

THE EUROPEAN
PILGRIMAGE ROUTES
FOR PROMOTING
SUSTAINABLE AND
QUALITY TOURISM IN
RURAL AREAS

International Conference proceedings
4-6 December 2014, Firenze – Italy

Edited by
GIANLUCA BAMBI
MATTEO BARBARI

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The first International Conference on Pilgrimage Routes took place December 4 to 6, 2014. “The European Pilgrimage Routes for promoting sustainable and quality tourism in rural areas” was organized by: Department of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Systems (GESAAF) - University of Firenze in collaboration with the Tuscany Region, the Department for Life Quality Studies (QUVI) and Department of Agricultural Sciences (DipSA) - University of Bologna, the Italian Association of Agricultural Engineering (AIIA) and the European Association of the Via Francigena (AEVF).

The Conference was held in the historic center of Florence involving 150 experts from 18 countries and was divided into two-day meetings with presentations of important exponents of the sector and a day of technical tour to Monteriggioni, dedicated to the Via Francigena in Tuscany.

During the Conference numerous interventions were kept in the two parallel sessions for the five areas of discussion: conservation and evolution of the landscape along the routes; life quality and social impact; tourism and local development; sustainability in the rural areas; tools and methods for building a tourist attraction.

The book has been edited by Matteo Barbari and Gianluca Bambi. M. Barbari, head of the Department of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Systems, University of Florence, is the author of over 200 publications; Gianluca Bambi, is the author of over 30 publications on the structures and infrastructures for rural tourism.

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BETWEEN PERMANENCE AND TRANSFORMATION: 'SACRED' ROUTES IN SORRENTO-AMALFI PENINSULA

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Summary

The Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula is characterized by a delicate equilibrium between natural and human traces, permanence and transformation in which each of the components – stratified during centuries – represents an essential part of the whole. Considering the evolution of the religion from Pagan to Christian cult and the consequent adaptation of places and structures of worship, in a context like this, despite the overlap of material and immaterial stratifications, it is possible to identify the persistence of traditions and uses in a sort of religious syncretism that connects rituals of the past to contemporary ones. In contrast to the primitive cult of the Sirens – mythical creatures described by Homer in the *Odyssey* – only recalled by literary resources, the ancient cults dedicated to Athena and to Apollo appear to be testified by material evidences. In both cases, in fact, the sources refer to the presence of two places of worship which were connected to the inland by paths used during centuries by pilgrims to reach them. These 'pilgrimages' routes retain still today their spiritual vocation, conserving it through the tangible presence of ancient traces or the intangible continuity in traditions and uses. Therefore, in the landscape of the Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula, the communication paths, as in the ancient forms, as in their modern stratifications, constitute a fundamental component of the multi-stratified palimpsest. Within this ancient system the 'sacred' routes assume a role of great importance: they testify the remarkable religious tension that has always characterized these places, the continuity in their 'spiritual' use, as well as, the presence of a particular 'sacredness' in these lands.

Finally, through the comprehension of tangible and intangible values retained in the pilgrimages routes, an in-depth interpretation of the relationship between the traces of ancient and modern cults in Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula could be reached. Moreover, the comprehension of overlaps and contrasts in the landscape along those itineraries allows to defining adequate guide-lines for the conservation of this cultural palimpsest.

Keywords: Cultural Landscape, Conservation, Sacred Routes, Religious Syncretism

Introduction

The landscape of Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula represents a wonderful and complex palimpsest of architecture and nature which offers itself as the most astonishing example of the «variations of Italian landscape in its multiple forms and natural conditions» [PANE 1955, p. 31]. In a con-

text like this, all the components – archaeological, environmental, rural, historical or anthropic – acquire a precise connotation in the characterization of the whole. The latter, composed of a dense overlap of preexistences and transformations, finds its meaning only in the coexistence of its parts whose protection ensures, at the same time, its conservation, too.

