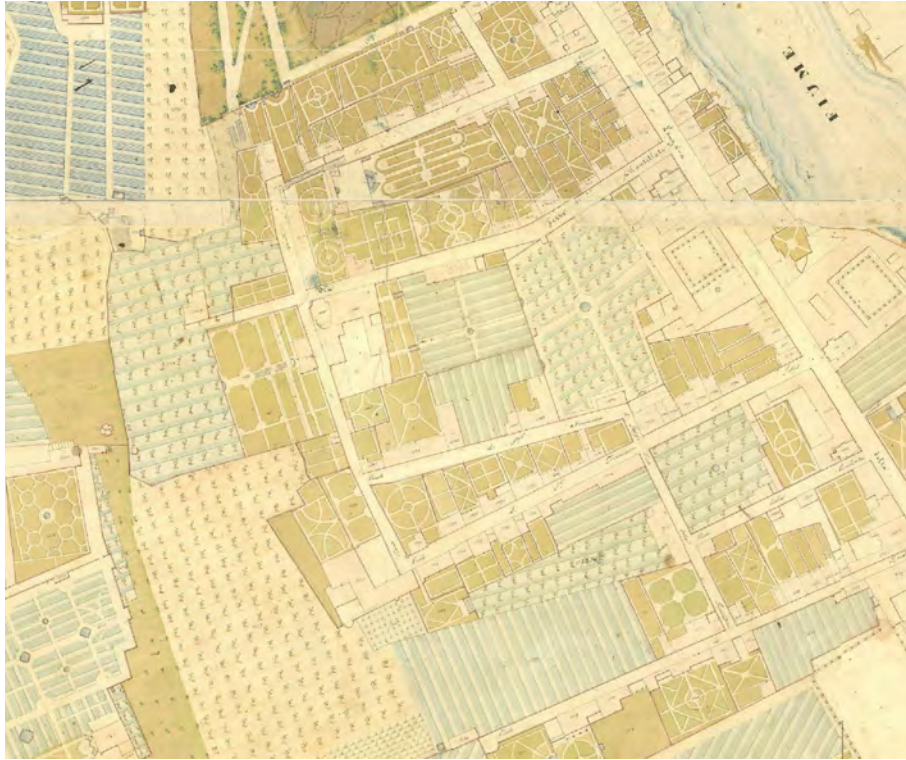
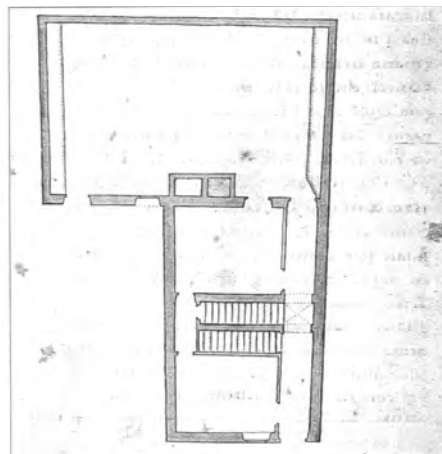


Fig. 14. Archivio di Stato di Roma, Presidenza generale del censo, Catasto Urbano di Roma, 1824.

Fig. 15. Casa alla Lungara vicino la Barchetta de Covoli, (TR I, Trastevere, Isola 99, part. 1177).





*Fig. 16. The elevation of the house facing the river in an old picture.*



*Fig. 17. The connection between the Regina Coeli building and the surrounding urban fabric, author's photo 2012.*



*Fig. 18. The Master Plan of Rome of 1873 and the residential district planned for the area of Regina Coeli.*



*Fig. 19. Rome seen from above, the Janiculum.*



Fig. 20. Perspective of M. Piacentini project for the area of the Regina Coeli prison.



Fig. 21. The detailed plan developed by Piacentini for the demolitions at vicolo della Moretta in 1931.



Fig. 22. G. Libertini, F. Lofiego, The formation process for the reconstruction of the urban fabric of Regina Coeli, Architectural Design II, prof. G. Strappa, a. a. 2013/2014, Master Degree in Architecture (Restoration), Sapienza University of Rome, seminar A. Camiz.

