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«WALLSCAPES»: EVOLUTION OF THE MARANO HILL FORTIFICATIONS (CUPRA MARITTIMA - ITALY) THROUGH MATERIALITY AND PERCEPTIONS

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Sommario

L'articolo analizza le mura di Marano, un piccolo borgo sulle colline retro-costiere marchigiane tra Fermo e Ascoli. Si presenta l'analisi delle fonti scritte relative allo sviluppo dell'abitato e i dati derivati dall'analisi dell'alzato delle mura, ancora in buona parte presenti. Viene poi presentato l'apporto dello scavo archeologico condotto nel borgo nel 2018, che ha permesso di valutare lo sviluppo dell'abitato in relazione alle mura. Infine, il contributo analizza come si è modificata la percezione delle mura nel corso del tempo in relazione al contesto geopolitico del borgo e alla riscoperta del passato romano dell'insediamento.

Abstract

The article analyses the walls of Marano, a small town in the back-coastal hills of the Marche region, between Fermo and Ascoli. Written sources related to the development of the settlement and data derived from the walls that still stand have been analysed. Moreover, a short insight into the development of the settlement in relation to the walls is presented through the results acquired during the archaeological excavation undertaken in 2018. Finally, the article explains how the perception of the walls has changed over time in relation to the Marano geopolitical context and the rediscovery of the Roman period settlement.

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THE EVOLUTION OF MARANO BETWEEN THE 10TH CENTURY AND THE MODERN PERIOD (AM)

This article deals with a study that began in 2018 (Merelli 2018/2019) that sought to contribute to a more precise chronological definition of Marano, a small, fortified hilltop settlement above the coastal town of Cupra Marittima (figs. 1-2). The close relationship between the settlement and the representative spaces of power, with its defensive system, has convinced the authors of this article to focus on the latter as the object of investigation. Through a reading of material evidence and all the available sources (written and iconographic), it has been possible to propose a reliable, functional, and chronological sequence of the living space, from the 11th-12th to the 14th-15th centuries.

The territory of Marche, characterised since the Roman Age as a scarce urbanisation but significantly affected by the medieval fortification phenomena, appears as an ideally fertile area for the study of medieval and post-medieval settlements, especially taking into account that most of the current settlement structure of the region seems to have preserved the structure developed in the late Middle Ages. So far, these aspects have only been systematically dealt with for the northern Marche region (Sacco 2017) and, partly, for the Potenza valley (Virgili 2014; Verreyke, Vermeulen 2009). However, the aforementioned cases concern territorial areas that can be identified through specific political realities (Montefeltro in the first case, Camerino in the second) in a process that, as the increasing collection of evidence shows us, needs to be read within its local or micro-regional context. In the area of southern Marche, certainly one of the least investigated under this profile (so far, only the case of Acquaviva Picena can be found in Giorgi, Vecchietti 2014), the castle of Marano proves to be an ideal case study.

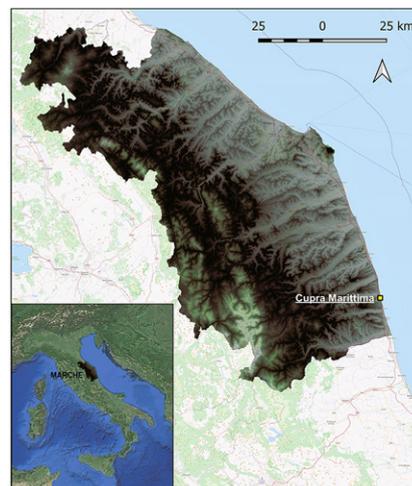


Fig. 1. Geographical location of the study area.

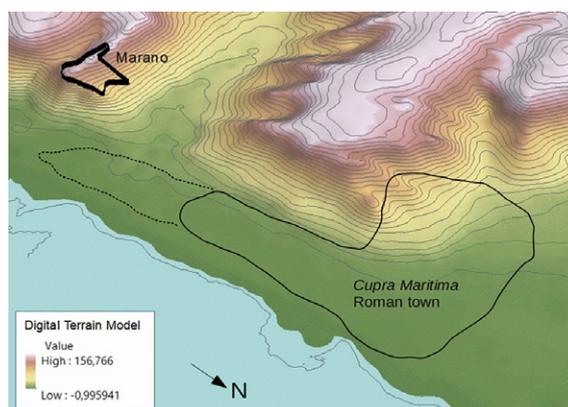


Fig. 2. Settlements and morphology of the area.