In that palimpsest – for which the definition of ‘cultural landscape’ appears appropriate [PANE 2009, p. 53] – the communication routes «as in the ancient forms, as in their modern stratifications, constitute a connective tissue that joins and links the elements of the system» and represent themselves one of the fundamental components of this latter [POLLONE 2014, p. 289]. Thus, an in-depth analysis of the ancient road infrastructure allows to identify continuity or changes in the utilization of the routes as well as the complexity of the uses – religious, agricultural, pastoral or linked to fishing – of the territory. In addition, it is important to consider that, in this road network, the ‘sacred’ routes assume a role of great relevance because they testify of the remarkable religious tension that has characterized the places since ancient times and the continuity in their ‘spiritual’ use until the present time.

Therefore, within the aim of protection and enhancement of the heritage consisting of the Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula and starting from the comprehension of the multiple aspects of its land and of tangible and intangible values retained in its paths system, it appears possible to recognize the relationship between the traces of ancient and modern cults identifiable in that context. In addition, through the identification of overlaps and contrasts, permanence and transformation in the stratifications of the landscape along those pilgrimages routes, it could be possible to define adequate guide-lines to construct a careful conservative approach for this cultural system.



Fig. 1. Massa Lubrense. Aerial view of the promontory of Punta Campanella, St. Costanzo Mount and the Fjord of Crapolla.

Materials and methods

Ancient cults and 'sacred' places in Massa Lubrense land

The Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula, which, for its geographic position, defines the watershed between the gulfs of Naples and Salerno, despite the evident damages due to the speculation, strongly retains its charm and its most significant features. The mildness of the weather, the variety of landscapes, the abundance of the sea and the soil fertility have represented valid reasons to populate these lands. Although characterized by an imposing dolomite limestone promontory, animated by jutting cliffs, deep recesses and coves of different shapes and extensions as well as by more gentle slopes on the northern front and much more rugged orography and hostile landscapes on the southern one [BONGHI JOVINO 2008, p. 15], these places show to be frequented since ancient times. The first people who inhabited them, in fact – from the prehistoric to the Italic ones, from the Greeks to the Romans [FILANGIERI 1910; GRECO 2014] – whose presence is testified by the large amount of archaeological evidences [BUDETTA 2012], were able to take advantage from the local resources.

As Giustino Fortunato observed, here:

along the dual coasts a port stands behind every cape, a garden on every hillock, a village nestles in every open space [...]. And in the meantime, here the ruins of a basilica or the leftovers of an aqueduct let think about the Greek colonies or the Roman cities, there, instead, the Longobardic abbey of Cava and the cathedral of Amalfi keep alive the memory of the first monks and of the first Italian navigators [...]; on those mountains stand on abandoned Norman and Angevin towers, and Spanish fortresses or convents form a black mass halfway up the hill [FORTUNATO 1884, p. 57].

The western offshot of the promontory, corresponding to the territory of Massa Lubrense Municipality and ending with Punta Campanella facing the island of Capri, could be considered as one of the clearest expressions of the character of cultural landscape that marks the entire peninsula (Fig. 1). For the presence of a strong naturalistic component, of rural settlements of greater or lesser extent, of characters linked to the agricultural activity, as well as the predominance of a considerable archaeological and architectural heritage, this place represents an emblematic example of the broader and more complex peninsular system. With an area slightly less than 20 km², comprehensive of eighteen hamlets, and a coastline of about 20 km long, this land «populated by ruins» shows «the living presence of the myth» [PANE 1955, p. 40]. Here, in fact, a large amount of references to the mythical origins and to the cult of

the ancient deities can be found in the toponyms of places, in the tangible traces of the archaeological evidences and in the intangible ones perpetuated by uses and traditions [IACCARINO - RUOCCO 2014].

Taking into account the evolution of the religion from Pagan to Christian cult and the consequent adaptation of places and structures of worship in order to satisfy renewed needs, in this context, despite the overlap of several material and immaterial stratifications, it is possible to identify the persistence of traditions and uses. Therefore, through the simultaneous interpretation of ancient and modern traces of spirituality it could be defined a sort of religious syncretism that characterizes these lands and connects rituals of the past to contemporary ones.

