

VITO BIANCHI

THE PARISIAN ATLAS
Fortifications on the frontiers
of Christianity in the 16th century

with a contribution by
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Translation
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PRESENTATION

The previously unpublished document that we replicate here depicts a series of 16th-century coastal fortifications, designed to mark the most advanced line of defence of the kingdom of Spain in the face of the Ottoman advance, over a period that can be dated, with reasonable accuracy, between 1566 and 1574, that is, around the times of the famous and well-celebrated (in the Christian-Western domain) battle of Lepanto.

The strongholds, each depicted on a double page, delineate a homogeneous fortified front that stretches from the Adriatic region of Abruzzo all the way to Tunisia, and is especially dense in Apulia, the part of the Italian peninsula most exposed to the Turkish expansionism that loomed from the Balkans and the Albanian shores.

The work, in its original version and with its cover and binding, has been generously made available by its owner, doctor René de Picciotto, who safeguards it out of a deep love for History, and thanks to whose sensibility, culture and munificence this publication was made possible.

The volume was found and bought several years ago in a specialised antiquarian bookshop in Paris, the “*Camille Sourget*” (93 Rue de Seine): for this reason, we thought to “rename” it as the “*Parisian Atlas*”.

THE FORTIFICATIONS OF APULIA'S COASTAL CITIES IN THE AGE OF THE SPANISH VICEROYALTY

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In Apulia, the cities along the coast have retained most of their defences on the side of the sea, while in the cities of the interior, with the exclusion of Lecce, all that remains are some short sections of walls, some keeps and, only in a few cases, the monumental city gates.

In the 19th century, the construction of urban districts outside the city walls marks the end of the traditional model of urban expansion of Apulia's cities, which for centuries had been bound to comply with the prescriptions of military architecture.

The city is no longer regarded as a military stronghold and its 'openness' is seen as one of the signs of a new civilisation: "If we take as a measure of the civilisation of a country the taste for roads, for public buildings and for the symmetry of construction, it is rather unpleasant that in our times we have in the towns monuments that remind us of the barbarity of peoples".

This is the opinion of the administrator of the historical province of Terra di Bari, who wrote in 1822 to the minister of the interior: "Your Excellency. The towns of our Kingdom, and with them those of this province that were mostly founded in the Middle Ages, used to be in most cases surrounded by walls, and locked in by gates as dictated by the customs of the century, by the types of war waged at the time, and finally by the need for safety of their inhabitants against the incursions to which they might have been subjected. But the times, the customs, the circumstances and the people themselves have changed, and therefore what was once useful, and maybe indispensable, has now become superfluous, and inconvenient. This truth is generally so widely accepted that in some of the towns there are repeated calls for the opening of gates and the demolition of walls every day, and the government on its part does nothing but comply with them".

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The *Parisian Atlas* presented here is made up of 18 tables, all painted in watercolour, glued to one another on their blank side, so that they don't show any empty pages.

At first there is an overall map of Apulia, including cartographic information useful in interpreting the following individual plans of strongholds. Then follow the maps referring to the specific fortifications of Vieste, Manfredonia, Barletta, Trani, Bisceglie, Molfetta, Giovinazzo, Bari, Mola di Bari, Polignano a Mare, Monopoli, Brindisi, Lecce, Otranto, Gallipoli, Taranto, Pescara and La Goulette (Tunisia). Some of these maps appear complete, others include further dotted lines, representing the proposals for architectural-military improvements to be added to the preexisting fortified structures.

In regard to the overall production of the volume it appears we can identify, on the basis of the drawings and the captions, two or more authors: the depiction of La Goulette, for example, shows an evident dissimilarity in the use of colour when compared to the other watercolour illustrations, especially in the aquatic component; the town of Manfredonia is indicated as *Manfredio* in the general map, and as *Manfredonia* in the detailed one; in a similar manner, with Giovinazzo we first find *Giovenazzo* and then *Giovanazzo*, while Gallipoli is initially listed as *Galipoli* and then as *Galippoli*: this indicates, in all four cases, clear differences in authorship, also confirmed by the duplicity in writing *càna* (in the overall map that opens the *Atlas*) and *canne* (in the single fortifications).



PUGLIA

La Puglia è una delle più antiche regioni d'Italia, situata nel sud-est del paese. È caratterizzata da una costa lunga e frastagliata, con numerosi porti e baie. L'entroterra è prevalentemente montuoso, con colline e montagne che si estendono verso l'interno. Le principali città sono Bari, Brindisi, Foggia e Taranto. La Puglia è nota per la sua produzione di olio d'oliva, grano duro e frutta. È anche una regione turistica importante, con molte località balneari e siti storici.

La Puglia è una regione molto fertile, grazie al clima mediterraneo e alle acque sotterranee. Le principali colture sono il grano duro, l'oliva e la frutta. La Puglia è anche una regione molto turistica, con molte località balneari e siti storici. Le principali città sono Bari, Brindisi, Foggia e Taranto.



La Puglia è una regione molto importante per l'Italia, sia per la sua economia che per la sua cultura. È una regione che ha molto da offrire ai suoi visitatori.

