

EAAE Transactions on Architectural Education no. 66

excerpt

CONSERVATION— CONSUMPTION

**PRESERVING THE TANGIBLE
AND INTANGIBLE VALUES**

**Donatella Fiorani
Giovanna Franco
Loughlin Kealy
Stefano Francesco Musso
Miguel Angel Calvo-Salve**

Editors



European
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This book presents the papers written by 33 participants following the 6th Workshop on Conservation, organised by the Conservation Network of the European Association for Architectural Education in A Coruña, Galicia, Spain in 2017. All papers have been peer-reviewed. The Workshop was attended by 51 participants from the following countries: Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom

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THE IMMATERIAL INHERITANCE OF THE PILGRIMAGE ROUTES IN THE GARGANO AREA

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Introduction

The presence on the Italian territory of historical paths, along which have arisen networks of religious buildings, draws attention to a very rich architectural and landscape heritage, today largely ruined or reduced to conditions of advanced neglect. Since the 6th century, a network of abbeys, churches and monasteries, linked to the cult of St. Michele Arcangelo and widespread in the Garganic land, supported the sacred routes travelled by pilgrims, often on the track of the oldest paths. Nowadays very little of that system remains: the ancient routes have been forgotten or replaced by new infrastructures; few buildings are still in use and in a good state of conservation, but many others are reduced to ruins, mainly due to their distance from urban centres and traffic routes.

This paper tries to retrace the articulated story of some of these buildings, based on careful readings of their geometry, formal structure and residual material. In addition to the establishment of a network linking buildings that are each inseparable from their own context, and often with a strong impact on the landscape, the paper provides a necessary underpinning for wide-ranging restoration projects. These must be free from confusion between conservation and speculation and supporting enhancement and proper recovery actions

The network of paths as a heritage to be preserved

For centuries, Europe has been crossed by peoples from all over the world, united by religious and spiritual values and directed towards Rome and Jerusalem, giving life to a rich network of pilgrimages in the name of faith.

The Way of St. James in Spain, which was declared a 'European cultural itinerary', and the Via Francigena in Italy are among the oldest and most important pilgrimage routes. The latter reaches the Gargano land from various directions, joining other historical routes already present in the area. It turned into one of the largest centres of European pilgrimage, stimulated and nourished by the most varied cultural currents that were drawn together on its land. As with the Way of St. James, it retains its ancient essence and crosses landscapes of unique beauty. The landscape is one of the main reasons for charm of this route being the context in which the material and immaterial values merge with cities, religious and civil artefacts, spiritual and psychological meanings.

The case of the Gargano area

The Gargano area performed an essential role as interface between East and West: its history is rich in traditions and myths closely linked to the cult of St. Michele Arcangelo,

making the promontory the ultimate sacred mountain in the Christian tradition from the 5th century AD. The Byzantine reconquest of southern Italy in the 10th century especially left its indelible mark on the regional culture (Calò Mariani 1984; Belli D'Elia 2003): the urban structure developed by the Romans had been severely disrupted, modifying also the church organisation of the 5th-6th century A.D. The Capitanata land was crossed by several pilgrimage routes and covered by Benedictine monasteries, hostels and places of worship related to the St. Michele sanctuary. Today, considerable evidence of these elements remains in a precarious state of conservation mainly due to their distance from urban centres and traffic routes.

This paper is part of a developing research programme about religious buildings on the Garganic area. The aim of the research is to unravel the complex history of some of the architectural foundations in the western part of the promontory and inland, along a system of routes linked to three main roads. The via Sacra Longobardorum is the most famous route, through it the Longobardian kingdom merged its expansionist aims with those of Christian culture, finding religious conversion an effective way. From the early years after the first millennium, when the Langobardic domination took over the Frankish one, the way was called Via Francigena. The St. Michele pilgrimage was promoted to become an international phenomenon incorporating the Gargano area into a much more complex road system than the Via Sacra Siponto-Grotta dell'Arcangelo and the Johannes Schuler¹. Starting from Lesina Lake situated in the northern part of the region, the route arrived in Monte Sant'Angelo, crossing a landscape populated by chapels, hermitages, churches and small monasteries. Among these buildings are St. Maria di Càlena abbey, Holy Trinity in Monte Sacro abbey and St. Giovanni in Piano church, which are all today reduced to an advanced state of ruin (Fig. 1).

