

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

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

TOME 1

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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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Tunisie, village berbère de Zriba el-Alia (© L. Hadda)

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## SOMMAIRE

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### Préfaces

Giuseppe De Luca	16
Niccolò Casiddu	19
Costanza Milani	22
Mounsif Ibnoussina	23
Stefano Baccelli	25

### Présentation

La régénération des villages est un élément d'un projet de croissance durable et équitable	29
Saverio Mecca	

### Tome 1

#### **Cultures pour la conservation et la valorisation du patrimoine à risque d'abandon en Italie**

Dialogue around abandonment	37
Marco Abbo, Francesca Luisa Buccafurri	
Le musée diffuse: stratégie pour valoriser les villages à risque d'abandon. L'étude de cas de Pitigliano entre patrimoine matériel et immatériel	49
Laura Aiello	
The church of S. Giovanni Battista Decollato at Mensano (Siena): an assessment of the structural condition of the church and adjacent buildings	63
Alessandra Angeloni, Andrea Giannantoni, Michele Paradiso	
Recompose the minor places, the value of the dictionary logic of architecture	77
Enrico Bascherini	
Enhancement strategies for historic towns. A proposal for the village of San Giovanni Lipion	85
Anna Chiara Benedetti, Giorgia Predari, Riccardo Gulli, Felice Monaco	
The digital documentation of the mountain village of Rocca Ricciarda: between medieval and modern archeology	97
Matteo Bigongiari	

<b>Recovery and enhancement strategies for the villages of the Ligurian hinterland. The case study of the Fontanabuona valley</b> Roberto Bobbio, Paolo Rosasco	111
<b>Knowledge and strategies for conservation of historic technologies</b> Teresa M. Campisi	123
<b>Explorer les villes abandonnées, préserver la mémoire des lieux: le cas d'étude de Santa Margherita dans la vallée du Belice en Sicile</b> Alessio Cardaci, Antonella Versaci, Luca Renato Fauzia, Michele Russo	137
<b>Paysage sans paysans: lectures de projet</b> Claudia Cavallo, Caterina Lisini	153
<b>Mountainous abandoned areas and territorial fragilities. Cultural preservation, reuse, improvement strategies</b> Valentina Cinieri, Alisia Tognon	169
<b>The permanence of form. A methodological proposal for the re-signification of depopulated small towns of Sardinia</b> Giovanni Battista Cocco, Ester Cois, Caterina Giannattasio, Andrea Pinna, Valentina Pintus	179
<b>Landscape and cultural identity - some cases of western Liguria</b> Lorenza Comino, Simona G. Lanza,	193
<b>Réflexions sur les tremblements de terre, abandons et identité à travers quelques études de cas en Irpinia</b> Giovanni Coppola	209
<b>Traditional masonry buildings on the Tuscan Apennine Mountains. The abandoned villages around Firenzuola</b> Michele Coppola, Letizia Dipasquale	229
<b>The safeguard of built heritage in archeological sites, an interdisciplinary approach based on light-weight uav photogrammetry and terrestrial laser scanning survey.</b> Carlo Costantino, Angelo Massafra, Davide Prati, Simone Garagnani, Giovanni Mochi	242
<b>Slow mobility as a connection driver for fragile territories between coastline and inner areas</b> Domenico D'uva, Chiara Ravagnan, Chiara Amato, Giulia Bevilacqua	259
<b>An innovative analysis tool for the small towns' valorization: the Riccia municipality's case study</b> Pierfrancesco Fiore, Emanuela D'andria	273



<b>Montecastelli Pisano and Cerbaiola: virtuous surviving examples of two small old villages.</b> Fabio Fratini, Oana Adriana Cuzman, Silvia Rescio	287
<b>A modern architecture in the historical building of Uglianfredo</b> Pierpaolo Frediani	301
<b>Les processus d'abandon et de resignification des lieux après le tremblement de terre: deux études de cas siciliennes en comparaison</b> Nadia Frullo	311
<b>L'abandon des villages en Italie, depuis les années '50 et '60 à travers des cas en Ligurie.</b> Caterina Gardella, Silvana Vernazza	325
<b>The S. Appiano Pieve in Barberino Val d'Elsa (Tuscany, Italy): restoration and enhancement for a sustainable reuse</b> Sara Garuglieri, Valentina Puglisi	333
<b>Villas, bâtiments ruraux et architectures militaires entre abandon et récupération: l'habitat historique rural dispersé de l'île Palmaria (La Spezia - Italie)</b> Carlo A. Gemignani, Luisa Rossi	345
<b>Holistic Approach to the Mediterranean Architectural Heritage at risk of abandonment: the case study of Montalbano Elicona (Italy)</b> Maria Luisa Germana'	359
<b>Autour des villages historiques abandonnés: valorisation, mise en réseau des ressources et stratégies communes de gestion du paysage</b> Adriana Ghersi	375
<b>Back to the small villages. Critical issues and prospects for a post-Covid re-appropriation of built heritage in the marginal internal areas in Lombardy</b> Mariacristina Giambruno, Sonia Pistidda	389
<b>A Methodology for the Seismic Risk Assessment of Pompei's Archaeological Site</b> Nicola Ruggieri, Stefano Galassi, Eloisa Fazzi, Giacomo Tempesta	403

**Tome 2****Cultures pour la conservation et la valorisation  
du patrimoine à risque d'abandon en Italie**

<b>Agri-industrial dynamics and Settlement heritage at risk. The case of the Albenga sub-region Giampiero Lombardini</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>The “Canto di Stampace” – a case study for the requalification and urban reconnection of the City of Pisa through the ancient defensive structures Laura Marchionne, Elisa Parrini</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Modern and industrial: the new abandonment. The case of the canavese area Rossella Maspoli</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>New proximity tourism opportunities. Hydroelectric heritage: a new alliance between owners and tourist/citizens Manuela Mattone, Elena Vigliocco</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Revitalization Strategies between Culture and Social Marginalisation. The Case of the Historic Centre of Cosenza Annunziata Maria Oteri, Nino Sulfaro</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Quota: a mountain village’s struggle for survival Giovanni Pancani</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>The village of Strumi near Poppi, searching the remains of the ancient Abbey of San Fedele in Strumi Giovanni Pancani, Giacomo Talozzi</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Castel Focognano, survey and documentation of a central Apennine borough which has fallen from the provincial capital to a pe- ripheral hamlet, now at risk of abandonment Giovanni Pancani, Gianfilippo Valentini</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Multilevel analysis for the protection of the architectural heritage of small villages Barbara Paoletti, Marco Tanganelli</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Territorial Capital: a source for the revival in inner areas Angela Parisi</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Permanence in absence. Preservation of historic and environmental heritage of Val Cervo (Piedmont, Italy). Gianfranco Pertot</b>	<b>177</b>

<b>Vulnerability of historical centers: the case of Camerino (Marche Region)</b>	189
Enrica Petrucci, Lucia Barchetta, Diana Lapucci	
<b>Beyond the earthquake: Knowledge for restoration.</b>	205
<b>The case-study of Cornillo Vecchio (Amatrice, Italy)</b>	
Renata Picone, Luigi Veronese, Mariarosaria Villani	
<b>Traces of history in the semi-abandoned villages</b>	219
<b>hit by the earthquake: elements for a conscious restoration</b>	
Daniela Pittaluga	
<b>Knowledge methods for the protection</b>	233
<b>of minor historical centres affected by earthquakes</b>	
Giorgia Predari, Cristiana Bartolomei, Cecilia Mazzoli, Caterina Morganti, Giovanni Mochi	
<b>The identity survey for the sustainable enhancement</b>	247
<b>of the historical contexts, small towns, and villages.</b>	
Paola Puma	
<b>Garfagnana, a project for the rebirth</b>	265
Marco Ricciarini, Adelaide Tremori	
<b>Community engagement for the enhancement of rural heritage systems:</b>	277
<b>Pantelleria as case study</b>	
Marco Rossitti, Francesca Vigotti	
<b>La communauté patrimoniale vaudoise,</b>	293
<b>entre phénomènes de vivacité culturelle et dépeuplement</b>	
Riccardo Rudiero	
<b>Territoires en déclin: changements démographiques</b>	309
<b>et crise des villages et des villes moyennes dans l'intérieur de la Sicile</b>	
Deborah Sanzaro	
<b>Return to the Inner Area sin the post covid:</b>	325
<b>rehabilitate the wide spread building between challenges and potential conflicts</b>	
Benedetta Silva	
<b>Wounded places: from devastation to warning</b>	339
Simona Talenti, Annarita Teodosio	
<b>The Village of Monterano: Identity Features and Restoration</b>	353
Barbara Tetti	
<b>Planning and managing the heritage-led regeneration of inner areas.</b>	365
<b>The sextantio experience in santo stefano di sessanio</b>	
Andrea Ugolini, Chiara Mariotti	

- The Castle of Sant'Apollinare in Marsciano (PG), 381  
survey, documentation and proposal to enhance the culture of the olive tree in a medieval village at risk of abandonment after seismic events  
Gianfilippo Valentini
- Fragilities and resources of depopulated mountain villages: 393  
consequences of reactivation initiatives on the architectural heritage. The case of northern Belluno province  
Caterina Valiante
- Archipelago Campania. 407  
Abandoned villages and conservation strategies for needs of post-pandemia tourism  
Elena Vitagliano

