

## **Recovery and rehabilitation of rural building in Scalfone di Castelnuovo al Volturno, a hamlet of the municipality of Rocchetta al Volturno.**

- Asset enhancement program -

### General Introduction

The building that is the subject of this report is located in an area that has been "lived in" by the local populations since the earliest times both for pastoralism and for agricultural activity, which until the middle of the last century was also practiced at high altitudes for the cultivation of potatoes and, downhill, wheat (wheat, oats and spelt), corn and vegetables. It was therefore littered with building artifacts of various types that have now largely disappeared or deteriorated to such an extent that they cannot be recovered, resulting in an irreparable loss, on the socio-environmental and cultural level more generally, of a type of rural architecture (and related building techniques) that is increasingly rare in an area where at the same time popular traditions closely linked to agro-pastoral economy of the place have been preserved and are still alive.

The building and surrounding area, with its large and well-preserved terraces cultivated until the most recent years of the last century, can therefore be considered one of the few significant testimonies "of the articulation and historical, anthropological and urban stratification of the territory, of the history of the populations and of the rural communities" of the area. The context in which it is set is that of the agricultural settlement outside the consolidated historical settlement of Castelnuovo al Volturno, which precisely in that area saw its farmland and scattered rural buildings concentrated. Its construction, in fact, is part of the more general phenomenon that during the Nineteenth century saw a gradual movement of many farming families from the hamlets to locations in the sub-mountainous belt, either temporarily (from spring to autumn) or increasingly permanently resulting in the establishment farms and small settlements and the construction of masonry artifacts.

The general situation of the building itself, starting from its size, architectural appearance as well as from what we learn from the collective memory and individual recollections of local people, suggests that the structure was used partly as a residence and partly as a storehouse for foodstuffs and tools as well as a shelter for animals. Its functional use for the dual exercise of pastoral and agricultural activities-another characteristic of the rural economy of the place historically complemented also by forms of seasonal migrations in the summer period for harvesting and in the winter period for Christmas novenas with bagpipes-is also revealed by two elements that emerge from observation of the settlement:

- the existence adjacent to the building of an artifact once used as a stable, now collapsed, made of stones identical to those of the main body;
- the presence of four levels of terracing, evidence of the difficult struggle sustained by local people in order to make otherwise wild and inaccessible land productive; of these, the first three upstream are still almost totally free of brushwood while the fourth, downstream, is currently wooded though still clearly recognizable as the work of human activity of land arrangement.

These characteristics (building in good condition and terracing still usable for agricultural purposes albeit in a changed context and in different ways) make the protection and redevelopment of what has survived - including the building in question - all the more pregnant with meaning, albeit, but perhaps all the more, in a historical and socio-economic framework that has changed profoundly but is all the more in need of rediscovering and maintaining traces of the past. Both as memory, thus as preservation and strengthening of the identity bond between population and territory, and as a perspective for the future. All the more so when one considers that one is in the presence of an areaparticularly rich of values landscape-environmental as well as of historical, archaeological and cultural evidence such as to constitute a valuable heritage on which to graft sustainable and lasting development projects and actions.

From a naturalistic and environmental point of view, the area is included in zone No. 2.1 with prevalence of naturalistic and physical-biological elements of high value of Landscape Plan No. 7 "Mainarde and Upper Volturno Valley" as well as in SCI IT 7212121 called "Meta Group - Mainarde Range." It also falls in zone B "General Oriented Reserve Areas" of the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park.

In the reasons for declaring this area of considerable public interest pursuant to Ministerial Decree 28.07.1976 and then LR no. 24/89 reads, "the aforementioned area has considerable public interest, because, forming a single landscape and morphological *hinterland* of considerable appearance, it constitutes a traditional aesthetic complex as well as a natural framework of great importance; the horrid crags of the Mainarde contrast with the calmness and extension of the plateau containing the residential settlements of Castel San Vincenzo and Rocchetta a Volturno, of the examples of containment and settlement of man's structures in the natural context of the environment: the monumentality of the mountain of Montenero, which continues with the gorge of the deep gorge of the upper Volturno, contrasts with the cathedral-like, almost unnatural appearance of the historic center of Cerro al Volturno, which, with its medieval castle, makes the point of the majesty of the landscape ..." .

