

HistAntArtSI - Historical memory, Antiquarian Culture and Artistic Patronage: Social Identities in the Centres of Southern Italy between the Medieval and Early Modern Period

Project summary

From the twelfth century, southern Italy was overrun by foreign rulers and their houses and saw fierce dynastic struggles for succession. In attempting to cope with these sudden changes and upheavels, the local urban communities continually found themselves faced by the need to legitimize and reconfirm their status through actual negotiations with the king, and eventually with the baron. In this context the procedures and methods used to construct specific local identities take on particular importance, as do those used by individuals and families to affirm their social position. At both levels the central element in such processes appears to have been recourse to the past and the study of civic and family origins.

An interdisciplinary team will carry out an investigation into how the use of sources, both archival as well as literary, and of local antiquities, influenced the methods of self-representation adopted by elite individuals and local communities in the Regno di Napoli between the medieval and early modern period. In particular, the project will seek to identify the conscious and strategic use of sources and of the antique in the composition of new texts and in the commissioning of artistic and architectural works, beginning with Campania and then extending to Puglia, Calabria, Basilicata, Molise and Abruzzo.

An accessible database on the Internet will be specifically designed and programmed to gather together all the data relating the antiquities and their local reuse, including works of art and architecture as well as the local scholarly histories in southern continental Italy between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The database will be an essential tool for project participants, but will also provide a new research instrument of research and open new prospects of research for the scholarly community world-wide. The files of the database concerning the antiquities of southern continental Italy will integrate the material which is already in the Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance, thus amplifying this significant international resource.

The final aim of the project is to establish a balanced view of southern continental Italy between the late medieval and early modern period, which has been hitherto judged with inadequate interpretative categories, such as those of centre and periphery, development and underdevelopment, in order to reintroduce to the study of European history an element of comparison which has in effect been "lost".

In fulfilling its aims, the project will provide both the knowledge and the tools for the elaboration of further projects for the conservation, development and

management of the artistic and architectural heritage of southern Italy on the part of the relevant local, national and international institutional bodies. Above all, at a time when Italy's national heritage is being increasingly commercialised, the project aims to increase Italians' awareness of their cultural heritage, so that the country's citizens can become its primary guardians.

Principal Investigator: Bianca De Divitis

Host Institution: Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II" - Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche "Ettore Lepore"

Start date: 01/01/2011

End date: 01/01/2016

Duration: 60

Project cost: € 1.500.000,00

Project Funding: € 1.500.000,00

Contract type: European Research Council - Starting Grant (ERC-SG)