**Tome 3****Cultures pour la conservation et la valorisation du patrimoine à risque d'abandon en Europe**

<b>Resilient techniques and methods to support a resilient lifecycle of villages and neighborhoods</b> Fabrizio Ivan Apollonio, Marco Gaiani, Simona Tondelli	17
<b>Abandoned villages in the area of Granada. The forgotten heritage of Tablate</b> Antonio Benavides López, Emma Verdelli, Giorgio Verdiani	35
<b>Beyond the no name house. New studies: Utrera</b> Vidal Gomez Martinez, Blanca Del Espino Hidalgo, María Teresa Perez Cano	47
<b>Toward sustainable regeneration of historic endangered towns: strategies for increasing resilience</b> Silvia Fineschi, Domenico Debeneditis, Laura Burzagli, Miguel Reimão Costa, Christian Degriigny, Silvia Rescic, Maria Dolores Robador, Cristiano Riminesi	61
<b>Reuse as a model for the preservation of rural architecture</b> Saša Mihajlov, Marina Pavlovic', Andjelija Milasinovic'	73
<b>Traditional spanish architecture “on the edge”: an analysis of benchmarks related to conservation policies</b> Camilla Mileto, Fernando Vegas, Valentina Cristini, Lidia Garcia	83
<b>New tourism models as a mechanism for the conservation of cultural heritage: the case of Cádiz</b> Pilar Miguel-Sin Monge, Gema Ramírez Pacheco	91
<b>Dhoksat, architecture through centuries</b> Elisa Miho, Joana Lamaj	103
<b>Towards a multidisciplinary approach for conservation of cultural settlements in Albania</b> Joli Mitrojorgji	117
<b>A ‘filter building in the Cabanyal Quarter on Valencia</b> Giulia Pettoello	133
<b>Effects of abandonment in the city of Pula after Italian exodus</b> Sara Rocco	145

## **Cultures pour la conservation et la valorisation du patrimoine à risque d'abandon en Maghreb et Moyen-Orient**

<b>Vernacular architecture of the Souf region (Algeria): urban morphology, architectural features and constructive technique</b> Cheima Azil, Luisa Rovero, Boualem Djebri, Fabio Fratini, Giulia Misseri, Ugo Tonietti	159
<b>A la mémoire de Sainte Crispina; Etude de la basilique paléochrétienne de Theveste</b> Fatima-Zahra Boughanem, Etienne Wolff	171
<b>L'architecture traditionnelle des villages perchés du centre-nord tunisien: le cas de Zriba el-Alia</b> Lamia Hadda	183
<b>Chellah, splendeur et déclin d'une ville mérinide</b> Lamia Hadda	199
<b>With the key on the heart, between the pain of loss and future hope</b> Osama Hamdan, Carla Benelli, Luigi Marino	213
<b>Abandon de Ksour Sahariens entre indifférence et désintéressement</b> Fatma-Zohra Haridi, Ali Boulemaredj, Ala Eddine Laouier, Amira Ouled-Diaf, Amel Saifi	229
<b>L'abandon progressif des héritiers des habitations des quartiers d'origine coloniale. Cas de la cité tldjene (ex cité Levy) setif</b> Amina Haouche	241
<b>Quelles stratégies pour la conservation et la mise en valeur des ksours du Sud-est de la Tunisie: cas de Béni-Khédache</b> Faiza Matri	255
<b>Réinvestir le patrimoine abandonné pour faire face à l'urgence du COVID 19: cas du village AZRO (Haut Atlas de Marrakech, Maroc)</b> Karima Mazirh, Mounsif Ibnoussina, Rachida Kasimi, Omar Witam, Mohamed Nocairi, Oksana Rybak-Turchanina	271
<b>Tourism Marketing in the Mediterranean Arab Countries: A Strategy to Restore Internal Regions at Risk of Abandonment</b> Wassila Ouaar	285
<b>On the edge of nothingness. Types and forms of Berber villages from the High Atlas to the Sahara</b> Alberto Pireddu	297

L'activité de restauration de Piero Sanpaolesi au Moyen-Orient, quelques exemples pour mieux comprendre et protéger l'architecture méditerranéenne Francesco Pisani	315
Les conflits religieux et sociaux comme cause de la transformation et de l'abandon récent de certains établissements byzantins en Asie Mineure Emanuele Romeo	331
Le rôle des vulnérabilités sociales et physiques dans la construction de la catastrophe sismique de 2003 à Boumerdes (Algérie) Farida Sehili	345
La cité minière de Djerissa, un patrimoine industriel en abandon Sana smadah	363
De l'abandon à la valorisation: Le noyau historique de Testour entre dynamique et dysfonctionnement Hazar Souissi Ben Hamad	377
A modern neighborhood for prosperity. The case of the International and Permanent Fair of Lebanon in Tripoli by Oscar Nie- meyer Joe Zaatar	389
L'architecture des villages ruraux en Arménie centrale: relevés et interventions pour une stratégie de développement durable Marta Zerbini	399





**Cultures pour la  
conservation et la  
valorisation du  
patrimoine à risque  
d'abandon en Italie**



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# QUOTA: A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE'S STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

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**Giovanni Pancani**  
Università degli Studi di Firenze-Italia



The photo  
plan of  
the village  
of Quota  
realized  
with the  
images  
taken by  
Drone and  
elaborated  
with  
techniques  
of photo  
modeling 3D  
S.f.M.

Quota, (a small village in Tuscany, Italy) rises on the eastern side of the Pratomagno massif, the mountain around which the initial stretch of the Arno river extends, from the springs on Mount Falterona crossing the Casentino valley and lapping Arezzo, to then continue in the direction of Florence.

In 2016, an in-depth study of the village of Quota began with a 3D laser scanner survey, following the established interest in historic centres of Casentino. In the meantime, several micro redevelopment projects of the village were conducted, one of which was completed thanks to the collaboration between the Municipality of Poppi and the DiDA Department of Architecture of Florence University.

During the survey, examples of a building in danger of being lost to history along with its heritage, handed down for centuries by local workers in terms of materials, colours and techniques, were catalogued.

With the advent of the economic boom in the sixties, almost at the same time as the young people were abandoning the village, building methods also changed and the rare renovations carried out in the two decades were entirely disconnected with the urban and environmental context. However, following the repopulation of the village by those who had abandoned it but who, having reached retirement age, returned, a series of restorations more respectful of local tradition were carried out.

*Unfortunately, the generation that re-inhabited the village has now almost disappeared, so Quota like many other small suburban centres is once again facing a challenge for its survival.*

**Keywords:** Casentino, historic village, documentation, enhancement, recovery, revitalization

## Introduction

The village of Quota is one of the mountain villages that animate the valleys of Casentino, surrounded by chestnut forests on the road that climbs towards Pratomagno. It still looks like one of those “stone” villages dominating the superb panorama of the Teggina valley, the stream that flows from the mountainside into the Arno (Fig. 1).

Sure enough, from the peaks of the Casentino valley, and in particular from Mount Falterona, the Arno River, fed by numerous ponds and streams, flows through it almost as far as Arezzo and, turning around the Pratomagno massif, heads towards Florence (Fig. 2).

The research, which began in 2016, set out to add to the knowledge of the town as well as to identify the construction processes of traditional building in danger of being lost, along with the heritage handed down for centuries by local workers, in terms of materials, colours,



**Fig. 1**  
View of the  
village of Quota  
coming from  
Poppi.

methods and ancient know-how, memory of a past closely tied to our culture, a link between past and future.

The study of the village of Quota, as well as being dictated by personal familiarity with the places, and sentimental reasons, is part of a broader work on the villages and monuments of Casentino. This included the town of Poppi, where the Count Guidi family centred their power until the fifteenth century, exerting a great influence on the fate of the entire valley (Pancani 2017).



**Fig. 2**  
Map of Italy with  
the location of  
Casentino and  
the cities of  
Florence and  
Arezzo.

The investigation method focused on surveying the village with 3D digital technologies so as to construct a metric-morphological database, able to reproduce a cartographic base, used to assess the state of preservation of the village and investigate the building diagnostics, as well as to collect the evidence found during cataloguing of both tangible and abstract knowledge of the area. Moreover, by reading the survey in transparency, various levels of information were drawn from the architectural stratifications, the basic consequence of the evolutionary events of the historic, economic and social history of Quota. The proposed objectives were to report and catalogue an entire series of architectural



features that are in danger of being lost, and with them that legacy handed down for centuries by local workers basically consisting of a set of technical knowledge and empirical know-how (Molducci, 2015). Facilitated by today's computerised procedures, a synthetic but significant amount of information regarding the materials, colours and techniques adopted was collected, memory of a past closely related to building methods, a link between the past and the future.

### **Historical investigation**

#### **The origins**

The historical heritage of the smaller Casentino villages is for the most part still little known; from the 1990s onwards a number of scholars have devoted themselves to the revaluation of

these villages reflecting a type of building wrongly considered minor, and too often forgotten. This work, developed over the last three decades, has contributed to understanding how this type of settlement played a very precise role from a historical point of view and has, at the same time preserved the traces of an architectural memory worthy of particular attention. The studies begun around 1990 by Marco Bini and Elisabetta Pieri on one of the most interesting villages in the Teggina valley, Raggiolo (Bini, 1995) contributed significantly to the investigation of these topics. Here, we refer, in particular to the research included in conference proceedings on the minor architectural heritage of Casentino<sup>1</sup>. Since then there has been further research in the field, again on the diffuse heritage of the Casentino including by Guido Vannini and his collaborators from the Medieval Archaeology faculty of the University of Florence (Vannini 2020).

However, historical information about the village of Quota is scarce, as are studies concerning the settlement, which has often been only marginally described.