In this majestic landscape, the passage of time, natural events such as earthquakes and those caused by human folly such as wars, together with the downsizing of agro-pastoral activities as a result of emigration and the attraction exerted by the nearby industrial poles and the tertiary sector developed in the centers of Isernia and Venafrò, have largely erased the small and large signs that human presence had imprinted on the territory in the course of an ultra-millennial history that, leaving aside the most remote Samnite and Roman incidences, developed around and thanks to Benedictine monastic settlement of San Vincenzo al Volturno.

Founded in the early eighth century as a northward outpost of the Duchy of Benevento, the abbey of San Vincenzo al Volturno became an important religious, cultural, economic and political center whose strategic positioning was well understood by Charlemagne, who projected it onto a scenario of European importance. Destroyed by the Saracens in 881, it fully recovered its strategic position at the end of the tenth century, giving rise to the repopulation of the area through the encastellation of most of the current municipalities of the upper Volturno Valley, thus taking the territory away from the forests to return and/or initiate it to villages, cultivated fields, livestock farming, in other words, to the human consensus. The monks re-conducted men, women, entire family units and brought them to live in the *castra*, the encampments that would later become the villages perched on the hills and from which would spread over the territory masserie and a multiplicity of artifacts (pagliai, made entirely of plant materials, pagliare, partly made of wood partly of dry stone masonry, rural buildings made entirely of stone) used for the shelter of animals, agricultural implements and the people themselves while working in the fields.

A land of farmers and shepherds, then, that of St. Vincent in which they developed and handed down craft traditions and knowledge still present, surviving the world that had expressed them and still able to speak to our time, to be useful to us and to excite us:

- the bagpipe, a heritage of the area but particularly rooted in Scapoli where workshops for its construction, an international music festival, museum institutes and a documentation center keep alive the community's link with its past and attract thousands of visitors to the area all parts of Italy and even abroad in search of authenticity and roots;
- the *Deer* of Castelnuovo al Volturno, a zoomorphic mask that at every carnival re-enacts the eternal struggle between good and evil, the conflict between wild nature and the world of humans, also attracting, with its magical pantomime, a crowd of

spectators/tourists in the small town clinging to St. Michael's Mountain;

– agri-food products and typical local gastronomy that are the fruit of knowledge and offer flavors that speak of lifestyles, production and processing techniques passed on from one generation to the next and that for some time now have begun to be valued as excellences and quality brands of the area; starting with the Scapolese raviolo, which used to be eaten by the family on the fat days of carnival and which today is celebrated and made available to the many visitors in a festival (the raviolata) established by the Circolo della Zampogna in 1991 and organized every year on the last Sunday of carnival. That of Abbey of St. Vincent al Volturno was not, however, only a land of shepherds and farmers; history, the one with a capital "S," has stamped its marks on it many times, positively and negatively.

In fact, on these mountains was consumed a part of the economic and social malaise that exploded in the South Italy, with dramatic implications, as part of the process unification of the country and that goes by the name of Brigantaggio. On the Mainarde the phenomenon centered in particular in the figure of the brigand Centrillo, alias Domenico Coia born in Castelnuovo al Volturno in 1828, also known as the Masaniello of the Mainarde. At the head of a large band of more than 150 men, he operated mainly in the area using as his base, according to the current vernacular, precisely one of the existing rural buildings in the Monte Marrone area. After participating in the Battle of Gaeta in support of Bourbon King Francis II, distinguishing himself by skill and courage, he was arrested in Rome by the French and tried in Cassino, where he was acquitted on October 20, 1865, along with other men in his band.