After the collection of the earliest sparse evidence indicating that Marano was a *villa* (Manaresi 1957, no. 154, 47-50) or a *fundus* (Avarucci 1996, no. 334, 600-601), from the beginning of the 11th century, the presence and territorial pertinences of the castle «de Mariano» appear better defined (Pacini 1996, no. 49, 99-101; no. 55, 114-116). The formation dynamics of the *castrum* (testified to, at the moment, only by written sources) are part of what has been identified at a regional level as the period of greatest development of the encastellation phenomenon in the Marche region (10th-early 11th century) (Bernacchia 2002, 169). This territorial reorganisation, in the case of the southern Marche region, is part of a heterogeneous political context, which saw the birth of a dense network of settlements around *castra*, even of modest dimensions, as well as territorial seignories to the detriment of a weakened central power, represented in this area by the imperial monastery of Farfa. The initiative for the Marano encastellation is attributable to the local lordship of the Tasselgard, the first owners of the castle, whose properties already included a church, a port and several water mills.

As in the case of the 10th century settlements, no archaeological data is yet available for the 11th century *castrum*, which can define its exact material characteristics, dimensions, and position with respect to the present-day town of Marano. It is conceivable that it was delimited by defences almost entirely made of wood and earth, occupying the summit area of the hill, thus exploiting the natural height of the terrain for the defence and control of the territory (Bernacchia 2002-2003, 3-4; Virgili 2014, 65). The reference to a church from the earliest sources suggests that the ecclesiastical building may have represented one of the central elements of the castle, acting as a gathering centre for the community.

Between the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th centuries, the written sources became more numerous, revealing an advanced acquisition process of the territory by the bishop of the city of Fermo to the detriment of the Tasselgard seignory, which in 1103 saw the definitive dispersion of its assets and the officialisation of the bishop's dominion over Marano as well (Paoli 1996, no. 395, 719-720). However, the documents also contain interesting data on the material consistency of the settlement and its transformations. They describe a reality that, at least until the late 12th century, was represented by an internal fortification (*girone*) of lordly competence, near to where a settlement had been formed (Tomei 1995, Appendix, no. 7, 360-362). The *girone* and the settlement were then divided by an embankment or, in any case, by a non-buildable area (*carbonaria*), marking the different spaces of the settlement. However, from 1194 onwards, there was a major reorganisation of the *castrum*, which involved the dismantling of the *carbonaria*, the parcelling out of the building areas and the construction of a new wall to enclose the entire settlement. From the mid-13th century, the presence of a church dedicated to Santa Maria and two town gates are reported: the *porta solis* and the *porta boree* (Avarucci 1996, no. 327, 583-588). Although the entrances are not identifiable in the urban fabric today, their positions can be reconstructed from their names. They must have been located along the northern and southern flanks of the settlement, as it was the case of many ridge towns in the territory (Catalino, Romani Adami, Vitali 1992), thus testifying to the presence of major roads reaching the settlement from north and south.

In connection with the gates, the *carbonaria* is mentioned again, clearly referring, in this case, to an area outside the walls. The building and demographic expansion of Marano in this period also manifested itself through a phenomenon of sinecism, which implied the demolition and annexation by the Tasselgardi of another castle («*alio castello*»), the name of which, however, is unknown. The possible «absorbed» centre has been identified in the nearby *Supportica castrum*, always mentioned in close association with Marano, as if the two centres were part of a single administrative entity. Such a view also appears to be supported by the disappearance, within the sources, of all references to the settlement of *Supportica* from the beginning of the 12th century (Paoli 1996, no. 395, 719-720), evidently due to its decline or abandonment. The original possible location of *Supportica* can be found in a hilly area about 1.4 km from the present-day Marano, an area that in the Gregorian Cadastre of the mid-19th century still maintained this toponym. During the research campaign of Ca' Foscari University of Venice in October 2018, a survey was undertaken in the area with the aim of identifying any evidence of the settlement (fig. 3). Despite the good visibility of the terrain, the research has so far led to the discovery of very little material evidence. Based also on the geomorphological characteristics of the investigation area (Cantalamessa 2011, 51), it is assumed that any archaeological deposits may have been removed or obliterated by ancient or modern landslides. At present, it is not even possible to identify traces within the settlement fabric of Marano that can be traced back to the transfer of the population from a specific centre such as *Supportica*, which generally maintained its identity even in the new settlement, with the dedication of the church to the patron saint or the transposition of the original toponym into the neighbourhood it was to form (Farinelli, Giorgi 2009, 407) (fig. 3).