The origin of the village remains shrouded in mystery: untangling the events that led to its origin is not an easy task and one to be entrusted mainly to documentary sources even if unfortunately lacking for the most remote periods. In the 1980s, some findings which suggest human presence at the beginning of the imperial age came to light in the territory of Quota, in the locality of Maestà di Fornace, along the road rising to Pratomagno from the village. It is to this era that the “roofing tiles, sporadic fragments of “Aretine ware and unpigmented pottery” refer, archaeological evidence that can be found in other sites of the Valley, at Ortignano and Villa Uzzano a Monte<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, precisely because of the territorial area to which this valley belonged in the Roman period, the land must have been centuriated<sup>3</sup> even at high altitudes and, although only a few traces of this “divisio agri” from the Roman period remain, they could testify, together with the above-mentioned finds, to the presence of a primitive settlement in the area<sup>4</sup>. The Roman settlement at Maestà, at about 800 m. above sea level, does not coincide with the building of our village, which presumably originated for other purposes and reasons in the second half of the sixth century AD.

<sup>1</sup> Nel convegno sul patrimonio architettonico minore diffuso del Casentino furono presentati numerosi interventi che servirono a fare un quadro complessivo degli studi in cui versavano i borghi minori del Casentino. Among the various contributions see: *Il patrimonio architettonico minore diffuso del Casentino: Raggiolo e la valle del Teggina*, edited by P. Schiatti, Study conference proceedings - Ortignano Raggiolo, Città di Castello 1995.

<sup>2</sup> L'unica fonte per le ricerche archeologiche nella zona sono i rilevamenti effettuati dal Gruppo Archeologico Casentinese, Cfr. *Nuovi contributi per una carta archeologica del Casentino*, a cura del Gruppo Archeologico Casentinese, Arezzo 1989, p. 72, tav. IV.

<sup>3</sup> Ricordiamo come la centuriazione fosse la divisione regolare del terreno in lotti tale da prevedere e consentire la gestione relativa all'aspetto agrario, sociale, produttivo e fiscale.

<sup>4</sup> Allo stato attuale degli studi è impossibile stabilire o anche solo ipotizzare quale civiltà anteriore a quella romana potesse essersi stabilita nella valle del Teggina.

The most reliable hypotheses are those formulated by Alberto Fatucchi, based in particular on the study of toponymy, often corroborated by archaeological finds from the Roman or early medieval period<sup>5</sup>.

The toponym Quota, in the spoken language Coita, as we find it mentioned in medieval documents, comes from the Gothic word “Goita”, which would suggest an Ostrogothic settlement: this is also true of the site, also called Quota, near Montauto di Talla. According to Fatucchi, the two quotas “are part of a series of anti-Lombard defence points, founded in the 6th century, both along the Roman road at the bottom of the valley, at the opening of lateral valleys, such as Filetto, Uzzano, Poggersona, Lorenzano, S. Apollinare di Subbiano, and on the crests running between Subbiano and Pratomagno”. The scholar identifies Quota as a control point on the ridge path that led to the passes of Pratomagno, specifically to Gastra. Quota is defined by Fatucchi as “the clearest evidence of the Ostrogoths”, in that remote phase during which the inhabitants were at the service of the Byzantines. After the death of Emperor Justinian who, with the Pragmatic Sanction of 554, had temporarily re-established order in his own territories, the Byzantines found themselves having to face the invasion of the Lombards from Pannonia in northern Italy in 568. The Byzantine leader was forced to defend the Empire by exploiting the impervious Apennine and pre-Apennine routes, such as those in Casentino, as much as possible. This is how the strategic territorial garrisons came into being, relying on people of Gothic origin who had joined the Greek army and were permanently present on the territory. They were therefore entrusted with the task of founding these sites and defending them militarily in an extreme attempt to stem the Lombard advance. Quota was probably one of these garrisons.

With the definitive Lombard conquest of Tuscia in 569, the importance of the Teggina valley did not diminish; as with the nearby Raggiolo. Quota too, with its naturally well defended position, “morphological and pedological” characteristics of the area, proved to be decisive for the Lombard settlement which, especially in the first period of its domination, added to the development of an economy based on exploitation of the woods and the pasture.

The ancient church of San Michele Arcangelo, particularly venerated by the people of Lombard origin would appear to testify to the Lombard settlement in Quota. The remains of the church were found by Paolo Schiatti (Schiatti, 1995) in a ruined rural building (Fig. 3) not

<sup>5</sup> Essential and almost exclusive in this case is the work of Alberto Fatucchi with some contributions on the history of the Lombard period in Casentino. In particolare, si veda: A. Fatucchi, *Aspetti dell'invasione longobarda del territorio aretino*, Arezzo 1975, pp. 3-8, 38-45, 69-85; Id., *Note sui Longobardi e la diocesi aretina*, in “Atti del VI Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo” (Milano 21-25 ottobre 1978), Spoleto 1980, pp. 401-15. *Alle radici della storia della Valle del Teggina in Casentino*, in “Il patrimonio architettonico minore diffuso del Casentino...”, op. cit., pp. 13-25.



**Fig. 3**  
The ancient building in St. Angelo, where you can see the remains of the Church of San Michele Arcangelo (photo of 1995.)



far from Quota, near the stream called Fosso del Cavallino, still owned by the church, as is the adjoining farm. As early as the thirteenth century, documents refer to two churches in Quota: one inside the village, dedicated to St. John, and that of Sant'Angelo, or St. Michael the Archangel<sup>6</sup>. Fatucchi deems the foundation of the church as reasonably related to the worship of water, to be regarded as the main place of worship in the valley until the 12th century.

The scarcity of information on the Teggina valley, and in particular on Quota, prevents further hypotheses, especially for the period before the year 1000. Even in the period of Carolingian domination, we cannot but imagine a situation still based on the exploitation of the woods and pastureland, and consequently a clear continuity of appropriations and customs already existing in the previous centuries. A situation closer to the present not just for Quota, but in general for the entire Teggina valley can be delineated starting from the period characterized by the fortification phenomenon in the Arezzo area between the XI and the XIII centuries. Fortification, at least until the 13th century, had no significant effects on the previous structure of the village. The defensive network consisting of various fortified villages added to the previous settlements: in Casentino, unlike southern Tuscany and Lazio, the transfer and centralisation of the populations within the “castra” did not occur<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. *La visita pastorale compiuta nel Casentino dal Vescovo Francesco da Montepulciano (1424)*, a cura di F. Coradini, Anghiari 1941, p. 301. Nella visita pastorale del 1424 la chiesa di Sant'Angelo viene riferita a Raggiolo che mancava di una chiesa pubblica.

<sup>7</sup> Sull'incastellamento del Casentino vedi oltre a A. Fatucchi, *op. cit.*, p. 22; O. Muzzi, *L'incastellamento del*



More than half of the fortified sites in Casentino, 18 out of 23, as Bosman points out, were not built *ex novo* but on already existing sites. They were provided with walls, moats and towers, very frequently only the highest area was militarily manned for defence reasons.

From the 11th century and in the following century throughout the West, the castle also became a symbol of military and feudal power, a strategic structure for the control and exploitation of the territory.

In these centuries, especially with the expansion of the Counts Guidi in Casentino, the valley of Teggina was again confirmed as one of the most important strategic sites for anyone who wanted to assert power over the entire Casentino region. The valley was once again the subject of two warring powers: the Guidi and the Tarlati. The feudal power of the Counts Guidi extended over the broad territory from Ravenna and Forlì extending to the provinces of Florence, Pistoia and Arezzo, and the Teggina valley was an important outpost against the territorial supremacy of the Tarlati of Arezzo<sup>8</sup>.

It was these years of bitter struggles that the Tarlatan first news and documents we found on Quota in the course of our research date back to. The village was one of the countless feuds of the Counts Guidi. As a matter of fact, the privilege in which Emperor Frederick II confirmed the sons of Count Guido Guerra, by then deceased, “more than two hundred castles” among which “Coita” is named<sup>9</sup> dates back to 1220.

The conflict between the Guidi and the Tarlati had led to a proliferation of castles<sup>10</sup>. The fortified site of Quota and the Fornace fortress are mentioned in Bandini's *Odeporico del Casentino* as fiefs of Aghilolfo di Guido Pace, grandson of Aghilolfo di Guido Guerra; Aghilolfo, the last son of Count Guido Guerra and Countess Gualdrada, was probably given Quota

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*Casentino (secoli XI-XIII)*, e F. Bosman, *Il Casentino nei secoli XI e XII: la comparsa dei siti fortificati*, in *I castelli nel territorio casentinese*, a cura di Scramasax, Catalogo della mostra (Bibbiena-Castel San Niccolò-Pratovecchio 1990), Firenze 1990, pp. 13-17; 19-50.

<sup>8</sup> Sui Conti Guidi la bibliografia è molto estesa, in questo contributo si è preferito limitarsi a citare quelle fonti, prevalentemente manoscritte, che potessero fornirci delle notizie inedite su un paese, come Quota, mai stato oggetto di una trattazione sistematica. Oltre all'*Odeporico del Casentino* di A. M. Bandini, del XVIII sec. conservato presso la Biblioteca Maruccelliana di Firenze, esistono altri due importanti testi: S. Ammirato, *Albero e Istoria della Famiglia de' Conti Guidi*, con le aggiunte di Scipione Ammirato il giovane, Firenze, 1640, pp. 5-10, 46-51, 78; l'altro testo è quello di Ildefonso di San Luigi, *Istoria fiorentina di Marchionne di Coppo Stefani*, Firenze 1770-89, vol. VIII (1777), pp. 96-103. Notizie più generali sulla dominazione dei conti Guidi sulla valle del Teggina si trovano in M. Bicchierai, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-27.