The most ancient cult, identified in these places, was that dedicated to the Sirens, mythical creatures described by Homer in the *Odyssey* [HOMER, XII, 36-45]. In fact:

the high promontory hangs over the difficult passage through the sea became the seat of a cult destined to appease the Sirens, those solar demons that incarnate everything that is connected, in the imagination of the Greek man, to navigation, a source of worry, of fear and threatens, as with the hope of a favourable voyage [GRECO 2014, p. 212].

The true localization of the sanctuary of the Sirens – Σειρηνοῦσιον – on the Sorrentine promontory is still today object of a heated debate:

there are those who want to identify it with the sanctuary of Athena which Strabo talks about [...] and those that recognize in the sanctuary of Punta Campanella a pre-existence of the cult of the Sirens, supplanted then by Athena and consequently by the *Athenion* [GRECO 2014, p. 213].

Many scholars have indicated the little islands of Li Galli as the place chosen for the cult of the Sirens, for others, instead, the temple was supposedly located at the bay of Jeranto [FILANGIERI 1910, pp. 74-85; BONGHI JOVINO 2008, pp. 31-33; GRECO 2014, p. 213; PANE 2014]. It seems that this sacred building was object of great veneration, mostly between the 4th and the 3rd century B.C. [FILANGIERI 1910, p. 81]. Therefore, as Giovanna Greco has observed, «In the reality of this sanctuary as remembered by literary sources, archeological research has still not offered up clear and convincing evidence, but the myth continues and the legend has become more and more solid» [GRECO 2014, p. 213].

Following and more important was the cult dedicated to Athena, for which the temple «in contrast to the primitive and barbaric myth of the Sirens [...] is not only recalled by literary resources, but also by the actual existence of a large part of the road which used to lead to it» [PANE 1955, p. 40]. The temple, which according to Strabo was built by Ulyss-



Fig. 2. Massa Lubrense, Punta Campanella. The ancient paving of via Minervia characterized by a halfway up the hill path [PANE 1955, p. 45].



Fig. 3. Massa Lubrense, Punta Campanella. A section of via Minervia; in the background, the island of Capri [PANE 1955, p. 43].

es as the Sirens'one [STRABO, V, 247; FILANGIERI 1910, pp. 85-86], must have been built at the extreme point of Punta Campanella where today rises a 16th century tower, in a position that could ensure its visibility from the sea, according to a model common both in Southern Italy

and Greece [GRECO 2014, p. 220]. The area of Punta Campanella, frequented at least from the 6th century B.C., as the archaeological remains testify, housed the temple of Athena already around 550 B.C., and this latter survived without evident continuing solution until the Imperial Roman Age [GRECO 2014, p. 219], when that place was called *Promontorium Minervae*. The archaic typology of the temple is documented by the discovering of some terracotta lion heads, very similar to the type of the nearby Poseidonia. During the 4th century B.C. the sacred building had probably undergone to an intervention of renovation because of the presence of some antefixes similar to those used in other Doric temples of Campania realized in the same period [BONGHI JOVINO 2008, p. 42].

The sanctuary continued to have its strategic role for a long time, as the presence of ruins of the Imperial Roman Age testifies. Reachable by the sea thanks to the existence of two natural landing-places and a steps cut out of the rock, and because of its proximity with Capri, it is possible to hypothesize the use of this area as landing and resting point for the Emperor Tiberius, or at least, for those who came from the island [PANE 1955, p. 46]. According to this assumption, the continuity in the use of the structures of the point ensured also their conservation and the preservation of the route – the so called *via Minervia* – that linked this area with the internal ones.