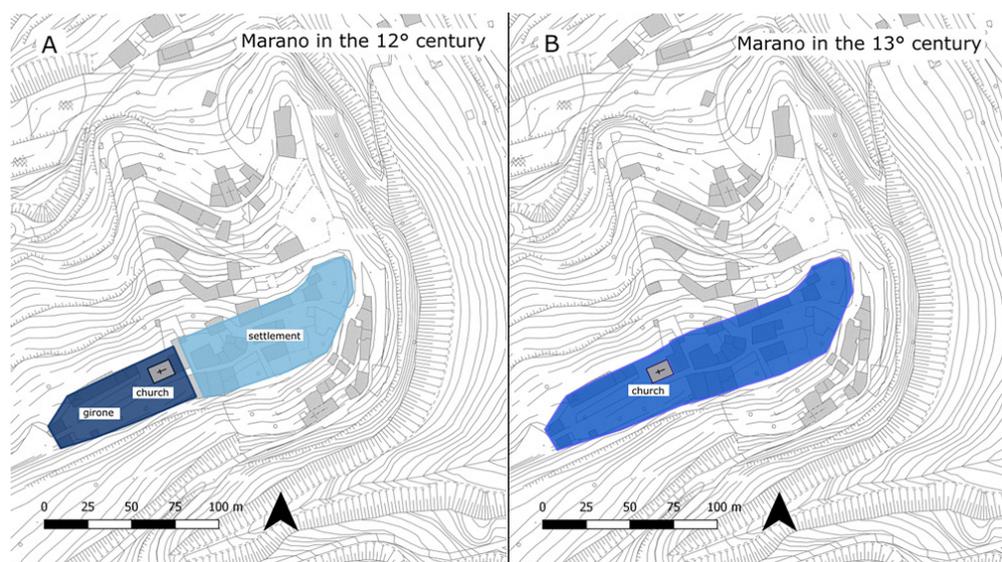


Fig. 3. Location of the surveyed areas.

The years between the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century were, therefore, a period during which Marano was affected by profound jurisdictional changes and underwent a strong reorganisation of its spaces. With

that, it achieved a more complex and stable form, perhaps in conjunction with the use of materials such as stones or bricks. The analysis of the evidence now present in the elevated area did not identify any elements clearly attributable to the 12th or 13th century structures. Based on the morphology of the site and the surviving urban fabric, it can be assumed that the area surrounded by the 12th century walls corresponded to the top of the ridge and that its limits can be identified with the structures of the area now called Rocca to the west, and with the present-day Church of Santa Maria in Castello to the east (fig. 4a). Indeed, the ecclesiastical building often represented the interface element between the lordly area and the village, mentioned within the *carbonaria* in some cases in the southern Marche, in the space between the moat and the defences of the castle (Antongirolami 2005, 342). The space which at the end of the 12th century the *homines* of Marano undertook to enclose by walls could correspond, instead, to the current urban area located on the entire top of the hill, named *Castello* in the Gregorian Cadastre in the 19th century, separated from the rest of the hillside even today by steep sides, which make the site easily defensible (fig. 4b).

Fig. 4. The evolution of Marano between the 12th and 13th centuries.



The first half of the 13th century is characterised by the birth and development of municipal bodies, and it leads Marano to assume a greater importance in the regional geopolitical framework (Fiore 2010, 332). The young State of Fermo, in particular, showed a strong interest in controlling Marano, which was then located along the border with the rival city of Ascoli. This inclination for control would also correspond to a greater articulation of the defensive system, with the expropriation of numerous private houses for the construction of a fortified redoubt (*«receptum pro communi Firmi»*). The unpublished parchment roll¹ containing a list of the owner's names and the boundaries of the individual expropriated *domus* gives an image of the area occupied by the *receptum*: it was a very compact area, crossed by a main road (*«viam publicam»*) and at least partly adjacent to the castle walls (*«murus castris»*). This

¹ Archivio di Stato di Fermo, Archivio Storico Comunale, Fondo Diplomatico, doc. no. 1666 Hubart.

fortified redoubt was probably located along the western side of the hilltop, roughly corresponding to the ancient roundabout and the subsequent fortress (*infra*). Perhaps as a reminder of this acquisition, the ownership of this part of the settlement, devoid of residential buildings until the 19th century, was claimed by the Municipality of Fermo in the 16th century.