At the beginning of the 20th century, as if wishing to restore to these mountains the sense of harmony and peace that the beauty of the places had always evoked, it was the art of painting that passed through its paths and found refuge in the modest dwellings of the shepherds. This came about thanks to an ecologist painter with a hermit's vocation, still mythical in the memories of the oldest inhabitants of Castelnuovo and Scapoli: Charles Moulin renamed *the Bear of the Mainarde* for his shy character and propensity for a solitary life. A contemporary and fellow student of Henri Emile Matisse, to whom he was bound by deep friendship, Charles Moulin was born in Lille, France, on January 6, 1869. Winner of *the Le Prix de Rome* prize, thanks to a scholarship obtained from the French Academy, he went to Rome in 1896 where he made his entrance at the Villa Medici, a prestigious and important milestone for artists of the time. In 1911, attracted by his description of the places by some pipers who had been his models in Paris, he reached Castelnuovo with the intention of staying there for a few days. Instead, he never left it again except for a few brief departures for reasons related to his artistic activity, as when he went to New York for an exhibition at the end of 1925. Until shortly before his death in Isernia on March 21, 1960, *Monsieur Moulin* lived in a small hut on Monte Marrone painting the light of the Mainarde and gathering herbs with which he prepared healing teas for himself and the locals.

During the period 1943-1944, Moulin's life, like that of the other inhabitants of the Volturno Valley, was shattered by the immense tragedy of World War II. Embedded in the war line called the "Gustav Line" set up by the Germans after September 8, 1943, and which ran from the Tyrrhenian to the Adriatic Sea, the Mainarde mountain range and the villages at its foot were the scene of the devastating fury of the conflict, paying a high toll in terms of lives and human suffering, the destruction of natural, historical, urban and architectural assets. In the locality of Santa Lucia, just downstream from the locality of Scalfone in Castelnuovo al Volturno, the partisan Giaime Pintor died on a mine on December 1, 1943; on November 14, 1943, in the locality of Valle Viata, the Germans massacred a group of citizens of Scapoli and Castelnuovo who had taken refuge in a hut; in Scapoli, in the Battiloro palace, in the early months of 1944, the

organized the attack on the Gustav Line that on March 31 of that year led to the breakthrough of the line itself, setting the stage for the birth of the Italian Liberation Corps. Today, a memorial stone or plaque is dedicated to each of these events, while a large "summary" monument formed of stone blocks each representing a region of Italy-greatly stands at the foot of the crags of Monte Marrone in the Colle Rotondo area in memory of all those who sacrificed themselves for freedom and as a warning to future generations to pursue peace and brotherhood.

In addition to the complex and still unfinished work of rediscovery and enhancement of the archaeological site of San Vincenzo al Volturno, over the past two decades, partly on the wave of the enthusiasm and expectations that accompanied the inclusion of the Mainarde Molisane in the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise, there has been a flourishing throughout the territory of a multiplicity of institutes and cultural and promotional initiatives of various kinds. Of the latter we have already mentioned in part although to the aforementioned events of the International Festival of the Bagpipe and Raviolata in Scapoli and the carnival pantomime in Castelnuovo al Volturno should certainly be added the "Mario Lanza" opera music festival in Filignano, inspired by the famous Italian-American tenor descended from a Filignano family that emigrated to the United States.

On the other hand, as far as cultural institutions are concerned, these are museums, permanent exhibitions, study and documentation centers, all of which are intimately connected to the traditions and naturalistic and environmental characteristics of the area and are: the Museum of Zoomorphic Masks in Castelnuovo al Volturno, the Permanent Exhibition of Italian and Foreign Bagpipes with annexed Italian Bagpipe Center and the Museum of the Bagpipe "Pasquale Vecchione" in Scapoli, the Museum of Historical Memory, the "Mario Lanza" Museum and the Historical-Military Museum "Linea Gustav" in Filignano, the Museum of the Second Risorgimento, the Contemporary Art Exhibition and the CEA "Bactaria" in Rocchetta al Volturno, the Museum of Apennine Fauna "Oscar Caporaso" in Castel San Vincenzo, and the Bear Museum in Pizzone.

These facilities and the wealth of knowledge and experience related to them, if included in an organic project of development of the area, can make a valuable contribution to the purpose of making culture a strategic element for the area's future.