In the *Tabula Peutingeriana* – a medieval copy of a Roman figured itinerary – the temple of Athena is clearly pointed out, while the *via Minervia* is marked as belonging to the ancient road infrastructure of the peninsula. This route represented

the longitudinal axis which linked Stabia (Varano Hill), reached Vico Equense and then passing through the Alberi Pass, crossed the inhabited places found on the tufaceous *falaise* and passed through Sorrento and Massa, before reaching the sanctuary of Punta Campanella. In the Roman Age, with the building of luxurious villas situated between the hill and the sea, the *via Minervia* took on the role of connecting between the *pars rustica* of the villas built above, down to the mid-coast, and the *pars maritime* on the sea, thanks to a series of twists and turns which connected the hill to the coast [GRECO 2014, p. 221].

The *via Minervia*, characterized by an halfway up the hill path about three kilometers long and partially consisting of a stone paving (Fig. 2), had been «travelled by the pilgrims who, starting with the 5th or the 6th century before Christ, made their way to the temple of Minerva» [PANE 1955, p. 48]. If the nature of the place, «solitary and impervious», would have to ensure the best conditions so that «at least some remains had come down to us», it must be consider that the systematic destruction of the structures on the point «can be explained more plausibly by

the fact that the ancient walls had most likely been transformed into a stone quarry» [PANE 1955, p. 44].

Finally, it is possible to recognize the cult of Apollo that would determine, according to some controversial sources, the construction of a temple in correspondence of the actual ruins of the Abbey of Saint Peter in Crapolla – deep gorge on the southern side of the Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula. In that fjord, in fact, – extraordinary example of a balanced combination between the nature and human work [*Conservazione e valorizzazione* 2010; *Landscape as Architecture* 2014] – according to the local historiography, thoroughly investigated by Valentina Russo, it is possible «to define a continuity in the sacred destination of the place since ancient times» [RUSSO 2010, p. 70; RUSSO(b) 2014]. So, as the scholar says,

the aura of the god Apollo and of the processions dedicated to him may have led to the etymology of the term *Crapolla*, from the Greek Ἄρκτον Ἀπόλλωνος that is “promontory of Apollo”. It would follow the derivation of the Iarito stream from ἱερατεῖον, as “sanctuary” (but also “clergy”). As a parallel, the recurrence of the name *Capreolae* in the archival documents has not to be neglected as it suggests, instead, clear connection to the nearby island of Capri [RUSSO(a) 2014, pp. 21-22].

Therefore, during the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth centuries many scholars continued to find plausible the preexistence of a sanctuary of Apollo, also taking into account the possibility that the medieval Abbey of Saint Peter would be built reusing the *spolia* of the previous temple structure. Particularly Onofrio Gargiulo (or Gargiulli) identified in the procession of the Congregation of Saint Peter, which take place every year in honor of the Saint, a revival of the ancient *Teorie* to the god Apollo that would started from the hamlet of Torca – whose name would have derived from the Greek Ἰεωρία [FILANGIERI 1910, p. 98; RUSSO 2010, p. 70; RUSSO(b) 2014].

In the following century, instead, Riccardo Filangieri and, in a second moment, Amedeo Maiuri, excluded the hypothesis of a Pagan preexistence in the Crapolla fjord and criticized also the previous reference to the *Teorie*, emphasizing the absolute silence of the ancient sources on a temple that would have to be so important to receive those solemn embassies [FILANGIERI 1910, pp. 98-99; RUSSO 2012, pp. 70-71]. Filangieri took into account only the hypothesis that, before the benedictine abbey, there existed a Roman villa and a little temple, whose materials would be probably reused for the construction of the Christian complex [FILANGIERI 1910, pp. 99, 103]. Despite those vague assumptions not substantiated by objective evidences, the observation of the site clearly testifies the presence of more ancient architectural elements [RUSSO 2010, p. 71; RUSSO(b) 2014; ESPOSITO – PENSABENE 2014].



Fig. 4. Massa Lubrense, Punta Campanella. The ruins of the Roman age in a picture of the end of the Nineteenth century [FILANGIERI 2006, p. 117].



Fig. 5. Massa Lubrense, St. Costanzo Mount. The procession in honor of the Saint (May 14th).