The settlement of St. Maria di Càlena near Peschici dates from 872 A.D. (Fig. 2). Written references establish its existence in the 11th century as evidenced by an act of 1023, concerning the gift of an "ecclesia deserta in loco qui vocatur C(K)àlena, cuius vocabulum est sancta Maria" by the bishop of Siponto to the Benedictine monastery of St. Maria di Tremiti (Petrucci 1960: 24). In 1058 the papal bull *Iustis petitionibus* confirmed its territorial assets and recognised its independence from Tremiti. As a result, the cenobio became a powerful abbey, whose properties – among them the Monte Sacro abbey until 1198, extended far beyond the Garganic area. The union with the latter abbey gave birth to a very authoritative centre, attracting the attention of the Montecassino abbey, one of the medieval culture hubs in Italy (Leccisotti 1938: 23; Corsi 2003: 64).

In 1256 the Benedictines were replaced firstly by the Cistercians (De Grazia 1913: 76) and afterwards, in 1446, by the Regular Canons of St. Agostino – called Laterans – who built a second church, also dedicated to St. Maria delle Grazie, and the associated sacred and civil, which were subsequently destroyed many times, reinforcing them with tall and solid walls, for defense and to protect pilgrims (D'Amato 2008: 288). The abbey expanded thanks to important concessions and privileges conferred by princes, popes, emperors and the faithful who disembarked here, landing on the northern Apulian coasts on the way to St. Michele sanctuary. In 1508, the temple of Càlena was still worthy of veneration, even though most of the buildings had almost collapsed, except for those restored or reconstructed by the Canons (Cocarella 1989: 76). By the end of the 18th century, the St. Maria di Tremiti abbey was suppressed and its possessions, including those of Càlena, were confiscated by Regio Demanio and sold to private citizens (D'Amato 2008: 290).



FIG. 1. Hypothetical graphic representation of the ancient sacred routes of the Gargano area (processing by C. Verazzo and M. Bitondi).

Even if the structure now is particularly stratified (Manfredi 2017), the original architectural tradition of Apulian model is recognisable in the oldest church: a three-naved basilica divided by rectangular pillars, with domes on the central axis and barrel vaults in the lateral ones. In the 12th century, this system represented dominant cultural model, which was improved in the Benedictine environment and then widely spread throughout the region, from the Gargano to Lecce. The lateral aisles are still accessible and the central one is uncovered; the interior presents the spans with the signs of the arrangement for the cross vault. However it seems to have had a pitched roof with wooden trusses. The wall surfaces are simple while the capitals have similar details to Cistercian ornaments, such as in the Santa Maria in Tremiti abbey, the leading monastery of Càlena. The so-called new church, in which the Madonna with child's image is exposed, was added to the oldest building (Petrucci 1976; Pepe 1981a; Piemontese 2008; Rausino 2008).