Except for a few temporary episodes (Tabarrini 1870, nos. 362, 379, 462), as from the 13th century, Fermo firmly dominated Marano. The military role of the castle persisted throughout the 14th and 15th centuries. In this period, Marano was among the Fermo centres with «*rocca e fortificia*» within the Albornois organisation of the Marca (Saracco Previdi 2000, f. 161^o, 1066, 44). Moreover, the presence of a *casserum* is still mentioned in the early 15th century (De Minicis 1870, 35), testifying to the existence of a garrison area with a precise military function, separate from the rest of the settlement. This part of Marano, which still bears the name *rocca* (fortress), and likely underwent major transformations over time (first *girone*, then *ricetto*, and finally *rocca*), shows material characteristics that nowadays are difficult to interpret with certainty. The evidence left on the elevation is devoid of any construction techniques or architectural elements which could provide a chronological reference. It is possible to reconstruct a trapezoidal defence system with two square towers at the south-east and north-east corners, and a large square tower at the north-west corner (fig. 5). This tower, with only a part of its base preserved today, built with squared and hammered sandstone and travertine ashlar, must have been the main element of the fortification, capable of housing a possible garrison. The entrance to the fortress faced east inside the settlement. Despite the variations in highland fortifications conditioned by the orography, the volumes and shapes of the Marano fortress are comparable with other cases in the territory, such as the *cassero* of Montefiore dell’Aso (Mauro, Tomei 2002) and the fortress of Acquaviva Picena (Giorgi, Vecchiotti 2014) (figs. 5-6).

The remains of the walls that nowadays enclose the village of Marano can also be dated to the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries, based on stratigraphic observations and the analysis of the architectural elements (fig. 6). The walls are mainly built of bricks and have characteristics, such as height (approximately 9.5-11.5 m) and thickness (approximately 0.5 m), that can be traced back to the end of the 14th century, when the use of firearms was not yet widespread. Some sections of the walls also retain the so-called «swallow-tailed» battlements, now absorbed into the walls of private houses, comparable to the walls of the nearby Carassai castle, dated to the second half of the 14th century (Pallottini, Mauro 2002, 206). The towers of the Marano castle present similar characteristics to other examples available in the Fermo area. The first tower of the western walls, with a rectangular base and partially absorbed

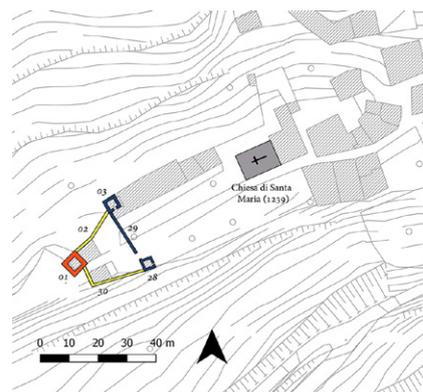


Fig. 5. Trapezoidal defence system probably relating to the *casserum*.

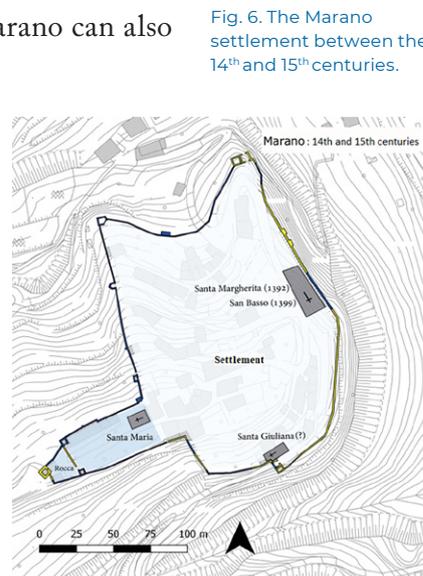


Fig. 6. The Marano settlement between the 14th and 15th centuries.



Fig. 7. The first tower of the western walls.

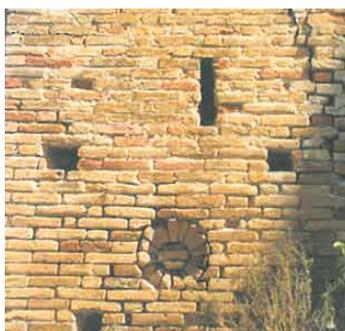


Fig. 8. Radiating loophole in the first tower of the western walls.



Fig. 9. Circular fire-mouth opening made of two brick elements.

by a modern dwelling, must have been open along the inner side that is currently walled in (fig. 7). On the two outer sides, perpendicular to the walls (north and south), traces of two radiating loopholes are visible (fig. 8). This type of circular embrasure, used for grazing fire (barrage and flanking) with small calibre cannons (about 15 cm in diameter), is part of a type of defence documented from the late 14th century and widely spread throughout the 15th century (Palloni 2000, 35). The later pentagonal tower, called «*puntone*» (Mauro 2002, 102), is also quite common in the territory (examples can be seen in Campofilone, Grottammare and Montefiore dell’Aso). Moreover, this type of tower is present in the outermost walls of the city of Fermo, which are dated to the mid-14th century (Tomei 1995, 106; Mauro 2002, 70 ff.). In this case, in addition to the circular bombards at the base of the tower, at the top-floor level, there is a different circular fire-mouth opening made of two bricks (fig. 9). This particular type of construction, also present in Carassai and Montefiore dell’Aso, can be found outside the region in Emilia-Romagna, which are dated to the 15th century (Fiorini 2012). Overall, the walls of Marano were built as a single work, probably based on the urban planning project of the Municipality of Fermo, according to a model that can be found in the nearby centres of Carassai (Pallottini, Mauro 2002, 206) and Acquaviva Picena (Giorgi, Vecchietti 2014, 81-82). Except for the insertion of some architectural elements such as the bombards, the defence system is devoid of any technological updates. The main elements of modification are attributable to reconstruction or consolidation works (figs. 7-8-9).