The abbey of Saint Peter, whose use was definitely ended probably at the first beginning of the 19th century [RUSO(a) 2014, p. 24], hosted, every year, two events of great spirituality involving a large crowd which used to reach the place in procession through land paths or by the sea. The first one, occurring on each second day after the Easter, consisted in an important festivity during which the holy Mass in the church was celebrated. In the second case, instead, the abbot received the pilgrimages of the Confraternity of St. Peter who went from Sorrento to Crapolla in procession [FILANGIERI 1910, p. 653].

Permanence and trasformation along the 'sacred' routes

The dense network of paths that characterizes – with a linear extension that exceeds 100 km – the territory of Massa Lubrense, has been realized over the centuries in order to link the little rural settlements and to reach the sea, the terraces for the cultivation or the places of worship. These routes, mostly pedestrian, were halfway up the hill paths, excavated into the slopes or characterized by steep stairways, not always safe and only rarely paved [ESPOSITO – RUOCCO 2000, p. 77]. The extension of the urban centers and the realization of driveways have provoked, in many cases, the alteration of the ancient road system. Sometimes, intersected by the new infrastructures and deprived of their function, the paths have been abandoned; other times, instead, they have lost their original configuration or their uses.

Nevertheless, there are many elements of the road system in which clear traces of the antiquity are recognizable: in the most cases, those paths have retained their original function and, with it, their morphological characterization. This occurs mainly where the uses of the territory remained largely unchanged over time, or, even if modified, this did not lead to significant distortions of the infrastructural network. That's how, privileged routes related to the exercise of the cult, agriculture, sheep farming or fishing seem to have preserved much of their meaning and multiple values. The analysis of characteristics and forms that those preexistences retain allows, firstly, to identify the 'nature' of the path – i.e. 'intentional' paths or 'spontaneous' ones – and, then, to distinguish typologies and components directly linked to the function assigned to them [POLLONE 2014, pp. 292–295].

Both two ancient places of worship, the temple of Athena on the Punta Campanella and the area firstly dedicated, probably to the cult of Apollo, and then to that of Saint Peter, in the Crapolla fjord, were connected to the inland with paths which were used, as explained before, during centuries by pilgrims to reach them. Despite many evident alterations affecting mainly the materials of pavings, these 'pilgrimages' routes show still today their spiritual vocation and express it in different ways. If, on one hand, in fact, it is possible to identify a continuity in the religious use of the paths; on the other hand, they acquire a sort of 'laical sacredness' in function of the special qualification that they take on [VARAGNOLI 2005].

The via Minervia

visible from the sea to anyone who travels between Capri and Naples because of the sharp line it makes where it follows the middle of the slope and, in its last tract, descends more steeply towards the shore – is

today little more than a mule path, yet it is worthy of being singled out as one of the most suggestive place of the classical world because of the landscape's beauty along its route and the presence, profiled between sea and sky, of the Greek cuts through the rock-face and the Roman paving stones [PANE 1955, p. 46].

The route, which starts from the hamlet of Termini, initially descends passing through fields and rough stone houses with vaulted roofs; then, reached a place called Canello, begins to show itself as «the same road travelled by the pilgrims who, starting with the 5th or the 6th century before Christ, made their way to the temple of Minerva» [PANE 1955, p. 48]. Here, in fact, it is possible to recognize a big hole – a sort of great doorway – that the Greeks were forced to realize in the a large grey stone rock which prevented their passage, and, more forward, a «well-preserved sections of Roman paving in the form of large blocks of Massa stones» [PANE 1955, p. 48]. Recent excavations and a following monitoring phase on this itinerary – devastated by a series of invasive interventions realized during years without any criteria and characterized by a widespread instability due to landslides – have allowed to acquire important information concerning the arrangement of the street. So this latter, built with limestone, appeared to consist of a series of large steps realized in order to mitigate the slope and the flow of rainwater [BUDETTA 2010, p. 36].