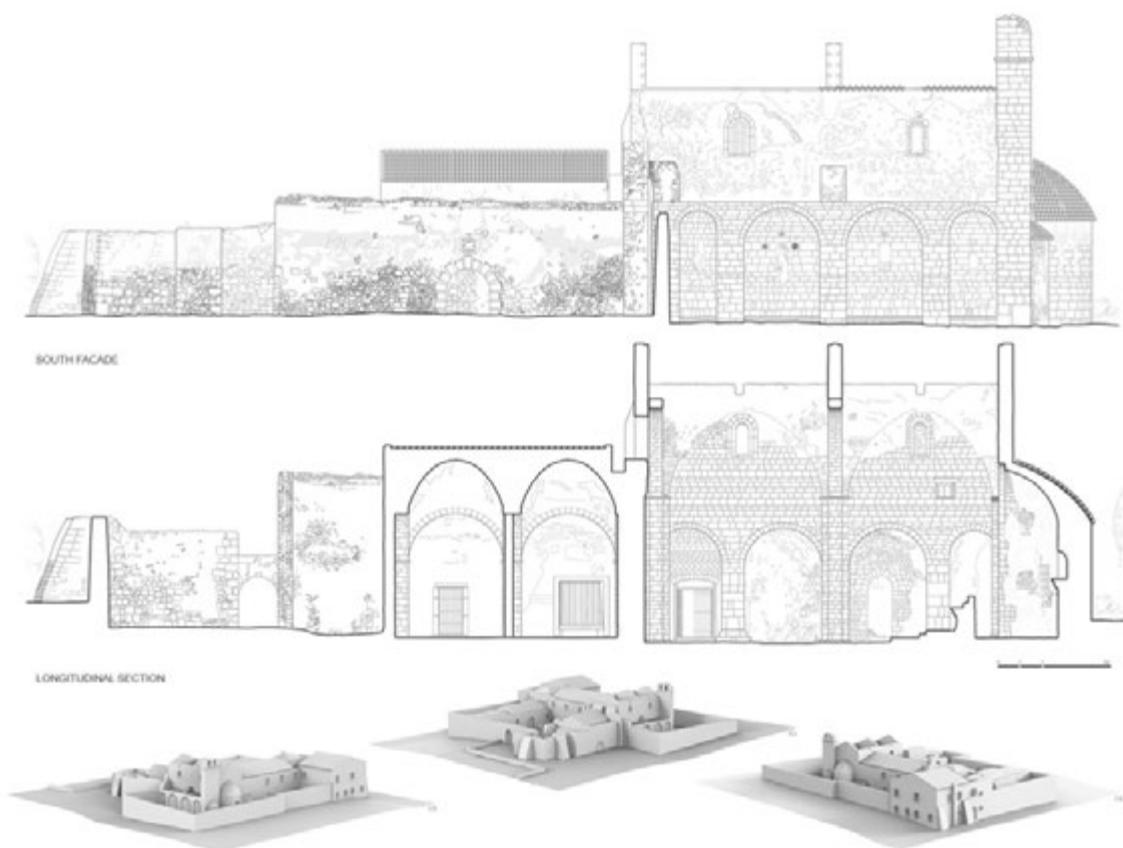


FIG. 2. St. Maria di Càlena abbey, the church. South facade, longitudinal section and render (Manfredi 2017).

Since 1917, the Càlena abbey has been regularly inserted by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage into the list of the cultural places and has been recognised as a national monument since the 1950s. However, the building now lies into a state of worrying neglect, and suffers from vandalism and theft. The lack of roofs covering results in capitals and frescoes being attacked by weather and humidity; the ornaments are almost completely buried by alluvial deposits and show abrasive marks; the flat-roofed belfry, completely covered by vegetation, is slowly crumbling. Therefore, Càlena became the symbol of the fate of many neglected monuments in the Garganic area, for which the public opinion has long been mobilised to solicit responsive actions. The purpose is to enhance the complex and to guarantee its public use under the provisions of the Law n. 1089/1939 and all successive laws addressing the under-protection of cultural objects, and in order to avoid any property speculation². Unfortunately, the protection of the monument has been completely disregarded, both by the owners, who use Càlena as a masseria, and by the institutions in charge of its supervision. But, despite an inspection by the Regional Superintendency in 2012, the site has not yet received any recovery action.

One of the best-known cases of ruins that are in need of appropriate enhancement is the abbey dedicated to the Holy Trinity of Monte Sacro, located in a hardly accessible site