<sup>9</sup> The news, unpublished, is reported by Ildefonso da S. Luigi, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-103.

<sup>10</sup> A. Fatucchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23 parla di castelli riferendosi ai comuni di Raggiolo, Ortignano, Montebene, Uzzano, Teggiano, QUOTA, Gogalto, Giocatoio, eccetera. L'autore attesta che date certe, piuttosto alte per la sua esistenza, si hanno solo per Ortignano, documentato nel 1029 e nel 1065. Riguardo a molte di queste fortificazioni l'autore si chiede se il “centro fortificato dell'incastellamento dopo il Mille recuperi il sito di un fortilizio della prima generazione, cioè del periodo delle invasioni barbariche (V-VII s.), e se fra le due fasi ci sia una continuità insediativa. Peraltro, è questo il dubbio che suggeriscono i dati archeologici per Fronzola, Ortignano, QUOTA, Montebene Uzzano”. È molto difficile dare una risposta a questo quesito poiché si tratta di un territorio in cui l'antica ascendenza barbarica si ravvisa fino al XII secolo e quindi è quasi impossibile non pensare ad una continuità insediativa risalente alla seconda metà del VI secolo.



**Fig. 4 and 4a**  
The terracing in the locality of San Giovanni alle Balze in which they are evident materials of recovery from buildings of greater relief in fig. 4 is visible also the arc (inverted) of a single-hole.



and other territories belonging to the Romena Castle and Fortress<sup>11</sup>: later, his son Guido Pace and then his grandson Aghilolfo would be remembered as Counts of Romena. Until about 1280 Quota was part of the estate of this branch of the Counts Guidi. At the beginning of the 14th century, for dynastic reasons at the moment not clear, Quota passed from Aghilolfo to Count Guido Novello II, who in the first decades of the century, acquiring the title of Count of Raggiolo, took residence there to exercise his feudal power over the Teggina valley<sup>12</sup>.

At the end of the 13th century, as seen from the tithes due to the Church of Rome for the years 1274-75, 1278-79<sup>13</sup>, and lastly 1302-03<sup>14</sup>, two churches are referred to in Quota: the church of Sant'Angelo, outside the village (i.e. San Michele Arcangelo), and the church of San Giovanni, inside, or in any case in the immediate vicinity of the 'castrum', to which the care of the population living in the area protected by the walls was most probably entrusted. In this regard it should be borne in mind that, in 1995, in a survey conducted for the degree thesis "Il nucleo Antico di Quota"<sup>15</sup>, following the path called "Strada per San Giovanni alle Balze", a series of worked stones were found which had

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. A.M. Bandini, *ms. cit.*, vol. VI, c. 4r.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. M. Bicchierai, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>13</sup> *Rationes Decimarum Italiae nei secoli XIII e IV. Tuscia. I. La Decima degli anni 1274-1280*, a cura di P. Guidi, Città del Vaticano 1932, nn. 1519, 1521, p. 70; nn. 2242-43, p. 97.

<sup>14</sup> *Rationes Decimarum Italiae nei secoli XIII e XIV. Tuscia. II. Le Decime degli anni 1295-1304*, a cura di M. Giusti e P. Guidi, Città del Vaticano 1932, nn. 2210-11, p. 123.

<sup>15</sup> Pancani G. (1994-1995), *Il Nucleo Antico di Quota*, Tesi di Laurea in Architettura, Relatore Bini M., Correlatore Pieri E., Università degli Studi di Firenze, Facoltà di Architettura, pp. 22-23.



been reused to build the dry-stone walls constructed for terracing the land (Fig. 4 and 4a). However, it is presumed that the foundations of the church of San Giovanni date back to the period of the fortification between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Towards the end of the 1300s, the “villa di Quota” came to the “second Count Ruberto da Battifolle, Count of Poppi”, and from him to his son Francesco who, having allied with the Duke of Milan against the Florentines in 1440, after the battle of Anghiari was banished from his lands<sup>16</sup>, so that Poppi passed, with the other territories pertaining to it, to the Florentine Republic.

Again, from documents related to religious buildings a few, fragmentary facts about Quota in the fifteenth century may be gleaned: in the pastoral visit to Casentino by Bishop Francesco da Montepulciano in 1424 the village had only the church inside the castle, that of St. John, which depended on the plebiscite of Buiano. The building is in good condition even if poorly decorated, but “Corporale immundum. sacramenta non habet”. At this date the church of Sant’Angelo had already been assigned to the care of the souls of “Rasolo”, that is Raggiolo, and no details about its state of preservation are provided<sup>17</sup>.

It is not until the beginning of the XVI century, that the *Decime Granducali*, offer the first useful elements for reconstructing the ancient nucleus of the village. Quota is referred to as “Chastello”, and the “mura di Quota”, and the “porta di sotto” are also mentioned. The written source speaks of a fortified site with walls that, although perhaps no longer in existence

<sup>16</sup> S. Ammirato, *op. cit.*, p. 46. Molto importante anche per le notizie sul passaggio alla Repubblica fiorentina.

<sup>17</sup> La Visita Pastorale compiuta nel Casentino dal Vescovo Francesco da Montepulciano (1424), edited by F. Coradini, Anghiari 1941, pp. 15-17 nn. 297, 301-302.

at the time the document was written, were still attested by place names. The “borgho di Quota” is also mentioned and appears several times in the eighteenth-nineteenth century land registers<sup>18</sup>.

The next tithe, compiled around 1554<sup>19</sup>, confirms much of the previous information<sup>20</sup>, and adds some other valuable clues. In fact, there is mention of a hospital<sup>21</sup>, the town hall building, and a castle square. The town, therefore, appears already delineated with its main buildings, still visible or at least handed down by place names: the castle, the town hall, the church, the hospital and, all around, the walls, of which one of the gates is remembered. In the document, for the first time, houses and outbuildings are also named: the houses are located in the village but no details are given, while for the outbuildings, besides the mention of “a hut with threshing floor”, which is mentioned as far back as the eighteenth-century land register, “al borgho di quota una schala con una stalla” is mentioned twice: a structure hardly comparable to those mentioned in the documents closer to our time. In the *Tithes* compiled between 1636 and 1641, in which about seventy entries are reported, we find only one new toponym, the “loggia”<sup>22</sup>.

No other document enlightens us on the situation of the village and its economic development for the period from the XV to the XVIII century: the loss of strategic importance marked the end of the interest that this valley had aroused in the Casentino: life increasingly depended, as may be deduced from the entries in the *Decime* already mentioned, on the cultivation of the chestnut and on livestock, on an economy that, substantially poor, was hardly self-sufficient. In this sense the little information needed for even a partial reconstruction can be inferred both for the late medieval period and more indeterminately for modern times, from general studies on the development of the “chestnut civilization” in the Casentino area<sup>23</sup>. According to a tradition originating in the Lombard and Carolingian periods, as already pointed out, this area had always stood out for

<sup>18</sup> A.S.F., *Decime granducali*, 6875bis, (16th cent.), cc. 19v, 24r, 25v, 41r, 46r, 53v, 54r-v, 58v.

<sup>19</sup> A.S.F., *Decime granducali*, 6876 (1554). I contribuenti sono 67. Notizie importanti alle cc. 6r, 9r, 10v, 16v, 17v, 18r, 22v, 26v, 29v, 39r, 47r, 50r, 53r, 57r, 61r.

<sup>20</sup> Vengono nuovamente ricordate: “la porta di sotto” (c. 6r carried by Lucha di Piero di Matteo; 29v carried by Giovanni d'Andrea d'Antonio; c. 39r carried by Pasquino di Piero di Giovanni), the “castle” (c. 18r carried by Jacomo di Domenico di Filippo; c. 50r carried by rede di Gabriello di Stefano; c. 53r carried by Pasquino di Sancti), “Dentro alle mura del castello di Quota” (c. 26v carried by Agnolo di Meo di Tognò).

<sup>21</sup> A.c. 16v nella portata di Tadi di Giorgio di Tadi.

<sup>22</sup> A.S.F., *Decime granducali*, 6877 (1635-41), cc. 10r, 31r, 65v.

<sup>23</sup> Gli studi sulla civiltà del castagno sono stati svolti ed approfonditi da Giovanni Cherubini principalmente per il periodo basso-medievale. Cfr. G. Cherubini, *La “civiltà” del castagno alla fine del Medioevo*, in “L'Italia rurale del Basso Medioevo”, Bari 1984, pp. 147-71, 291-305; e *Fra Tevere, Arno e Appennino. Valli, comunità, signori*, Firenze 1992, pp. 40-69. Per il periodo dei Conti Guidi è doveroso accennare alla lavorazione del ferro a Raggiolo e in generale sul Torrente Teggina, che già attestata da R. Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, Firenze 1965, vol. IV parte II, pp. 49-50, e ora ampiamente documentata da M. Bicchierai, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-71. Questa attività non è allo stato attuale riferita al nostro piccolo centro urbano.

the presence of chestnut groves and their cultivation, destined to play a decisive role in the following centuries<sup>24</sup>. The continuity of such cultivation “had occurred through centuries of human endeavour, probably largely attributable to the late Middle ages, which had expanded at the expense of oak groves and other plants. The nearby village of Raggiolo, at least since the fifteenth century, had given its name to a quality of chestnut that still exists today”<sup>25</sup>. However, it may be hypothesised that production was mainly related to local consumption, particularly after the Florentine conquest. The above-mentioned sixteenth-century *Grand Ducal Tithes*, which mainly mention ‘chestnut’ lands, as well as much ‘wild’ land, rarely mention ‘buildings’ related to the production and storage of chestnuts, as amply documented in the *Leopold Land Registry*, nor do they mention structures suitable for livestock breeding, another notable resource of the area, especially at the time of the Counts Guidi, who owned a large number of flocks<sup>26</sup>.