Frequented, today, mainly by hikers, this route, conserving its most wild and fascinating character in an atmosphere of magic charm, as well as, a part of its ancient pavings, recalls the solemnity of the place of worship. In fact, after the unexpected vision of the island of Capri, delineated against the sea's backdrop (Fig. 3), going down towards the lighthouse,

one sees the farthest point of land and can picture how, to those far-off frequenters of the promontory, the temple must have appeared not on a higher level, which was the normal prospect for so many other sanctuaries, but a trifle lower down in relation to the road that leads to it, and thus framed by the blue of the sky and the sea [PANE 1955, p. 48].

The presence of the myth, the archaeological evidences and the ancient materials of the path as well as the sublimity of the landscape surrounding testify of the 'spirituality' of this route. A sacredness, this latter, that derives, on one hand, from the memory and the tangible traces of the ancient pilgrims, and, on the other hand, is defined by the 'alterity' recognizable in the condition of loneliness of the itinerary and in the uniqueness of its features (Fig. 4).

A more clearly religious connotation characterizes, instead, other two sacred routes of the Massa Lubrense land, in which the recall to ancient cults and traditions is testified by the presence of processions that take regularly place even today. The first case concerns the pilgrimage

to the chapel built in honor of Saint Costanzo on the eastern top of the homonymous Mount, the highest peak of the orographic system of the territory of Massa Lubrense. This cult has ancient origin and was probably imported by the nearby island of Capri where Saint Costanzo was bishop and patron [FILANGIERI 1910, p. 602]. The itinerary of the religious procession, which starts from the same hamlet of Termini, consists of a dirt track, mostly flat in the first part, and of a steep stairway in the area with the maximum slope. A carriageable road with multiple bends, built to reach the western top of the same mount – called Santa Croce –, intersecting the ancient mule track along its entire length, makes the journey more difficult.

The secular rite, which occurs between late April and early May, is recalled by Filangieri who speaks about an ancient tradition that involved a «large concourse of people», adding, then, that «In the seventeenth century the confraternities of Sant'Agata and Torca used to go there in procession» [FILANGIERI 1910, p. 602]. This pilgrimage entails the transportation of the statue of the Saint in procession from the church of Termini to the little chapel. In occasion of the feast which is repeated on every May 14th, the local population, led by the priest, ascends to the mountain through the steep path, preserving and reviving, in this way, the memory of the ancient tradition (Fig. 5).

According to some historiographical sources, however debated, this religious rite might repeat a previous form of Pagan pilgrimage linked to the presence of a votive sanctuary in that place – wrongly identified by some scholars with the temple of Athena [FILANGIERI 1910, pp. 90-91]. Although no claims support this hypothesis, the idea that those paths have been used by the ancient inhabitants of these lands to reach the nearby *Athenaion* is acceptable. It is clear, therefore, how the ancient spiritual vocation of this route has been preserved over the centuries together with the use of it that has been done in time and continues to be done even today.

In the second case, which concerns the pilgrimage to the chapel of Saint Peter in the Crapolla fjord, the continuity in the religious use of routes and structures is even more evident than in the first one. Here, in fact, the construction of the medieval Abbey of Saint Peter and, then, of the twentieth-century little chapel, testifies how the cultural, spiritual and material inheritance of the place has been preserved over time. The Abbey, whose first testimonies date back to 1111, since the beginning of the Seventeenth century «declined in use also because of its distance from the nearby villages and, consequently, its architecture fell progressively in ruin» [RUSSO(a) 2014, p. 24]. The ancient place of worship, probably definitively abandoned – as already mentioned – at the first beginning of the 19th century, in 1949 saw the construction of a new Chapel in honor of Saint Peter, erected in correspondence of the Benedictine



Fig. 6. Massa Lubrense, Fjord of Crapolla. The believers follow the ancient route which links the hamlet of Torca with the little chapel of St. Peter (June 29th).



Fig. 7. Massa Lubrense, Fjord of Crapolla. The believers attend in the celebration of the Holy Mass in front of the chapel of St. Peter (June 29th). In the background are visible the sea and, on the left, the tower of St. Peter.

church's atrium. During the eighties, then, the realization of a flight of steps completely altered the asset of the left side of the transept of the ancient church [Russo(a) 2014, p. 24].