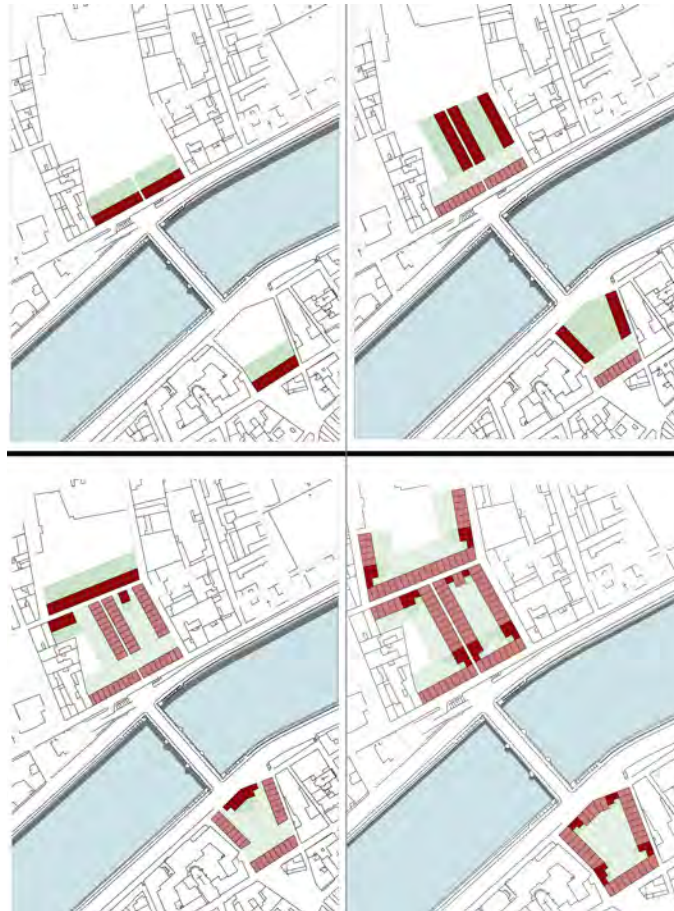


Fig. 23. G. Libertini, F. Lofiego, Hypothesis of the transformation for Regina Coeli prison, partial demolition and reconstruction, Architectural Design II, prof. G. Strappa, a. a. 2013/2014, Master Degree in Architecture (Restoration), Sapienza University of Rome, seminar A. Camiz.



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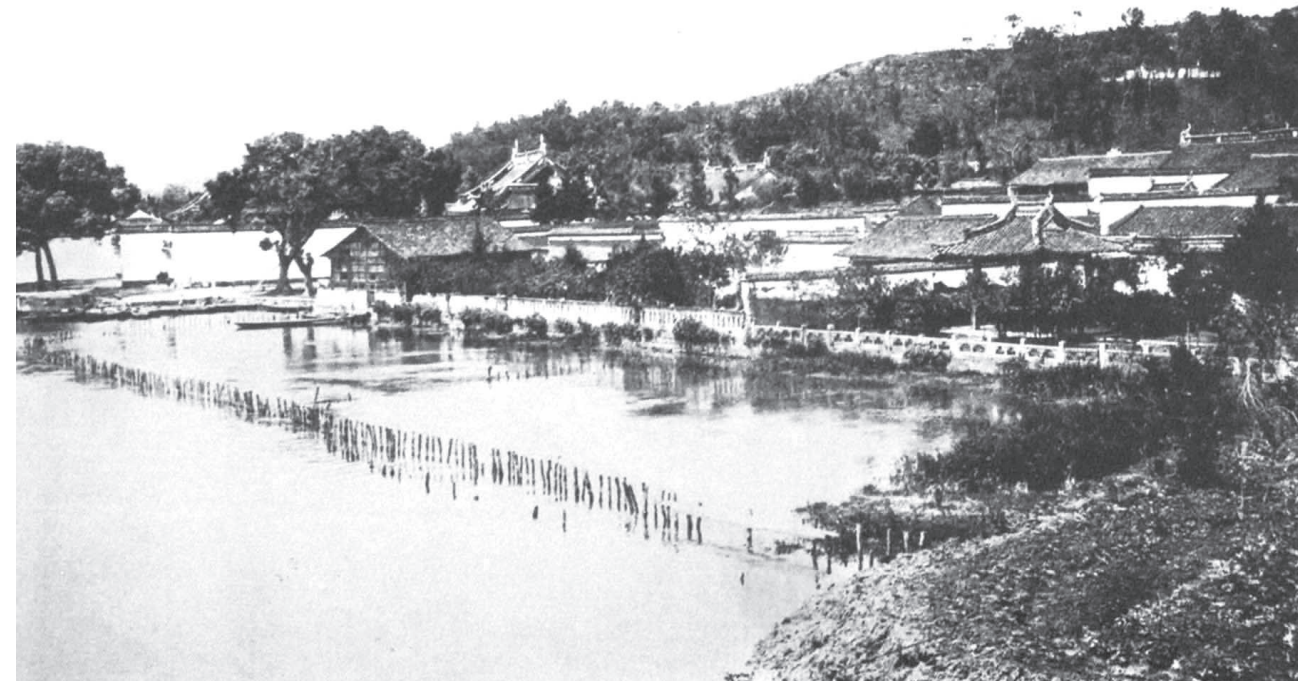
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Hangzhou is a very special city for Italian architects who want to learn about historical and contemporary architecture and about the urban challenges in contemporary China. There are further issues that we would like to investigate about Hangzhou in the future and in order to do that, it would be interesting to involve further experts such as archaeologists and hydrologists given the special presence of historical relics, water and several issues which still deserve a better enhancement.