Only with the compilation of the descriptive *Land Registers* with parcels, relating respectively to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the surveys carried out by Pietro Leopoldo in Casentino in 1778 for drafting the *Reports on the government of Tuscany*, and the *Statistics of all the Communities that make up the District of the Subprefecture of Arezzo requested in the year 1809 by the French Government*, was new information provided on the Teggina valley and, even if with much difficulty, on the village of Quota and on the architecture mainly related to the economic reality already outlined in the previous centuries.

### **Character and evolution of the town from the eighteenth century to the present day.**

The above historical *excursus* helps to explain the development of the village of Quota from the XVIII century to today; the fortification configuration as a defensive place facing the Teggina stream, which strikes any traveller who comes here, the sylvan-pastoral economy dating back, as already written, to the Lombard period, the secluded position in relation to the most important communication routes, are characteristic traits that can be partly read in recent history<sup>27</sup>.

In particular, the *descriptive land register*, the compilation of which began around 1713 up to around 1830, with additions and changes, gives us a detailed picture of the settlement

<sup>24</sup> Una certa tradizione storiografica ottocentesca fa addirittura derivare il nome di Quota dalla quota parte di castagne che i Conti Guidi si dividevano, stando a quanto riportato da P. Porcellotti, *Illustrazione critica e descrizione del Casentino*, Firenze 1865, ed. anast. Sala Bolognese 1977, p. 107.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. G. Cherubini, *op. cit.*, 1992, p. 43.

<sup>26</sup> Cfr. G. Cherubini, *op. cit.*, 1992, pp. 46-53.

<sup>27</sup> Cfr. gli Atti del Convegno di Studio svoltosi a Ortignano Raggiolo nel 1995.

and economic situation of Quota<sup>28</sup>. The town as a whole is situated around three hamlets overlooked by most of the houses: the Borgo della Chiesa and the related Piazza<sup>29</sup>, already mentioned in the sixteenth century, the Borgo della Torre, sometimes also called Piazzola<sup>30</sup>, and the Borgo Fornaccio<sup>31</sup>. It is mainly around the first two hamlets that the urban structure of the town is organized. The church of St. John the Baptist, to which reference is made, is not the original with medieval foundations since, as we learn from the same document “a ruined cottage where the church of S. Giovanni Battista Vecchia was located” is listed.<sup>32</sup> As mentioned in the previous paragraph the remains of the ancient church are thought to have been located along the current “road of San Giovanni alle Balze”, about sixty metres down from the junction with the road that leads from Sant’Angelo to Quota. This hypothesis is supported by the place-name “San Giovanni alle Balze”, and by the presence of a terracing of regular appearance supported by walls made with reused stones rough-hewn into an almost rectangular shape, (Fig 4 and 4a) which do not find any correspondence with the type of material used for the construction of the terracing. One of the stone blocks that make up the terracing is, we believe, similar in shape to those that form the arch of the single-light windows of religious buildings of the Romanesque period. Until the beginning of this century, as we were told by the elders of the village, it was still possible to see the remains of a cottage that the population identified as the old church of San Giovanni alle Balze. The more recently founded church appears to have “two Altars, its Bell Tower, and Bell with a cemetery on the west side”; it was a very rich property being endowed with a good number of landed properties in the surroundings<sup>33</sup>. Adjacent to the church there was, in addition to the “rectory”, the Hospital of S. Andrea, “a house for the use of the Spedale de Poveri”, also owner of landed property<sup>34</sup>, and the Confraternity of *Corpus Domini*, of which we have only seventeenth-eighteenth century testimonies because of the loss of the Books and Records fol-

<sup>28</sup> A.S.A., *Catasto Antico, Quota n° 1*, a. 1713 e sgg. (Catasto descrittivo), a cui si farà riferimento per le citazioni documentarie; anche in A.S.F., *Decime granducali*, 6878, (1713-18), in questo senza le aggiunte dei decenni successivi.

<sup>29</sup> Ricordato in moltissime portate si accenna soltanto ad alcune di esse, per es. alle cc. 37r, 46r, 57v, 90r, 126r, 204r, etc.

<sup>30</sup> La “piazzola” è già ricordata nelle *Decime granducali*, 6876, a c. 47r e nella decima di Mencherino di Santi da Tequinano. Nel Catasto in questione il vocabolo è riportato molte volte a c. 82r “Alla piazzola o Torre di Quota” nella portata di Bartolomea di Giovanni Moretti, a c. 84r, 94r, 105r, 109r, 117r, 148r, 152r, 159r, 162r, etc.

<sup>31</sup> Nello stesso documento questo borgo ha solo tre unità insediative: a c. 88r, 181r, 258r,

<sup>32</sup> Si veda, c. 302v.

<sup>33</sup> Alle cc. 296r e sgg. (beni non paganti) alle cc. 304r e sgg. (beni paganti). La chiesa è la maggior proprietaria di beni fondiari di tutta la comunità.

<sup>34</sup> Lo stesso, presumibilmente, trovato nei documenti cinquecenteschi e la cui istituzione doveva essere precedente a quel secolo. Vedi cc. 310r-311v. I terreni di proprietà dell’Ospedale erano dati a livello ai fratelli Cocolini vedi cc. 262r-263v; 268r-269r; 272r-272v.

lowing the Leopoldine suppressions<sup>35</sup>. In 1671, the brothers and sisters spent 4 liras “to cover the roof over the altar” of their church, and at the same time had a canopy and wooden crucifix rebuilt<sup>36</sup>. In the Borgo, the presence of a loggia that opened near the church is mentioned in some land register entries<sup>37</sup>, probably the same mentioned in the tithes of the mid-seventeenth century<sup>38</sup>.

We have no information about the hamlet called “la Torre”, the name of which certainly refers to the remains of a building that was part of the medieval “castle”, nor about the other hamlet, “il Fornaccio”, which could very generically refer to the presence of an oven, perhaps for communal use, a traditional and fundamental element in the economy not only of the town, but of the whole area.

Of the approximately one hundred land register entries referring to inhabitants and land owners in Quota, sixty-eight mention the house, and in addition to it in many cases other buildings of great utility to the economic life of the country. The dwellings, preferably located within the village, in the three hamlets already mentioned, had to be low and maximum two-storey, however in one entry reference is made to the number of rooms<sup>39</sup>, which in general is not specified. Out of the total, twelve houses they had the ‘verone’ in front, namely “the covered porch in which the external staircase of country houses in Tuscany ends and which is sometimes-communal, even containing an oven”<sup>40</sup>, a significant element since there are now few houses left with such feature<sup>41</sup>.

The presence of those buildings supporting the economic and productive life of the community is widely documented, structures that must have strongly characterized the village and its surroundings: ovens, dryers and huts. There were six ovens<sup>42</sup>, and in all likelihood they were sufficient to serve the entire small community, which in the period shortly after the one referred to in the Land Registry, in 1745, had only 183 inhabitants<sup>43</sup>. The number of “dryers”

<sup>35</sup> See, cc. 297r-280r.

<sup>36</sup> Di questa Compagnia laicale si è conservato un unico registro che non ci dice niente riguardo alla sua origine. Si consulti, A.S.F., *Compagnie Religiose Soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo, 2366, Libri di entrata e uscita della compagnia del Corpus Domini di S. Giovanni Battista di Quota (1671-1785)*. Per le notizie citate Cfr. c. 98r.

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. le portate di Donna Francesca d'Antonio Fani (c. 146r); di Gregorio di Martino Cuccagni (c. 162r); di Donna Letizia di Angelo Tondi (c. 182r); di Salvatore di Francesco Coccolini (c. 265r); di Donna Maria di Francesco di Bricia da Ortignano (c. 274r); di Donna Maria Fani (c. 291r).

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. n. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Cfr. la portata di Domenico di Matteo Chimenti (a c. 282r)

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. E. Pieri, *Carattere ed evoluzione dell'abitato di Raggiolo dal Settecento ad oggi*, in “Il patrimonio architettonico minore diffuso del Casentino...”, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> Avevano il verone le case a cc. 37r; 46r; 74r; 84r; 88r; 122r; 152r; 163r; 179r; 182r; 242r; 253r. In fact, in the current Borgo della Chiesa, the ancient presence of the porch can be seen, but the restoration of the house performed prevents a certain attestation.

<sup>42</sup> Per i forni Cfr. c. 1v; 122v; 170r; 182r, 234v; 282r.

<sup>43</sup> Cfr. E. Repetti, *Dizionario geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, Firenze 1833-45, vol. IV, p. 577. Di contro nello stesso secolo dalle notizie riportate dal manoscritto del Bandini, ms. cit., nel tomo I a c. 36 la parrocchia di S. Giovanni di Quota aveva la cura di 1234 anime, il doppio circa di quelle che vengono riferite per la Pieve di S. Michele

was also relatively small: four; in three cases the oven and dryer were part of a single unit<sup>44</sup>. Both the oven and the dryers were of primary importance for the economy of the village, insofar as associated with the methods of preserving chestnuts, procedures dating back to at least the late Middle Ages. The chestnut was preserved by drying, “for small quantities in the sun or the heat of an oven, and for large quantities in the smoke of the dryer”<sup>45</sup>. Among the various preservation methods, the most usual, the reduction of the dried fruit into flour, would have required the presence of a mill: there is no mention of it, it may be presumed that this processing took place at the mills of Raggiolo overlooking the river Teggina<sup>46</sup>.