This defined the definitive shape and size of Marano, with the settlement developing concentrically around the 13th century nucleus, particularly along the north-eastern side of the hill, due to the morphology of the land and most likely to the economic role represented by the port, located near the mouth of the S. Egidio stream.

In the context of this expansion between the 14th and 15th centuries, we can also notice the formation of a new administrative centre corresponding to the new public square, overlooked by the church of S. Basso and Margherita and the town hall.

Between the 16th and 17th centuries, the fortified structures lost their strategic value, with the progressive disappearance of the fortress and the occupation of the walls by private dwellings. The main works carried out on the walls between the 18th and 19th centuries mainly involved modifications to the road network and the securing of the eastern and southern sides of the hill, which had been subject to landslides since at least the 17th century (Ciarrocchi 2004, 11). An opening for coaches was made in the northern wall, replacing the old *Porta da Borea*, which had collapsed. The «*torrione vetusto e ruinoso*» (Mostardi 1977, 240) of the fortress was

demolished to build the modern western road, which appears in cadastral maps from the second half of the 19th century.

Despite numerous attempts to stop the landslides, the collapses that occurred between 1832 and 1847 caused the definitive depopulation of Marano and the formation of the present-day town of Cupra Marittima along the coast.

THE EXCAVATION OF MARANO: IN DEPTH (AAR - TF)

Presented below are the characteristics of the stratigraphic sequence investigated between 2018 and 2019 in the excavation area opened along the south-eastern slope of the Marano hill². The intervention had a total extension of approximately 75 m² and involved the excavation of approximately 200 m³ of deposit. Although the area has been progressively narrowed, the sterile substrate has been reached over the entire extension of the excavated area.

The intervention involved part of the site of a multi-storey building, demolished in the early twentieth century (fig. 10). Once the higher stratifications pertinent to the ground floor of this complex were exhausted, various wall structures perpendicular to the slope were intercepted, marking the space into three rooms. The excavation therefore continued in the three compartments, called Rooms 1, 2 and 3. The sequence embraces a chronological span between the 14th and 20th centuries AD. In terms of stratigraphic succession, there are no breaks in the occupation of the area except in Room 3: here, as we will see, the occupation of the Modern-Contemporary Age is set directly on the medieval levels (fig. 10).

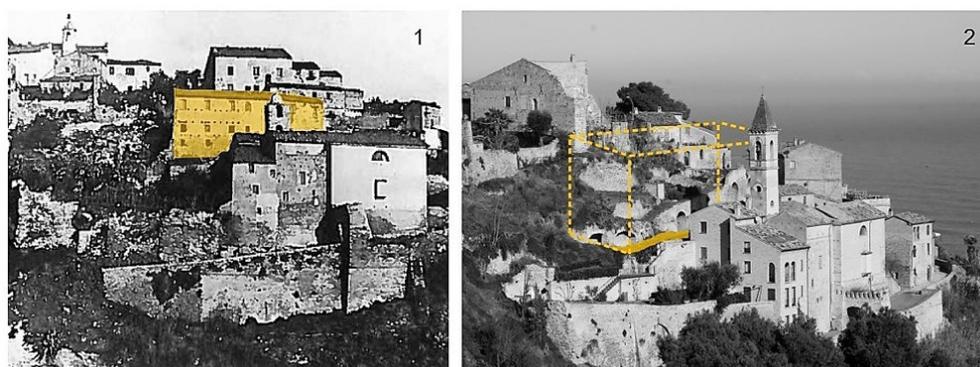


Fig. 10. Location of the excavation area with the demolished building.

According to pottery assemblages in Room 3, the oldest occupation dates back to the 14th century, that is, at the moment in which Marano was involved in its definitive expansion and definition, contextually to the construction of the still visible defensive wall. In this period, the area was a mixed space, mostly occupied

² Here, a summary of the main results will be presented. A book specifically dedicated to the excavation's results has been published in 2022 (Gelichi, Ferri, Rucco 2022).