HANGZHOU

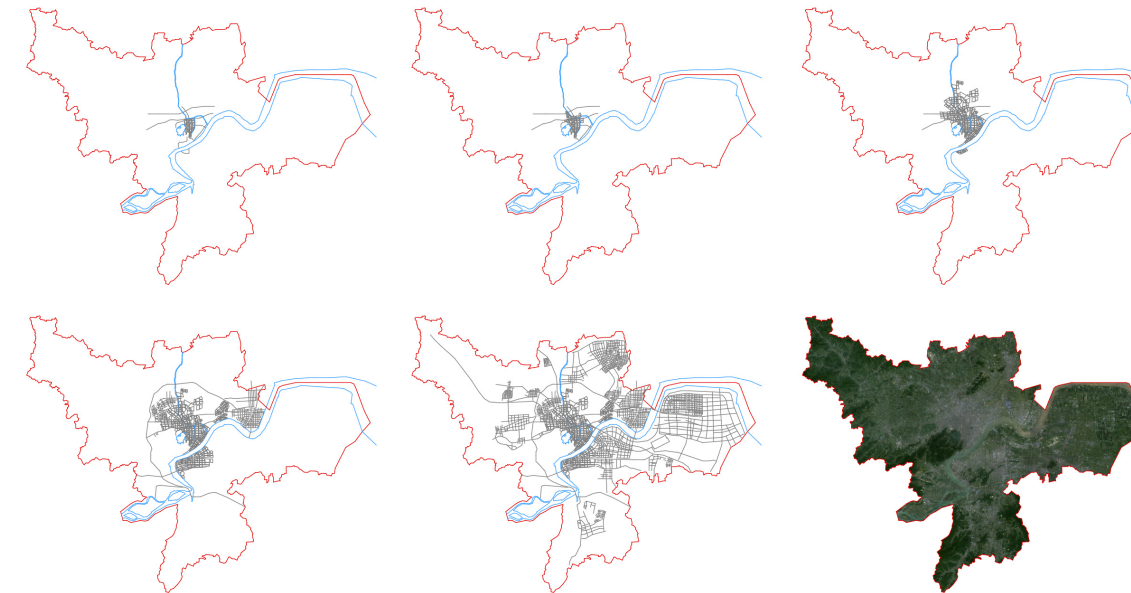
XIAOLING DAI, ANNA IRENE DEL MONACO, WENBO YU

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UNESCO-Chair SERIES #2

# Hangzhou

from Song Dynasty Capital to the challenge of Cultural Capital in contemporary China

edited by XIAOLING DAI, ANNA IRENE DEL MONACO, WENBO YU



This book collects writings on the urban history of Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang Province, and writings on comparative and cross-cultural issues related to China and the western architectural culture. Hangzhou is a significant example for scholars interested in studying the challenges that contemporary Chinese cities with a relevant urban history should face up to recover their traditional urban identity. Especially when monuments and urban textures have been widely compromised or destroyed by the recent urban development as it happened in the last three decades in China. So that, what remains as a tangible witness of the old urban past is more related to the collective memory (traditions and old sayings) than to real tangible relics. With a present metropolitan population of about 6 million inhabitants, Hangzhou, an ancient Capital of Imperial China during Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), is still today one of the most important historic 'water cities' in the world, especially the West Lake area, a national and international touristic attraction.

back cover: *Hangzhou - Old views (1912-1949): from the late Qing Dynasy to the Republic of China.*