Despite the evident alteration of the preexistence, the palimpsest of tangible and intangible values retained in this context shows a clear continuity in the transformation. So, if the material traces of the ancient benedictine complex are reused, fused and 'exposed' in the nineteenth-century adaptation of the place of worship, «the religious use of the site remained with the annual pilgrimage dedicated to St. Peter, recalling the original dedication to the "holy fisherman" from the Middle Ages to the present day» [Russo(a) 2014, p. 24]. Every year, in fact, in occasion of the feast of the Saint, which occurs on June 29th, the Local Committee for the festivities organizes a procession that follows the historic

route from Torca to the little chapel in Crapolla and, at the same time, pilgrimages by the sea are organized from the nearby Marina del Cantone. This tradition, characterized by a strong spiritual energy, assumes at the same time, also a high emotional connotation as testified by the participation of a large amount of believers (Figg. 6, 7). Finally, taking into account the hypothesis of the presence, in ancient times, of the sanctuary of Apollo – as seen above – the medieval pilgrimages, before, and the modern processions, later, would be considered as a 'revival' of the ancient sacred legation to the temple of the god.

Results and discussion

Conservation issues of a 'sacred' landscape

The living presence, in the territory of Massa Lubrense, and, more generally, in the Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula, of an ancient road infrastructures of such entity – characterized by different uses –, of its stratifications, and of the multiple values linked to it, imposes the cultural duty to identify criteria and strategies for its careful conservation.

The 'sacredness' of these lands – recalled also, as seen above, by the toponyms of places, the persistence of traditions and the material evidences – is linked to the clear traces of Pagan and Christian cults but also depends on the particular characterization of this territory. As Claudio Varagnoli said, in fact, the concept of 'sacredness' refers to an idea of 'separation', of alterity from the context surrounding [VARAGNOLI 2005, p. 291]: a condition, this latter, that qualifies the object recognized as 'sacred', giving it a series of values. In the 'recognition' that substantiates the intervention of restoration, according to Varagnoli, it is possible to identify the action aimed at reconstructing precisely that condition of 'astraction' from the reality which characterizes the dimension of the sacred [VARAGNOLI 2005, p. 298]. Taking into account that the research of the 'sacredness' from a laical point of view corresponds to the recognition of the 'alterity' which constitutes the palimpsest of values to conserve, it is possible to consider the territory of the Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula as a 'sacred' landscape. In this context, in fact, in the overlapping of secular traces of men and nature are clearly readable, on one hand, the traces linked to the exercise of the cults and to the religious use of the places, and, on the other hand, a much more 'spiritual' and emotional condition due to a singular environmental qualification in a rare atmosphere of great charm.

Therefore, the sacredness – religious or laical – of this cultural landscape depends on its alterity, on its being a unique system of stratifications in which a plurality of tangible and intangible values is clearly recogniz-

able. Here, despite the alteration of the ancient complex, it is possible to identify a sort of ‘different repetition’ in which the continuity with the past derives from the manipulation of the preexistence [VARAGNOLI 2005], the appropriation of the material and the perpetuation of the memory.

From a more general point of view, within this dense road network, it is possible to note that the paths located more inland, around the numerous urban settlements, appear to be most affected by transformations, alterations or interruptions in the tracks due to the presence of the new asphalt roads, retaining only in some sections their ancient forms. Instead, the paths more ‘authentic’ are those that pass through most isolated area or that are more close to the coast: the difficult accessibility, the presence of steep slopes, overhanging areas and of a wilder and less ‘anthropized’ natural context in which the historical uses – mostly agricultural and religious – have been perpetuated, have determined a condition of greater isolation and, with it, a more complete preservation of the components of the routes [POLLONE 2014, p. 294]. In these cases, that character of ‘alterity’ is even more evident.