Fig. 11. Medieval floors documented in Room 2.



Fig. 12. Stratigraphic section of the medieval floors documented in Room 3.

Fig. 13. New walls and a small hearth/furnace in Room 2.



by structures of a largely residential type but also by green areas, intended for lawns or crops. The occupation involved limited layers, and the rest took place directly on the substrate of the hill (fig. 11).

The medieval occupation determined numerous rearrangements of the spaces. If sufficient information is lacking to establish the characteristics of the building, the high number of occupation layers documented in a rather limited period — the entire 14th century — testifies in favour of a lively and continuous occupation, gravitating almost exclusively on Room 3 (fig. 12).

In this area, important information was obtained from the analysis of the snails collected by sieving the individual levels³. The scarcity of ceramic and glass materials, the limited number of structural traces and, conversely, the presence of numerous medium-sized silos, which occupied a large part of the walkable area, had led to the hypothesis of having intercepted a context that was not directly residential but, if anything, adjacent to a house. The archaeomalacological datum, coherent in itself, seems to corroborate this hypothesis, tracing the picture of a space with a herbaceous cover, not shrubby, perhaps close to ruins, but characterised by a constant and continuous anthropic presence. Furthermore, the study of faunal findings relating to mammals and birds has led to hypothesise, especially for the latter category, poultry farming, based on the various ages of development to which the osteological record refers. Even the presence of predators

such as the fox, as specified, could constitute indirect evidence of the presence of farmyard animals. The area is therefore configured as a courtyard space, included in the mesh of the settlement, according to a model already extensively documented in the available bibliography. The slope was not, therefore, strongly anthropized, as it would appear starting from the modern age, but still dotted with green spaces, perhaps even for horticultural use.

During the 16th century, the entire area underwent a substantial planimetric reorganisation (fig. 13), which materialises through extensive backfill activities and a progressive structuring of the spaces, with the dismantling of the previous wall structures and the construction of new walls, perpendicular to the slope, as well as the definitive closure of the spaces towards the valley.

3 Land snails represent an underrated yet extremely useful proxy for paleoenvironmental analyses and reconstructions (Rucco *et al.* 2020).

Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the area was divided into clearly distinct spaces by structures made of stone and brick, which marked rooms of about 3×5 m (fig. 14).

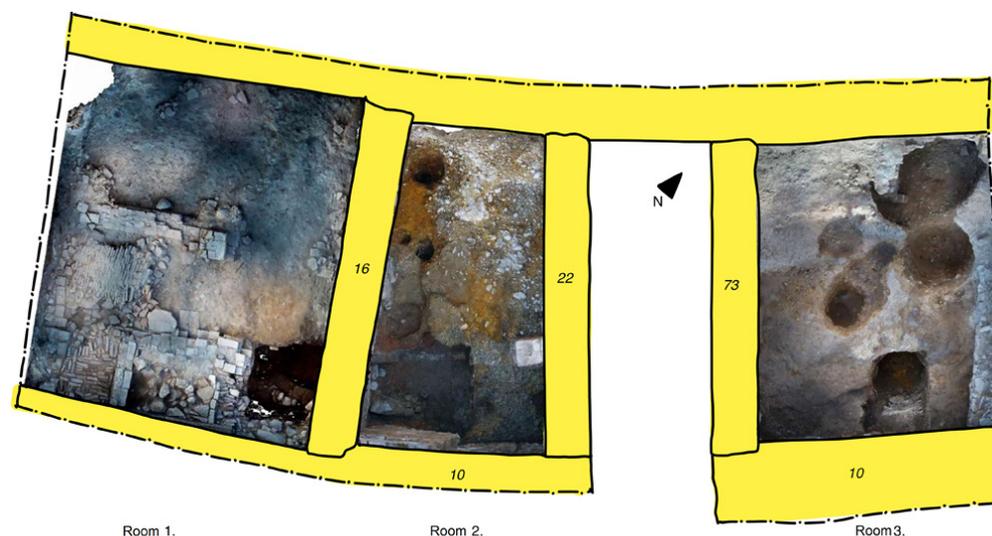


Fig. 14. General plan of the excavation area.

Between the 18th and 19th centuries, the occupation was divided into isolated basins, characterised by the succession of lime floors made on huge levels of preparation consisting of abundant fragments of brick in free matrix. The space that certainly stands out for its stratigraphic complexity is, at this time, that of Room 1, in which very articulated static-architectural solutions and a particular under-scanning of the space in rooms of various functions have been documented (fig. 15).

With the passage to the 19th century, even this scan disappears, leaving room for the construction of a building, demolished only at the beginning of the 20th century, characterised by a ground floor set directly on the levelling of the previous structures.