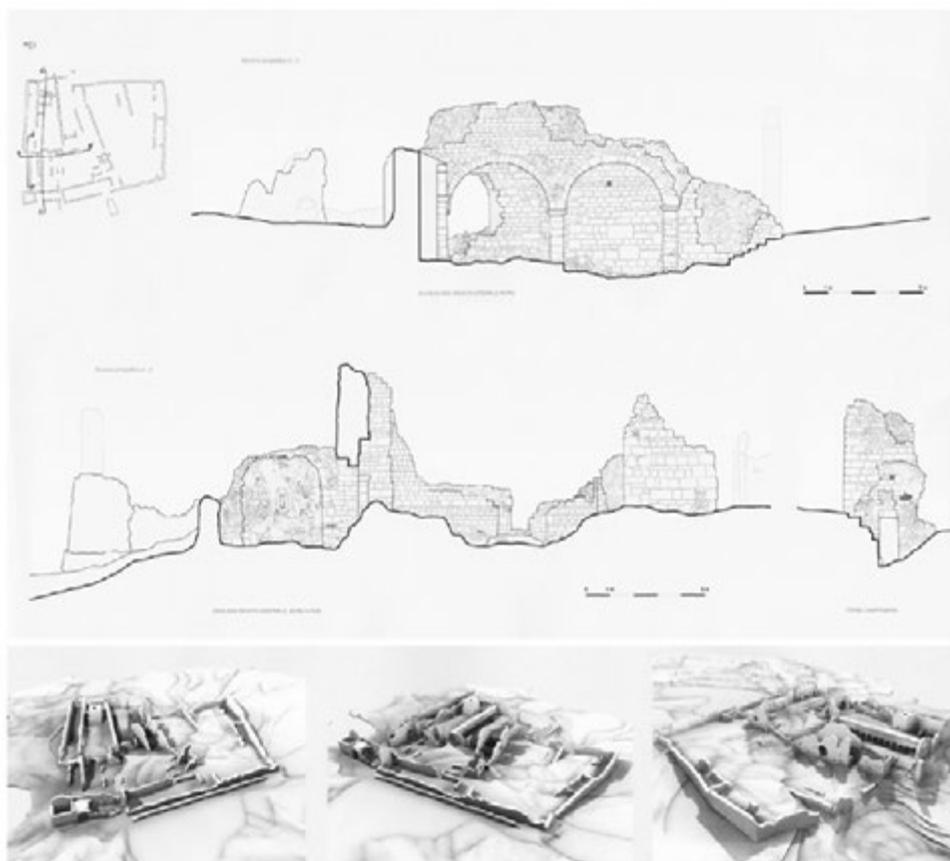


FIG. 3. Holy Trinity abbey. Sections and render (Berardinucci, Minervino 2008).

in the municipality of Mattinata (Fig. 3). A small cenobio was created by a group of Benedictine monks; it belonged to Càlena, as evidenced in a papal document dated 1058. In the first half of the 12th century, the monastic settlement gained more religious, economic and political power thanks to the pilgrims travelling towards Monte Sant'Angelo and to their frequent donations. The decision to create a new cultural centre near the St. Michele sanctuary fell on the small cell in Monte Sacro. Here, the abbot Gregorio built a huge library making it one of the most important cultural centres of Apulia in the Middle Ages. Later it acquired the functions of an abbey until earning independence from Peschici in 1198 (Fiorentino 1979; Pepe 1981b; Kindermann 1995).

Historical circumstances, especially economic ones, especially those that occurred after it came under the jurisdiction of the Siponto archbishopric in 1481, brought about its end (Prencipe 1952). A long period of decline, marked by scant documentation, was starting (Petrucci 1960). That certainly explains the provision whereby Monte Sacro properties were confiscated by the King of Naples and were later, in 1820, granted to Cardinal Ruffo as a reward for his services offered to the Bourbons (Fulloni 2006), beginning a long story of successions linked to the decline of the complex. A contributory factor may have

been the disastrous Gargano earthquake of 1893 which wrecked Mattinata and probably caused further damage to the abbey's buildings.

Between 1989 and 1992 the site has been the object of archaeological digs. Despite its serious abandonment and its progressive destruction over the centuries, the surveys revealed the original configuration to have had an irregular layout, as witnessed by the remains of cellars, refectory, cisterns, warehouses, stables and places of worship, such as the square baptistery, the cloister, the church and the narthex. The church had a three-aisle plan developed along an east-west axis, with apsidal termination and without transepts. The interior was marked by pillars, which probably at first supported wooden trusses, and then the barrel vault of the main nave. At the southern apse there was a bell tower with a square plan, of which today only part of the first level remains, characterised by well-worked and squared stone blocks. The facade fronted a narthex with three spans covered by cross vaults, of which today only the left one remains. In this latter part what remains of the decorative scheme is better preserved: the presence of acanthus capitals, rosettes, floral motifs and scraps of a fresco representing a Madonna with child and two Benedictine saints (Fulloni 2006; Massimo 2013), is evidence of the value of the building.

The state of neglect has not changed although the complex has also received public and private contributions for the maintenance of the access through permanent and extraordinary works. But the protection of the ruins needs also the conservation of landscape, which conveys an important aspect of their value and evocative meaning in the Gargano National Park, in which the monastic complex is located³.