A reading of the Land Registry shows that there were a good number of huts, fifteen in all, sometimes built on the land bordering the house<sup>47</sup>, most often on plots of land outside the town, used for normal agricultural work<sup>48</sup>. In fact, in addition to the large number of “chestnut” groves, “vines”, “apples” and “vegetable” plots are frequently mentioned, even though not very extensive and difficult to cultivate due to the scarce quantity of cultivable and stony land<sup>49</sup>. Land with oak groves can also be found, reduced by man over the centuries in favour of chestnut cultivation. The chestnut land was often used for pasture: mainly for sheep, but also pigs, pigs in particular, having the additional function of cleaning up the forest. Only two stables are mentioned<sup>50</sup>, but the shepherds-farmers of the area most probably used premises annexed to their houses not specified in the Land Register. A further significant element reported in these documents is “a lime mortar kiln” owned by Jacopo di Antonio Ticcetti da Sala (at c. 49r), which was probably sufficient for the construction and maintenance of the buildings of the whole village.

This settlement and economic structure is confirmed by the *Reports on the government of Tuscany*. The settlement of Quota, in 1778, as appears in the *Reports*, was a commune

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Arcangelo di Raggiolo, paese limitrofo, più grande e più popolato.

<sup>44</sup> Cfr. per i seccatoi cc. 53v; 1v; 122v; 234v: negli ultimi tre casi formanti un unico nucleo con l'essiccatoio.

<sup>45</sup> Cfr. G. Cherubini, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 162.

<sup>46</sup> Sulla basilarietà della farina di castagne nell'alimentazione della zona dal Medioevo fino al Sette-Ottocento cfr. G. Cherubini, *op. cit.*, p. 154 e sgg. e Sir Robert Dallington, *Descrizione dello Stato del Granduca di Toscana. Nell'anno di Nostro Signore 1596*, a cura di N. Francovich Onesti e L. Rombai, Firenze 1983 (trad. dell'ed. inglese, London 1605 “A Survey of the Great Dukes State of Tuscany. In the Year of Our Lord”, p. 50).

<sup>47</sup> Cfr. per es. le portate di Giovanni di Santi Bianchi (c. 94r); di Arcangelo di Domenico Madiati (c. 109r); di Giovanni di Domenico Madiati (c. 141r); di Giovanni di Domenico Rossi (c. 152v), eccetera.

<sup>48</sup> Vedi per es. le portate di Marco di Giovanni Gigli (a c. 101r); di Arcangelo di Domenico Madiati (a c. 110r); Agnolo di Domenico d'Agnolo Tondi (c. 173r), eccetera.

<sup>49</sup> Da una foto Brogi dell'inizio del '900 (pubblicata in *Immagini del Casentino. Lo spirito di una valle*, Firenze 1988, p. 44) si può vedere come ancora in un tempo non lontano dal nostro l'altura di Quota e i terreni circostanti, terrazzati, mantenessero i segni del paziente lavoro dell'uomo, perduti completamente negli ultimi decenni di questo secolo.

<sup>50</sup> Vedi le portate di Jacopo e Bastiano Madiati (a c. 118v); e quella di Agniolo di Virgilio Gigli detto Brandino (a c. 148r).



independent of Poppi which it complains of having been annexed to: “The inhabitants of the communities of Fronzola, San Martino and Quota complain with the attached petition that they have been aggregated to the community of Poppi, when before they were all three together as a separate community, and that they have lost the advantages they had at that time and that the duty has been doubled (...)”<sup>51</sup>.

There are few other mentions of the village of Quota, named “Quota Castle”, but basically the information about the area confirms the presence of well-cultivated chestnut groves and terraced plots<sup>52</sup>. There is also a watercolour dated 1778 with the *View of the Tuscan-Romagnolo Apennines* ) by Antonio Fedi and Francesco Mazzuoli, showing the Teggina stream in the stretch that flows below Raggiolo: only the top of Quota is visible, and a few scattered houses. Although it is difficult to make a comparison with the current state, we can see that in the agrarian landscape of that time the intervention of the hand of man was profound, revealed in particular in the care taken to terrace the land<sup>53</sup>.

In the course of the century the situation remained substantially unchanged<sup>54</sup>; however, two facts are relevant: a significant increase in population, and above all the great impulse given to the cultivation of chestnuts.

From the analysis of the data reported in the register of the “Stato d’anime” of the church of San Giovanni Battista di Quota compiled in 1826, we have deduced that the population of the village had almost doubled compared to the first decades of the eighteenth century, counting 261 inhabitants distributed in 56 families, figures maintained in the following decades<sup>55</sup>. It is conceivable that this figure may be related to an increase in the presence of scattered settlements in the surrounding area, as would seem to be attested by the *Land Registry of 1830*<sup>56</sup>. In it there are very frequent mentions of “farmhouse and yard”<sup>57</sup>, rarely mentioned in the previous land register, located outside the village, for example in the locality

<sup>51</sup> Pietro Leopoldo d’Asburgo Lorena, *Relazioni sul governo della Toscana*, a cura di A. Salvestrini, Firenze 1970, p. 466.

<sup>52</sup> Cfr. *Idem*, *op. cit.*, a cura di A. Salvestrini, Firenze 1969-74, vol. II, p. 464-466. In effetti fino all’inizio del nostro secolo in questa zona i pastori transumavano con i loro greggi verso la Maremma. Cfr. G. Cherubini, *op. cit.*, 1992, pp. 46-53.

<sup>53</sup> Manoscritto Cappugi, 308. *Veduta dell’Appennino Tosco-Romagnolo di Antonio Fedi e Francesco Mazzuoli*, 1788-89.

<sup>54</sup> A questo proposito è molto interessante il già citato ms. 99 conservato presso la Biblioteca Comunale della città di Arezzo *Statistica di tutte le Comunità componenti il Circondario della Sottoprefettura di Arezzo richiesta nell’anno 1809 dal Governo Francese*, ms. 99, n° 19, cc. 218-228, in cui è tracciato un quadro generale della situazione economica ed insediativa di Poppi con i paesi amministrativamente dipendenti.

<sup>55</sup> Cfr. E. Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 577. Il Repetti per l’anno 1840 fa calare la popolazione a 185 abitanti; A. Zuccagni Orlandini, *Indicatore topografico della Toscana granducale*, Firenze 1856, p. 304-5, riporta per il 1845, 324 abitanti, e 345 per il 1855.

<sup>56</sup> A.S.A., *Catasto Poppi*, Tav. ind. n° 2 dello stesso, a. 1830 (Catasto particellare).

<sup>57</sup> Cfr. per es. cc. 37r; 124r; 140r; 231r, eccetera.



**Fig. 5**  
The village of Quota around 1950.



**Fig. 6**  
the "Borgo della Torre" crossed by a flock around 1960.

**Fig. 7**  
Some buildings in the "Piazzetta del Lastro" around 1960.

"Le Lame". As many as 33 "dryers" were located in the neighbouring territories<sup>58</sup> compared to 4 in the previous century. This is the most significant fact, which suggests that the forest was being used increasingly, and perhaps better, for the production of chestnuts and chestnut by-products for the city market. In general, the situation did not change much compared to the 18th century, and what we described for the whole area, namely a substantial general immutability of architectural structures and forms of life, was only abruptly interrupted in the second half of the 20th century, in the middle of the industrial boom. Starting in those years, the building heritage of the village underwent a radical transformation (Fig. 5).

From the eighteenth century until the 1960s, the houses of Quota appeared according to the plot of lots common to the castle sites of the Casentino hills: a fairly regular structure characterized the buildings, which served both as housing and as a shed for tools and shelter for working animals (fig. 6). The typical house was preferably three-storey, with the stable and the cellar on the ground floor, the kitchen on the first floor, very often

<sup>58</sup> Cfr. per es. cc. 13r; 41v; 143r; 232v; 238, eccetera.



communicating through an internal staircase with the rooms on the top floor. Frequently the attic consisted of a wooden deck that divided the rooms horizontally, reducing the space and thus allowing less heat to escape.

What made the whole town characteristic was the uniformity of the building materials used, typical of a poor economy, and therefore locally produced (Fig. 7). Basically, two materials were used: sandstone and chestnut wood; the masonry was made of stone, with square stones for the cornerstones and “smaller stones for the walls”<sup>59</sup>. The presence of the “lime mortar kiln”, the analysis of the mortar of the buildings that have not undergone recent restoration, and the presence in the area of some tuff quarries attest to the fact that the masonry was mainly made of lime mortar and tuff<sup>60</sup> (Fig. 8). For the wooden carpentry, chestnut beams and planks were used, and stone slabs were used for the roof; chestnut wood was also used for the door and window frames.

As far as the outbuildings are concerned, at Quota, until the end of the 1980s, there were still some dryers in excellent condition: generally built with a “hut front with a roof, a small window” through which the chestnuts were introduced, “and a stone step below”<sup>61</sup>. Currently the village has about forty inhabitants, mostly elderly, and has completely lost the economic and settlement characteristics of the past, the signs of which, however, remain. Today you can still walk through the steep paved hamlets of long ago: the Borgo della Torre that goes up to the highest part of the historical centre of the village, recalling the tower of the castle, has a small square in front of it. The current composition of Borgo della Chiesa is of interest.