Fig. 15. Modern-Contemporary structures in the excavation area.

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE WALLS (MF)

The present walls of Marano are an outstanding monument because they are very well preserved. Only the eastern part is missing due to landslides in the area. The whole circuit can be considered essentially as a unitary work, the outcome of a precise urban planning project by the governor of Fermo, according to a pattern found in other towns of the Marche region, including Fermo itself. They enclose the core of the oldest settlement, dating back to the 13th century, and their features indicate a defensive function. The only partial renovation, with the insertion of a few bombardments, indicates a very limited adaptation to the

appearance of the new firearms from the 16th century onwards. Essentially, a gradual and rather subdued depletion of their primary function is evident. Their active defensive function takes place between the 14th and 15th centuries, but they soon take on a symbolic function, becoming a hallmark of the town.

Perhaps it is possible to hypothesise a symbolic function even before its construction in masonry in the 14th century. As already said, we do not have archaeological data about Marano for the Early Middle Ages. Information derives substantially from written sources that identify the inhabited settlement through its material structures and, in particular, through the material structures considered in some way «emerging»: in the very first documents, words used are *castrum*, *castello* and church, which represent the new medieval aggregation hub of the community (Merelli 2018/2019, 7-11).

In the Early Middle Ages, written sources are testimonies that cannot be used directly as descriptors of a materiality, but rather as a will of representation, not as a description of the real configuration of the cities. The different documents vary in their lexicon, either by defining the same place in a different way, or by giving a different name to similar settlements, at least in appearance: they represent the voices of the rulers, not the reality of the settlement (Gelichi 2010, 93-94). From this point of view, the settlement of Marano, which in written sources appears to us between the 10th and 13th centuries as having a small fortification wall on top of the hill, soon transformed into a *receptum*, regardless of what these were in reality, was intended to be seen as a fortified town. The reason why it was necessary to give to Marano an aspect of strength and impregnability was its strategic position, being disputed between many forces. Control of the coastline between the Menocchia and the Tesino rivers, overlooked by Marano, fell within the interests of numerous contenders: the Bishop of Fermo representing the papacy, imperial troops, local lords and newly autonomous castle towns such as Ripatransone (Borri 2012, XXIX).

Motivations of a symbolic order, to demonstrate one's power and economic readiness, as well as geopolitical strategy, also underlie a not too sophisticated reading of the stone and brick fortress-building campaign commissioned by Albornoz and Fermo throughout the whole region in the second half of the 14th century. Even before, the landscape was dotted with fortresses that performed a multiplicity of functions complementing the defensive one: primarily, the reception of papal officials and legates (Lanconelli 2009).

The research carried out so far has not allowed us to investigate Marano's medieval walls in depth. In this case, the data shown are based on the stratigraphic analysis of the standing structures and on the data that can be deduced from the documentary sources. Therefore, we are not able to define how the construction of the walls in their current layout has materially impacted the built-up area, whether they are the result of an expansion or if they have been drawn from scratch at the edge of the built-up area; or if they are the result of the choice to include some inhabited areas to the detriment of others.

The decision to conduct an in-depth excavation along the southern side of the hill was partly motivated by the aim of chronologically tracing the evolution of

the village and identifying the moment at which its symbolic function replaced the defensive one. The intention was to understand if and when the walls were in effect an urban element that topographically determines the development of the village. It is no coincidence that the excavation is located in an area considered external to the very first small, fortified structure (Gelichi, Ferri, Rucco 2022, 27). The most ancient phases have highlighted an open area, albeit occupied and full of domestic activities. The archaeological study has brought to light the construction of complex structures, which are respectful of the slope following its inclination, dating back to the 16th century. The chronological data of an intensification of the buildings and the presumed gradual functional conversion of the walls, from a truly defensive structure to a very symbolic representation of the village, converge at the same time, starting from 1500.

Before this date, the slope was not strongly anthropized, but still dotted with green spaces, for growing vegetables. Since the Early Middle Ages, urban domestic gardens for food production meant a characteristic appearance of the townscape (Goodson 2018 and 2019). They were cultivated areas near houses where fruits and vegetables were grown and, as Marano has shown, where small domestic animals were bred. In documented records, they appear among properties that were sold and exchanged (Romano 2015, *passim*). Therefore, they had real value and were not merely open areas. These cultivated spaces were for domestic use or small-scale exchange and were productive. However, we do not have any insight about who controlled these plots at the edge of the Marano urban area, but we can consider them a viable part of the settlement.