The derelict complex of the church of San Giovanni in Piano, near Apricena, is equally in need of care (Fig. 4). The original monastic settlement probably belonged to the Benedictine order⁴, judging by a donation of 1054 (Leccisotti 1940). However, its most prosperous period coincided with the settlement of the Celestines, which linked the fate of the Apulian monastery to that of Santo Spirito in Sulmona (Vendola 1939; Leccisotti 1938). In 1627 a violent earthquake hit the Garganic territory and damaged the building. That event should explain the second construction phase of the complex, presumably by the monks themselves, between the 17th and 18th centuries, according to the even now visible stylistic elements. It is not possible to make any further hypothesis about the state of the building. It was later abandoned in favour of the safer headquarters of the Holy Trinity in San Severo⁵. As a result, a slow and gradual neglect of the religious complex began, and in 1806 it was acquired by a private citizen and joined to a pre-existing masseria, triggered by the suppressive measures of the House of Savoy in the region⁶.

The surveys reveal valuable information on the construction phases (Placentino 2017). The original large nave is still legible along the southern facade, thanks to the presence of seven stone *monofore* on a limestone wall built with plenty of mortar: the free joint on its western end marks the collapse of the facade, probably due to the earthquake of 1627. In the work of reconstruction, in late Baroque form, the great medieval nave was divided; the facade was not rebuilt but was replaced with a new wall. Large windows were created, in a classical design marked by brick jambs and cornices and surmounted by elliptical brick oculi in the upper part of the wall. The presence of a diastasis on the southern front supports the hypothesis of an addition towards the east with a further building and an external staircase, built in more recent times to allow access to the upper floor, when it was probably transformed into a residence, as the interior seems to indicate.

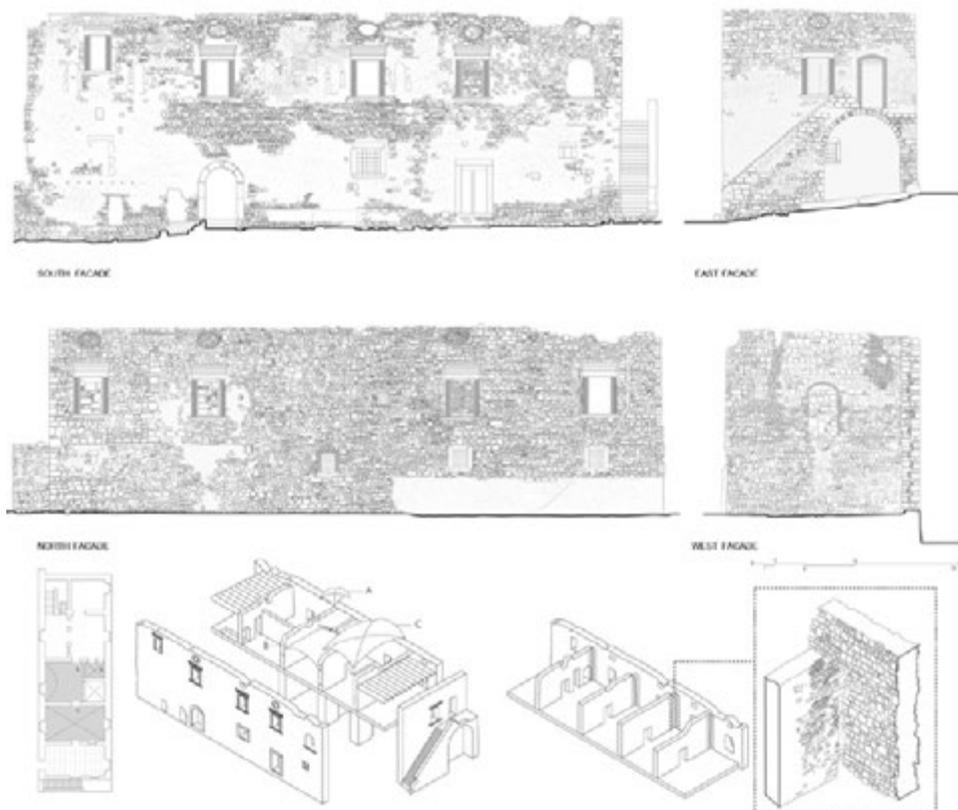


FIG. 4. St. Giovanni in Piano. Facades and interior schemes (Placentino 2017).