<sup>59</sup> E. Pieri, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>60</sup> Una cava di tufo localizzata sulla cosiddetta “torre” di Quota è rimasta funzionante fino ai primi decenni di questo secolo come testimoniano alcuni anziani abitanti del paese.

<sup>61</sup> E. Pieri, *op. cit.*, p. 57.



**Fig. 8 e 8a, 1965**  
**Fig. 8 and 2017**  
**Fig. 8a, Some**  
 buildings above  
 the boulder on  
 which stands  
 the highest part  
 of the country,  
 these buildings  
 rise on the base  
 of the ancient  
 walls of the  
 Castle of Quota.



The building that gives it its name is probably a 17th century construction, with very sober typological and stylistic features. A marble plaque bears witness to the restoration work carried out in 1929. The interior of the church has a single apsidal nave, two altars placed respectively in the arms of the transept, and a wooden truss ceiling painted in the early twentieth century style. The Crucifix mentioned in the seventeenth-century documents referred to above is preserved in an adjoining room, belonging to the Confraternity of Corpus Domini, still active. In front of the church the rectory looks onto the small square, between the rectory and the church there is a loggia built during the restoration in 1929.

The reconstruction of the events and economy of the village has revealed how the economy of Quota and its valley was based on chestnut harvesting and sheep farming, immediately after the year 1000 until the first decades of the last century, determining the construction of architectural structures and the consequent choice of building materials. According to the sources, at least for the 18th and 19th centuries, the construction methods did not change much with the passage of time, but continued to be closely related to the environment. In this regard, it is useful to emphasize how this architecture, through successive stratifications, maintained a continuity with its past, with the re-proposition



of architectural models and the reuse of materials. For Quota this is even more natural as, closed within itself, the presence of wood and building stone prevented the supply of other materials from distant areas until the last century.

Since Quota has become purely a holiday place for the children and grandchildren of the former inhabitants, an indiscriminate “restoration” has begun that has completely distorted the nature of the site.

Recalling the village of Quota are the silent testimonies of buildings devastated by the inexorable passage of time, past and recent memories of ancient buildings, treasure troves of history, traditions and symbols that still survive today, defying the force of time and man's neglect.



**Fig. 9**  
Survey of the  
Source of the  
Bridge, elevation.

### Survey Method

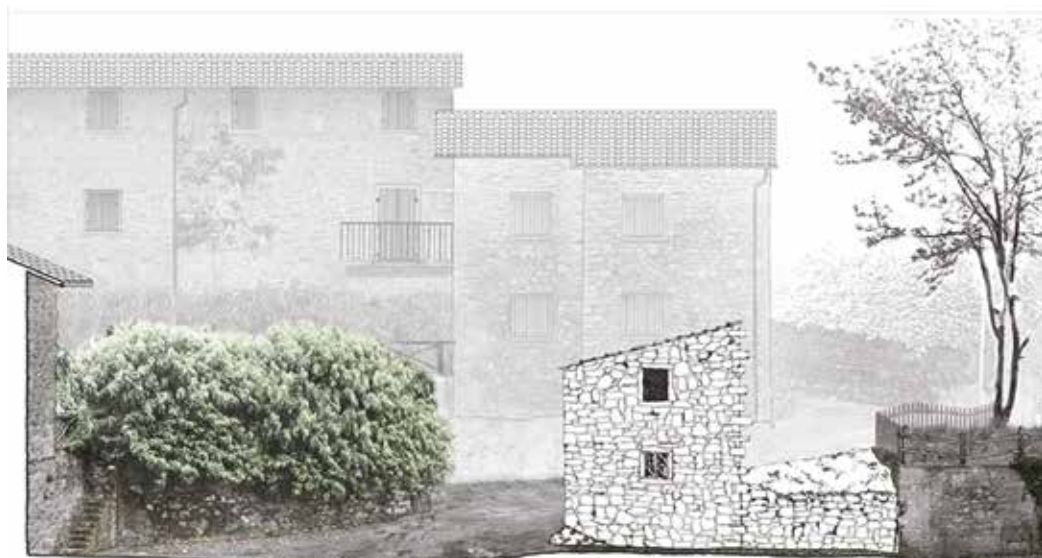
The data collected during the laser scanner and photogrammetric surveys were addressed in two different study campaigns, allowing a reconstruction of the state of conservation of the village. The data on the metric-morphological aspects of the village, accompanied by historical research, allowed us to see what events had determined the development of Quota. The first survey campaign focused on specific findings on site, in particular the relationship between the village and its seven water fountains was analysed. The following year, in 2017, the survey focused instead on completing all of the remaining built-up area of the village, however, to date, the groups of houses in the two small hamlets that are just outside the village, “La Valle” and “La Quercia”, have not been considered.

During the survey campaign of the “Fountains” (Fig. 9), the focus was on water as an essential asset for human, which in a small mountain village is considered even more precious, since often there are no wells and its supply depends on searching for nearby springs. A project to document and valorise the village considering water as a primary asset for its growth and development centred around the fountains, surveying and subsequently restoring them. In the following campaign, instead, topics related to the urban surveying of the village (Pancani 2017) but also to documenting traditional building techniques, such as masonry with stone ashlar and mortar, and the dry-stone walling used for all the landscape management terracing delimiting the farmlands around the village.

### The survey

For the survey of the Borgo di Quota, a “Faro Focus M 70” laser scanner was used for both campaigns, one of the seven fountains conducted in 2016, and one conducted the following year to complete the survey of the whole village (Fig. 10 and 10a). Moreover, as regards the study of the dry-stone masonry techniques, the experience of building a small section of dry-stone wall was documented, using both a laser scanner survey and 3D photogrammetry; in this regard, a video recording of the dry-stone wall construction work was arranged, commented on by Giocondo Ciabatti, the elderly *master mason*, who did the masonry work (Fig. 11 and 11a).

The laser scanning surveys (Fig. 12) were carried out using an acquisition mesh of approximately 0.7 x 0.7 cm, which made it possible to acquire a great deal of metric-morphological information on the artefacts (Fig 13). Thanks to the good quality of the reflectance, it was also possible to distinguish the documented wall textures, from those made with rough-hewn ashlar, to those with ashlar of more ancient workmanship squared and laid in rows, up to the large boulders used for the walls of the medieval fortress. The reconstruction of the work was organized on the basis of a general plan represented in scale 1:100, used for the graphic reconstructions of the individual *hamlets* (streets). In the reconstructions of the various *hamlets* in scale 1:50, the cobbles of the floors and the elevations were accurately described, the latter enriched by the information acquired with the orthophotos of the facades, obtained with 3D SfM photomodelling (Gaiani, 2015) (Fig 14). Lastly, the aerial documentation (Fig. 15 and 15a) acquired using a Dji Mavic 2Pro drone, equipped with a Hasselblad camera with a 1-inch CMOS 20 million effective pixels (5472x3648) sensor, allowed the reconstruction of a map of the village's roofs (Parrinello, 2019), one of the architectural elements that, compared to the 1960s, underwent numerous changes in the materials of the roof coverings. From the survey, the layout of the walls of the ancient castrum emerged quite clearly, some



**Fig. 10 and 10a**

Survey of the "Fonte del Lastro", with insertion of the ruined building recovered with an old survey made in 1986.





**Fig. 11 and 11a**

The dry wall construction work with the group of students and the master Giocondo Ciabatti.



**Fig. 12**  
The scans in  
borgo del Lastro.



**Fig. 13**  
The point cloud  
of the entire  
Quota country.

traces were already evident at first glance with a simple inspection, others were found by searching in the cellars of the houses that were along the route. However, more detailed considerations will only be possible when, at a later stage, the survey documents are examined by archaeologists specialized in architectural stratigraphy (Fig. 16).

### **Comments on the state of the Village**

In the 1950s, after the Second World War, driven by the hope of improving their economic condition, a considerable part of the population that lived in Quota, as happened in the small centres of the central Apennines, moved towards the big urban centres of the north and centre of Italy. Only a small percentage of the active population remained in the villages of our valleys, as in Casentino, together with the people who were older and had completed or were ending their working life.



In the '60s and 70s the economic growth in Italy as in the rest of Europe allowed many economic and social expectations to be achieved, so that many people returned, even if only for holiday periods, to their native village. In particular a generation of children, born in the new cities where their parents resided, spent their summer holidays in the places of origin of their families together with their grandparents who had not moved to the city. The economic consolidation and the new housing needs of families accustomed to new residential standards of the city, led many people to make substantial investments in the original hamlet, for the renovation of houses, thus giving rise to a virtuous process, which allowed the preservation and survival of the village of Quota.

This process changed the appearance of the village while allowing the restoration of many houses, which by now, due to abandonment, were in a very precarious condition. Unfortunately, however, with the advent of the economic boom of the 1960s, the gradual nature of the construction process accelerated greatly, resulting in a series of restorations completely out of context. As a matter of fact, the building procedures consolidated by tradition were abandoned, new materials were used replacing the traditional ones with effects that were not always successful, such as cement mortars in place of lime, brick roofs that completely supplanted the stone slabs used as roofings, or even aluminium instead of wood fixtures.

However, this flow of money gave rise to a virtuous and significant economic process related to the market for restructuring. Later, many of those who had left the villages in the 1950s in search of new opportunities returned, as pensioners. The now renovated houses were able



**Fig. 14**  
The “Fonte del Ponte” with view to the buildings above the boulder on which stands the highest part of the country, represented in the elevation with both Iron wire mode with Photoplane obtained by 3D photomodeling S.f.M.