For the Early Middle Ages, it has been assumed that owning agricultural land inside the city could also have a symbolic value (Goodson 2018, 346). These lands represented resources and giving lands was used to secure support. Within the medieval city, land served as a representation of wealth and control of resources, as a sign of status and access to money. It was a visible urban asset. The excavation of Marano has highlighted the transition from this model to a more intensive model of urbanisation and the reduction of open areas within the urban circle.

Whether this shift from open land within the settlement to a dense urbanisation can in turn be interpreted as a change in representing wealth and power is not easy to say. However, it is a rather lengthy process, which continues into the 17th and 18th centuries: urban planning became even more pressing and private housing occupation of the once public and defensive walls became prevalent (fig. 16).

This change in use and perception of the walls is evident when confronting the iconographic sources depicting Marano between the late 1600s and 1900s (all of them collected by Merelli 2018/2019, 12-20, with indication of collocations). An early view from 1677, although poor in architectural detail, shows the castled village on the hill and the continuity of the surrounding masonry, clearly evident in all its magnificence (fig. 16a). A few years later, in 1709, Ferdinando Marsili was called upon by the papal state to carry out a census of the fortifications along the Adriatic coast, between the Tronto and Po rivers. Here, the planimetric representation of the Marano walls had a utilitarian intent, highlighting the

Fig. 16. Marano as illustrated between the late 1600s and 1788. a) 1677 (DE NICOLÒ 1998, 151); b) the mid-18th century (MEDEI 2010, 93); c) 1788 (CIARROCCHI 2004, 24)..



defensive purposes of the structure. In fact, only the wall layout and the public buildings (churches, a few structures leaning against the walls) stand out. A nucleated town can also be seen in two Marano views from the mid-18th century and 1788: tightly enclosed by its walls with well-preserved towers, looking towards the coast below, which differs in that it has a less urbanised landscape, dotted with scattered blockhouses (and a few boats on the sea in the 1788 representation - fig. 16c). These images certify the gradual but relentless shift of Marano's economic and political interests towards the coast, which was gradually becoming populated. However, by the mid-19th century, the image of the walled town of Marano was still well understood in the common imagination and among its own inhabitants, who chose to represent themselves by reproducing the 1788 view in a silver bas-relief, dated 1848, and kept at the Suffrage Church (Ciarrocchi 2004, 24). Remarkably, the Gregorian Cadastre of 1855 shows numerous open spaces within the village, unlike the views of the previous century (Merelli 2018/2019). The same process is illustrated in the collection of historical postcards dated between 1888/1890 and the early 20th century (Cupra... com'era 1994), where the growth of the new coastal settlement and the depopulation of the walled town on the hills are made evident.

Advancing into the Modern Era, partly for environmental reasons, due to landslides, a section of the wall collapsed, and partly due to neglect, the walls are not preserved intact. In some parts they are transformed to open the passage for cars. This is not just about progress and adaptation to new needs. One could advance the hypothesis that the Marano walls are losing their representative value of the settlement. In parallel with the gradual abandonment of the walls, new topics of interest come to light downstream, at the mouth of the Menocchia river. While Roman remains, especially epigraphs, occasionally came to light as early as the 16th and 17th centuries, systematic excavations were conducted in the Menocchia valley during the 18th century. Impressive structures and statues were

discovered (Marozzi 2004/2005, 4-10). The relevant literature is enriched with numerous citations referring to the Marano area, now renowned for its Roman past. In particular, the question of the location of the temple of the goddess Cupra, disputed between the village of Grottammare (Polidori 1783), located a little further south, and the village of Marano (Colucci 1783), ignites a debate among scholars and shifts the spotlight to a far more ancient than medieval past. Findings of epigraphs and statuary followed one another, and T. Mommsen included some inscriptions from the Marano territory in his 9th volume of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (in 1883).

In the same process of revising its own identity, and rediscovering its past, the town of Marano acquired the new name of Cupra Marittima, recovering the ancient Roman toponym, as imposed by a royal decree of 1862 and as proposed by the then mayor Gregorio Possenti. In the meantime, the railway was built, parallel to the new Adriatica state road. The upper part of the town (from that moment called *vecchio incasato*, «old village») began to undergo a rapid process of depopulation. Houses and services moved downwards along the two main road arteries. Postcards from the early 1900s gradually framed less and less of the old walled town (Cupra... com'era 1994), treated as a scenic backdrop to the rapidly growing new Cupra, which could boast of an illustrious past as a temple seat.

The temporal coincidence between the definitive material and symbolic abandonment of the walled village and the rediscovery of Cupra's Roman past does not seem to be accidental. Marano's inhabitants, no doubt in response to new environmental, political and economic needs, found a new location which is materialised in the identification of new symbols of their community.

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