Even in this case, the current situation shows a serious state of neglect. The former religious building, lacking a roof covering⁷, is used as stable and storage for farming materials and tools. Moreover, there are no signs of the plan of the convent, which the chronicles of the early 20th century indicate as desolate and crumbling (Pitta 2002).

The complexes examined provide evidence of the lively religious and economic life of the Gargano area in the medieval period. They are also exemplary evidence of the effects of marginalisation in terms of their state of conservation and of the condition of their remains, where architectural survey represents the main evidence for their former material and formal composition. Although they do not represent a complete scenario about these topics, they still highlight fundamental issues, such as the advanced state of neglect and the need to give back value to places of worship which are today far from traditional tourist routes, but are part of an extraordinary beautiful landscape, making them easily accessible and useable.

The design choices within the project are aimed to the definition of a new system of religious and nature tourism on a territorial scale, through the systematisation of a network of paths that can guarantee greater knowledge and recovery of these places. The focus is on slow mobility, part of an international scenario based on the enhancement of the historical and cultural heritage.

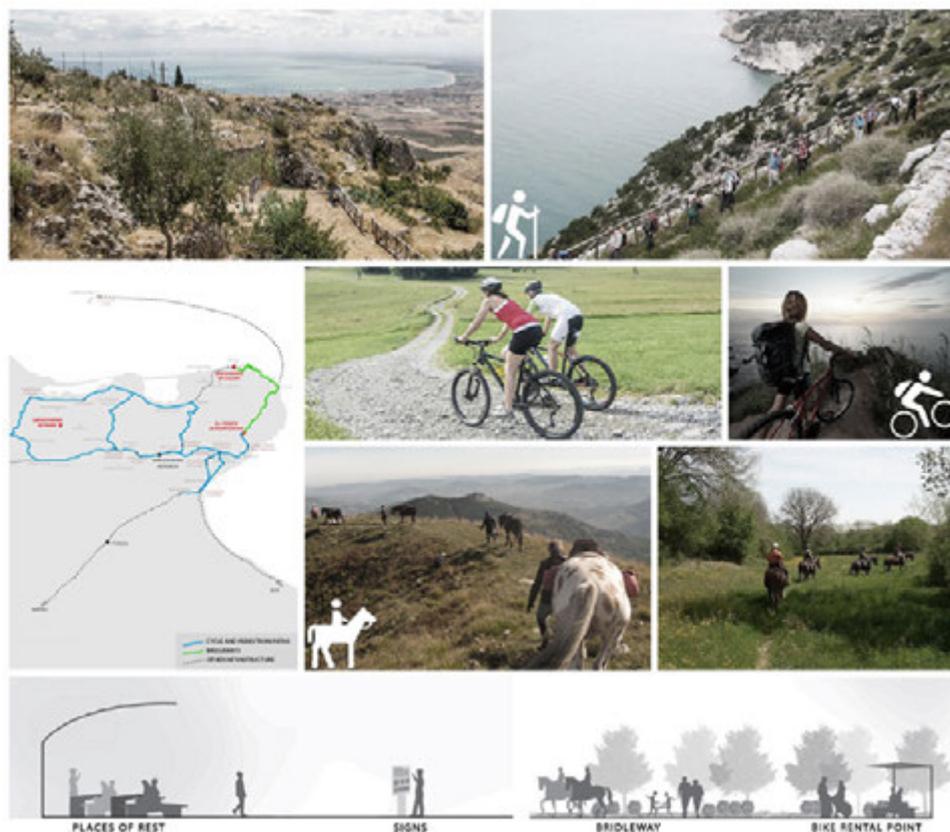


FIG. 5. Design concept (processing by C. Verazzo and M. Bitondi).

The activation process of accessibility for the community and the recognition of its identity values start from the most attractive urban centres – such as Bari, Foggia and San Giovanni Rotondo. The network develops on the existing ancient paths – such as the Via Sacra Longobardorum, the Via Sacra Siponto-Grotta dell’Arcangelo and the Johannes Schuler – that are implemented by the creation of new cycling, walking and naturalistic routes. There is also the possibility to create bridleways and walkways for skilled trekkers. Moreover, the presence of areas dedicated to horse breeding for touristic and therapeutic purposes would facilitate tackling the impervious routes, for example, to Santa Maria di Calena and Montesacro. Based on European experience, the project involves the use of accommodation for families, individuals or groups, matching the new facilities to those already present in the area, such as campsites and hotels. In this regard, it is necessary to provide the specific equipment for it: signs, navigation systems and maps of routes and services. Service areas, bike rental points and intermodal exchange (bus terminal, stations and parking lots), places of rest for tourists near the places to visit and in the most scenic points of the Gargano territory will be required (Fig. 5).