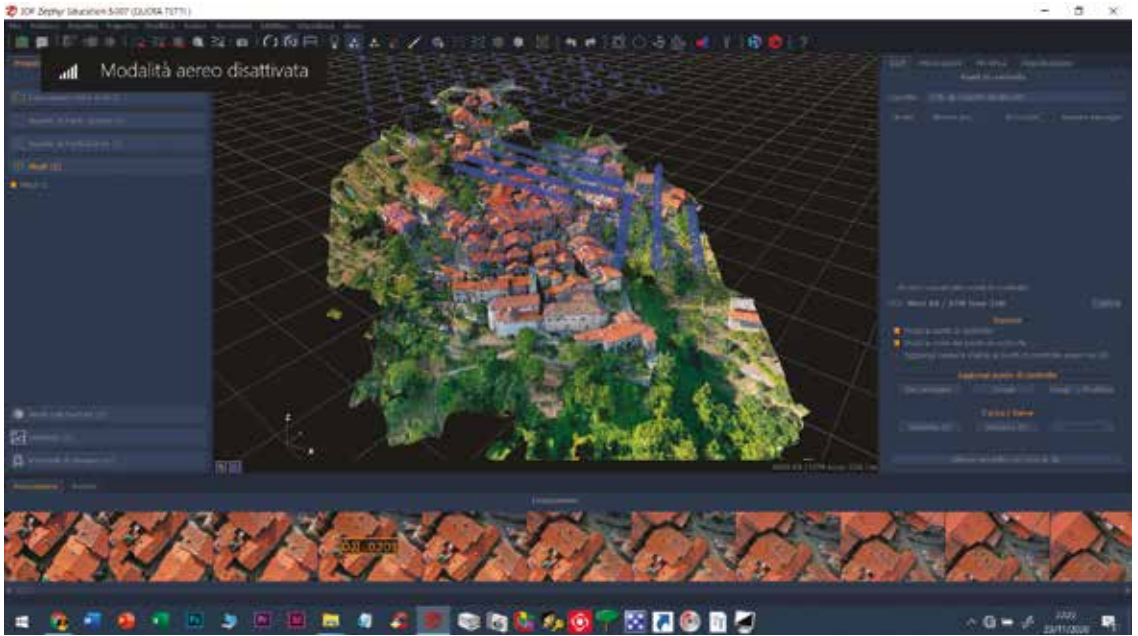


**Fig. 15a**  
An image of the village of Quota during photo modeling of images from Drone processed within the Software 3DFZephyr.

**Fig. 16**  
The remains of the high medieval walls of the Quota Castle in the Borgo della Piazzola in an elaboration of the Points cloud.

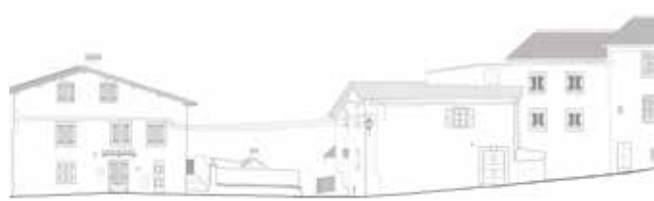
to satisfy the changed standards and comforts of living, so the village of Quota, like many other mountain centres in Casentino, and also of the whole central Apennines, kept itself sufficiently populated, thus guaranteeing the survival of the small commercial activities located there.

The period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s coincided with the moment of greatest vitality of the village of Quota. It was in fact in these years that many pensioners moved back, even if only for part of the year, and it was also in this period that a series of restorations began that were more aware and more attentive to the historical and architectural memory of the place of origin (Fig. 17, 18, 19, 20). These interventions recalled the local tradition, using materials more in keeping with the place, such as wood or stone both used or freshly-quarried but cut in the “old way” and with the use of lime-based mortars for filling the joints. Unfortunately, on some occasions there were interventions with jarring effects compared to the pre-existing reality, caused by the lack of knowledge of building traditions and of adequate cultural means to mend the rift with the past.





**Fig. 17**  
The fronts of the  
"Tower" and the  
beginning of the  
Borgo del Lastro.



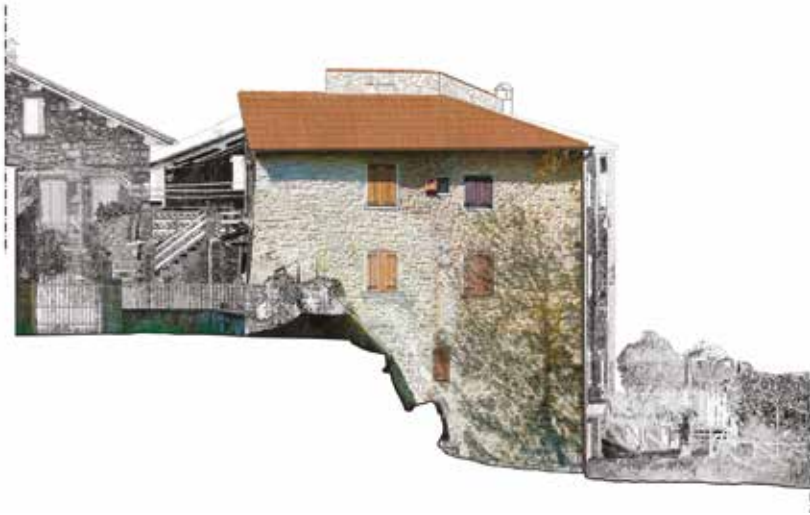
**Fig. 18**  
The fronts of the  
Borgo Crudele.

**Fig. 19**  
The Church  
square looking  
towards the  
street of the same  
name.



**Fig. 20**  
The fronts of the  
"Tower" and the  
beginning of the  
Borgo del Lastro.





Since the early 2000s, this cycle seems to have ended its propulsive capacity and the villages have been subject to a gradual and inexorable depopulation. Those who were young in the fifties have aged and their generation is gradually beginning to disappear. However, their children's generation has not yet reached retirement age, and in any case the downward trend caused by the great economic crisis of 2007-2011 has impoverished them considerably, while their ties with their parents' places of origin has also weakened. As a result of these circumstances, we are once again in the presence of a dangerous demographic decline in our mountain villages. It is a much more dangerous phenomenon than that which occurred sixty years ago, because it is not a question of a section of the population moving away, but of a population disappearing and not being replaced, either by new generations, or by the return of those who had left, as happened with the exodus of the 20th century.

With the depopulation of the old town centres and the opening of large shopping centres in the valley, even the small shopkeepers have gone into recession and had to close their businesses. The closure of small businesses in the villages has further encouraged their abandonment. The persistence of these conditions can only have an unfavourable impact on the preservation of the territory of the Apennine valleys and in particular of that historical, architectural, cultural and landscape heritage which resides there. Not to mention that the depopulation and abandonment of mountain villages coincides with the cessation of any land management, an event that can cause degenerative phenomena from a hydro-geological point of view, in turn leading to changes that affect the phenomena of pluvial regimentation downstream.



**Fig. 21**  
The small building built for the recovery of the site of the Fonte del Lastro and Seccatoio di Pilade.



It is therefore clear how important it is to be able to implement actions to counter the depopulation phenomenon of these villages, trying to induce virtuous actions that can slow down the depopulation of mountain villages, where not actively encouraging repopulation, especially of residents dedicated to caring for the territory itself.

Some hope for this trend seems to come from the effects produced by the Covid-19 pandemic raging since the beginning of 2020. In fact, the need to establish greater social distancing, and the possibility of smart working further enhanced by the project of the Tuscan Region to bring the fibre network to all small villages, may allow Quota and other mountain villages to hope for an albeit partial repopulation.

As far as the village of Quota is concerned, a certain reawakening of the real estate sector, practically dead for years, has been noticed in recent months. In this regard, it should be noted that for some years, voluntary associations devoted to preserving the village, are approaching their work with a renewed mentality and determination (Busi, 2020) Studies of Florence, and have begun to hold study seminars directly in the village. During these seminars, in addition to the survey of the entire village, projects for the enhancement of the village have been implemented. It has been acknowledged that the asset that distinguishes Quota, even compared to other Casentino villages, is the particular quality of the



water with special organoleptic properties that flows from the village fountains. In fact, during the twentieth century there were seven “Fountains” in operation, one of which, located just outside the village, “the King’s fountain”, is said to have had the best water. Many of the fountains were fed by single small aqueducts that led the water from the spring to the point of withdrawal, which was often equipped with a small tank. In 1969, thanks to the enthusiasm, the spirit of initiative and the good will of some people from Quota, first and foremost Lamberto Ciabattini, Angelo Giovannini and Abramo Fortunati Rossi, Quota was provided with its own aqueduct which, by exploiting some springs present “on the mountain”, allowed the villagers to have running water in their houses. This “rural aqueduct” maintained and updated with some improvement works, is still operative and represents a richness for the village both for the quality of its water and because it is still owned by the villagers, who through an association allow all those who are connected to the aqueduct to participate with equal shares and property rights. DiDA research contributed to this work and its maintenance, by redesigning an old rural building adjacent to one of the village fountains (Pancani Ricci, 2020). The redevelopment project (Fig. 21) was financed by the Poppi Municipal Administration and carried out in 2019. Lastly, the presence of a nearby shop has helped to cement the spirit of local aggregation, which even in a period of crisis for mountain villages, as existed up to just before the pandemic, has allowed the small village to maintain a modest continuity of population throughout the year, with peaks of three to four hundred inhabitants during the summer holidays.

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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.