#### Purpose and content of the enhancement program

In the context outlined above, with the rehabilitation of the building and its associated, owner's intent is to enhance the historical typology rural architecture that it represents, restoring its link with folk traditions and traditional knowledge of the area in order to contribute to their preservation and transmission with a view to the development of the area and the improvement of the quality of life.

To achieve the aforementioned purposes, the owner will make use of skills and experience of the Cultural Association "Bagpipe Circle" of Bachelors.

This association, operating since the end of 1990, has over the years grown in size and notoriety nationally and internationally and has to its credit in particular: the conception and implementation of the Rural Development Project "Living with the Bagpipe" within the framework of the PIC LEADER II Molise, the establishment and management in Scapoli of the Permanent Exhibition of Italian and Foreign Bagpipes with the adjoining Italian Bagpipe Center, the integration of the Bagpipe Market Exhibition with the current International Festival, publication of the *Utrculus* magazine, books, CDs, MC, Videos, DVDs, Establishment of the Music School for bagpipe and ciaramella with organization of annual courses, conception (February 1991) and organization (for 10 years) of the *Raviolata* (an event for the valorization of the traditional dish of the Scapoli carnival), realization of the first (and still unique) Census of cultural goods concerning the bagpipe, organization of ( and participation in) numerous

similar conferences, seminars, exhibitions and festivals (in Italy and abroad). Most recently, the Association itself has been accredited to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee, in an advisory capacity under Article 9 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage implemented by Italian State Law No. 167 of September 27, 2007.

The enhancement program that the owner and above-mentioned association, on the basis of a special agreement, intend to implement envisages a use of the settlement that integrates the reproposal agricultural activity with carrying out of initiatives of an essentially cultural, educational and tourist/recreational quality, compatible both with the settlement itself and with the destination of the area as a protected zone.

Thanks to the presence of the terraces will be set up "educational gardens" for the recovery of varieties and methods of cultivation of local plant species with connection to the Italian Network of Educational Gardens making use of new information and communication technologies. In addition, through actions of animation and involvement of the population and the people holding the local agricultural know-how will be stimulated the emergence of forms of "social agriculture" to be entered into the Social Farms Network according to the INEA guidelines and on the basis of the experiences that are being developed in this area nationally to expand a responsible agriculture, able to respond to the new needs of citizens and to promote sustainable development in a mountainous and rural area such as the one in which the building object of this intervention is located.

Given then the location of the property along the route of hiking and pastoral routes to the highest peaks of the Mainarde and Monti della Meta as well as pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Canneto (Lazio side of the Mainarde) and the nearest hermitage of San Miche a Foce in the neighboring municipality of Castel San Vincenzo, the terraced spaces suitably arranged with suitable furniture elements can be used for rest, recreational and tourist purposes, in the spirit of multifunctional diversification of agricultural activity in terms of offering cultural and tourist services for the benefit of the community. Inside the building, explanatory panels and other promotional material that can also be used online will provide potential users with the opportunity to learn more about the naturalistic, historical and socio-cultural values of the area. Again, informal education, awareness and information courses aimed at the general public and young people in particular will be organized - again with the active participation of local people as bearers of local traditions and knowledge. "Guided trails" will also be organized along the paths that the shepherds of the area once climbed at dusk to herd animals with the sound of the bagpipes and that in the various eras have seen the passage of brigands and opposing armies, hermit painters and monks in search of medicinal herbs, bears, wolves and deer on which the popular imagination has built myths, legends and rituals still alive in the imagination.

To weave the web of relationships between society and agropastoral economy that for centuries have characterized the Mainard area and the current persistence of traditions that are intimately connected to that society and economy, an important role will be played by the bagpipe, both with the attraction that it already arouses to the area with the existing facilities and events and through thematic meetings and workshops that will be organized at settlement to meet the growing demand for knowledge and insight from enthusiasts and connoisseurs of the instrument, its history and its world of belonging.

*(Antonietta Caccia)*