The proposed plan develops a territorial level strategy, made up of works with low environmental impact. The definition of a reference walking plan to allow the understanding of the sites within the nature park, and the design of a route that guides the visitor

through the far from easy interpretation of the surviving ruins will therefore be fundamental. In order to respond to the question about the ruin restoration, the design concepts are based on the maximum respect for pre-existing buildings and are not limited to the reconstruction of the site but to a series of timely actions aimed to securing and consolidating the walls residues. In the same direction go the other actions aimed to restoring continuity to the perimeter of the ancient sacred places: partial reconstructions, used for closing breaches and gaps and for suggesting the lost masonry continuity, are built with traditional materials. In some cases, the reconstruction of the lost wall perimeters could be done through stone blocks at head-level that allow the permeability of the margin and induce to mentally complete the ruins. Where the collapses are more significant and where the reconstructions could change the nature of the places, the plan envisages using greenery, drawing both on historical examples and on recent restoration experiments relating to the use of different species of trees in the accommodation of ancient ruins.

Conclusion

As shown by the EAAE studies and being aware of the material and immaterial values linked to the issue of the journey, it is believed that the most valid approach is to accept these ruins, considering them to be irreplaceable evidence of the places' spirit because of their fusion with the landscape and environmental context, and to make them authentic resources of the Gargano territory. They can be considered as an open-air museum by means of enhancement and virtuous recovery actions. The leitmotif of the whole project can be to suggest a reinterpretation of the places strongly connected with the environment, as well as to emphasise the religious nature of the places thanks to the sacredness of the surrounding landscape, itself considered a container of beauty.

The ruins represent the material sign of the passage of time and, in this sense, tourism takes on a new meaning. As in the case of the Way of St. James, the pilgrimage route today is not just a way to rediscover one's religiosity, but also a cathartic journey in search of oneself, through the ancient paths that once welcomed the faithful.

A cultured tourism – as alternative to mass tourism – is part of the new ecological and eco-sustainable trends, which focus on the issue of slow paths, zero-kilometre food and informal vacation places, in the name of physical and spiritual well-being.

Notes

¹ The Via Sacra Siponto-Grotta dell'Arcangelo started from the paleo-Christian basilica of St. Maria di Siponto (12th century AD), in Manfredonia, and crossed a land characterised by valleys, paths and cave churches. The Johannes Schuler, instead, started from St. Leonardo in Lama Volara (12th century AD) passing through the ancient Siponto, and it climbed up Pulsano's hill, where the homonymous abbey is located (12th century AD); after crossing Monte Sant'Angelo and reaching the Holy Trinity abbey, it went to the St. Maria di Càlena abbey through a cattle track towards Peschici, and to the Tremiti Islands and Croatia across the sea. On this path there were

several abbeys, hermitages and necropolis (Serafini, Verazzo 2017: 457-461).

² On 27th December 2007, the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage of Apulia officially notified to the Peschici Municipality the integral restriction concerning the abbey.

³ It was considered a Community Site of Importance (pSIC, Directive 92/43/CEE) since 1995 as well as a Special Protection Zone (SPA) since 1998.

⁴ Archivio Comunale di Lesina (ACL), 1737. "Origine del Monastero di S. Giovanni in Piano, e sua unione col Real Monastero della SS.ma Trinità de' PP. Celestini di San Severo", in *Platea autentica di tutti li beni stabili, cenzi attivi, e passivi, e privilegi, e cittadini-*

ze del regal monistero della SS. Trinità dei PP. Celestini di San Severo. Lesina. c. 6.

⁵ Ivi, c. 6v.

⁶ Biblioteca comunale di Apricena, 1812. *Catasto Storico della città di Apricena*, n. 352.

⁷ The church was not already covered in the depiction of the *Atlante delle Locazioni del Tavoliere di Puglia* by Antonio and Nunzio de Michele, published in 1686, but probably written decades later, because the monastery is clearly recognisable in the same representation.

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