Starting from these observations and taking into account the need of an indispensable systemic vision, in which the paths are an essential part of the broader cultural landscape, it is appropriate to consider that the development of such *environment* is achievable primarily through the conservation and the enhancement of the ancient road infrastructure that becomes the fundamental *linking structure* between the architectural, archaeological and environmental components – punctual or distributed – that characterize it. In addition, the complexity of the elements involved in this heritage requires a culturally aware attitude, sensitive with respect to the conservation of the multiple values depending on them, as

The intangible assets of a Cultural Route are fundamental for understanding its significance and its associative heritage values. Therefore, material aspects must always be studied in connection with other values of an intangible nature [*The Icomos Charter* 2008].

The methodological approach to the phases of analysis, conservation, protection and management of the delicate heritage constituted by the ancient infrastructures does not differ from the one that supports any restoration: it is fundamental, in fact, that this method must be based on a systemic logic, and must have a multidisciplinary character in order to ensure an exact comprehension of all the variables involved [BORIANI – CAZZANI 1995, 2002; *The Icomos Charter* 2008, pp. 8-11; POLLONE 2014, p. 302]. Starting from a preliminary survey aimed at identifying the preexistences of the road network and, subsequently, at defining the state of conservation of each of its elements, it is possible to develop specific strategies for its conservation. Taking into account the inseparable

link between the paths and their context, it is important that all the actions must be aimed at consolidating this relationship, in the respect of the material and immaterial components that contribute to its definition. Then, specific operation must be conducted in order to keep the material, through direct interventions of restoration, and to conserve the memory, by constructing a system of knowledge of the historical uses of territory and paths, as well as, by defining new compatible and sustainable uses of these lands. Particular attention should be paid also to the preservation of the spiritual vocation of these places and of the tangible and intangible traces of its sacredness.

With regards to the conservation of the material and before acting directly on the preexistences, it is important to define an in-depth knowledge of the paths from a metric, morphological and constructive point of view and to comprehend all the historical stratifications which characterize them. The interventions, then, must be always careful, well-calibrated and aimed at cleaning the paving surfaces and ensuring the best conditions for the conservation and the safety of the routes. The integrations, where necessary, should be minimal, compatible with the ancient materials and clearly distinguishable [AA. VV. 2008].

In order to ensure, instead, the preservation of the intangible values it is necessary to set strategies aimed, on one hand, at building a careful knowledge of these areas through researches and analysis, to spread, then, to the communities and at perpetuating, on the other hand, the memory of the uses of the paths in the territory by improving their accessibility. At the same time, it would be desirable to develop the current uses also defining a set of 'sustainable' functions, compatible with issues of conservation of the preexistences and respect of their identity.

Finally, the restoration of the ancient viability system while allows to preserve the characters of the paths, ensures the possibility to identify a series of uses which could be structured as itineraries of visit of the 'wide-spread museum' in all of its components – archaeological, architectural, natural – reachable through the restored road network: as naturalistic, trekking or hiking itineraries, as religious itineraries designed to perpetuate and spread the memory of the ancient pilgrimages to sacred places of worship, as routes related to educational activities or workshop for children.

Conclusion

The considerations explained above allow to affirm that within the cultural landscape consisting of the Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula, if, on one hand, the evident alterations stratified during centuries have provoked an inevitable mutation of some of the authentic elements of the territory, on the other hand, this evolution testifies of a 'continuity in the

trasformation' which is manifested in the current presence of material and immaterial traces of characteristics and uses belonging to a more or less near past. In this palimpsest, in which there is a close link between natural, archaeological, architectural and human components, the routes by land constitute an element of strong identity: the interpretation of their complex system, in fact, lets define the entity of overlaps, continuity and transformation of the places along the itineraries.

Therefore, considering the laical and religious 'sacredness' of these lands – characterized by the presence of frequent recalls to the mythical past, of ancient cults, modern forms of worship and wonderful environmental conditions – and the need to defend and protect this heritage, the conservation and the enhancement of this latter become a moral duty and a cultural imperative.

Finally it is important to consider that, in a system like this, characterized by a delicate equilibrium between natural and human components, in which each element affects the others, the conservative approach finds meaning only if it takes part of a more global strategy of protection of the whole complex palimpsest.

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