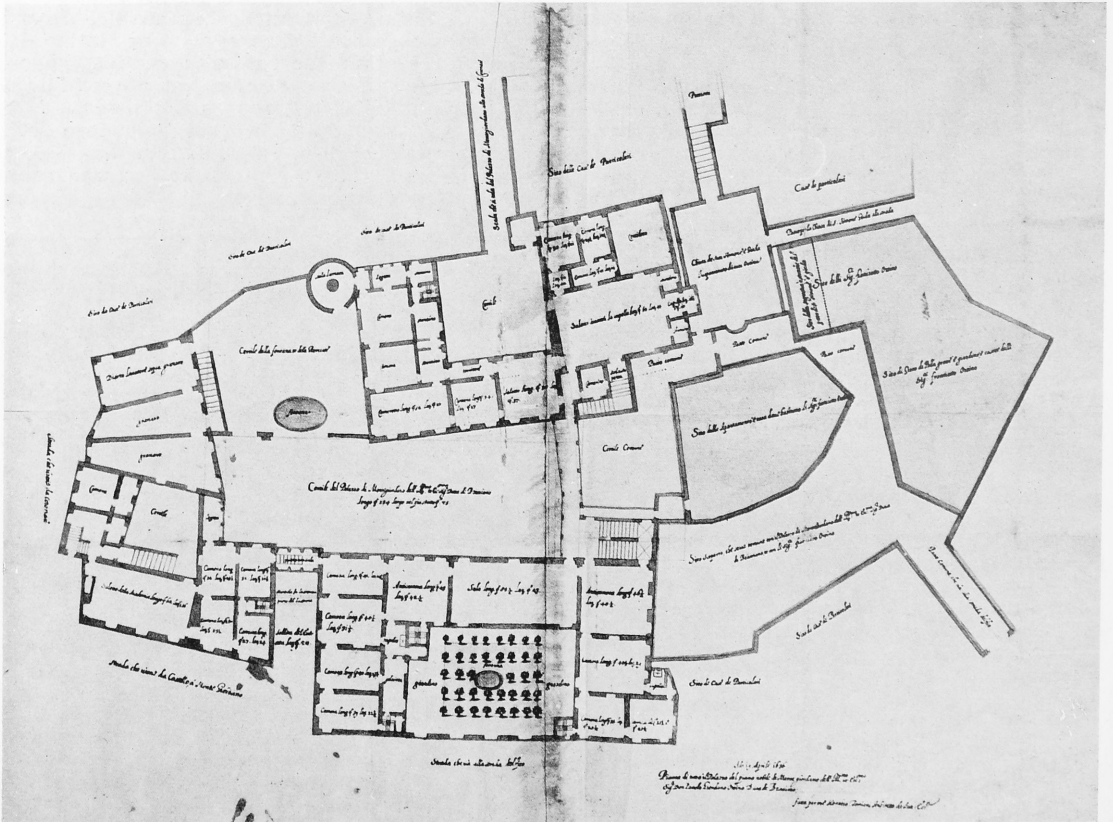


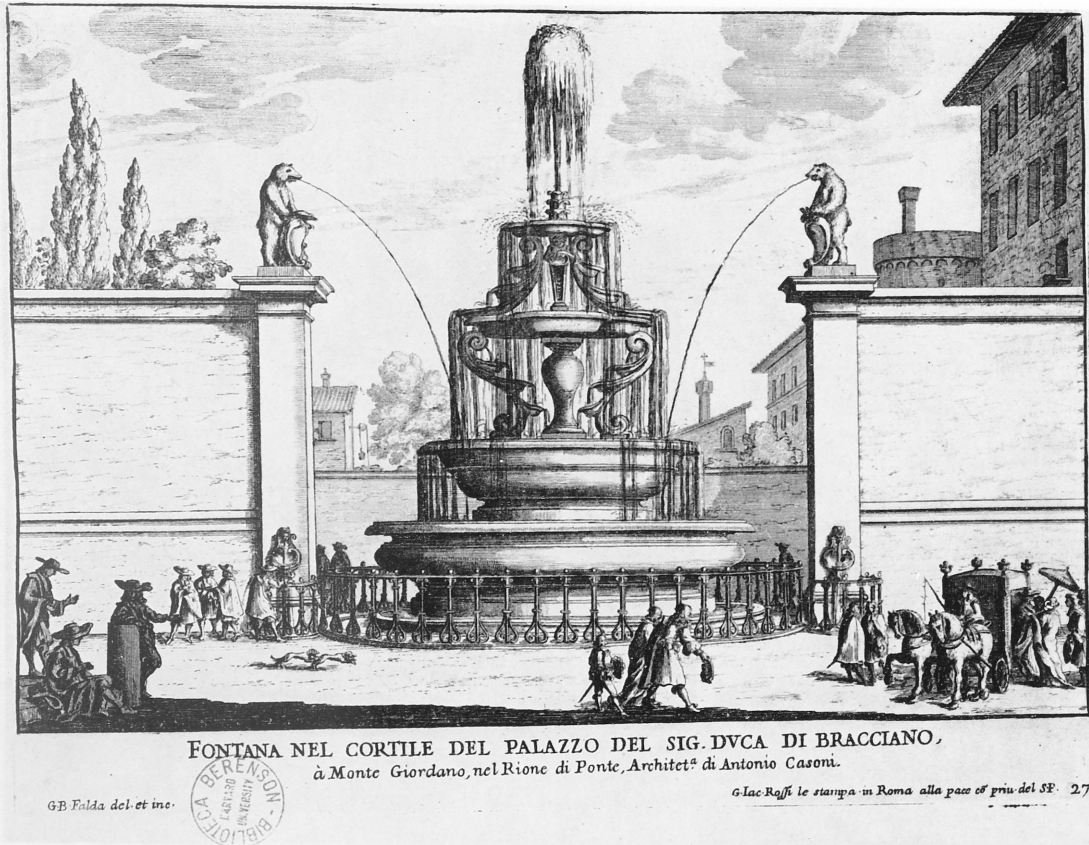
Sabine Eiche: TOWARDS A STUDY OF THE PALAZZO DI MONTE GIORDANO IN ROME:
A PLAN BY ORAZIO TORRIANI *

The conglomeration of houses known collectively as the Palazzo di Monte Giordano (now Taverna) has never been studied systematically. Its history is long and involved, and the documentation still remains to be assembled and analysed.¹ To date, also the visual sources have been of limited usefulness: Monte Giordano can be discerned, in more or less detail, on most of the early plans of Rome, but the only known groundplan of the complex is a modern one drawn up in the 1950s, which necessarily reveals the buildings in their current state.²

The publication here of a newly discovered plan dating from the early 17th century should allow research on the palace to progress with greater facility (Figs. 1, 3-4). Covering two sheets joined together vertically at the centre, the plan measures 74 × 101 cm. Along the lower right margin is the inscription: *Adi 19 Aprile 1636. Pianta di tutto il Palazzo del piano nobile de Monte giordano dell' Ill.mo et Ecc.mo Sig.r Don Pauolo Giordano Orsino Duca de Bracciano; fatta per me Horatio Torriani Architetto de Sua Ecc.tia.*³ The lines, first incised with a stylus, are drawn in graphite, and the wall thicknesses coloured with a red wash. All the spaces, interior and exterior, are labelled, and measurements are included for many of the rooms. Franciotto Orsini's houses, located in the eastern section of Monte Giordano, are distinguished from the Bracciano properties in having only the perimeters drawn, with the walls coloured brown and the surface areas tinted with a pale wash. The architect did not cancel the regularized wall lines that he superimposed on the plan, which are particularly noticeable around the majestic double ramp stair at the centre, and along the court façade of the construction forming the northern limit of the complex.



1 Orazio Torriani, plan of the *piano nobile* of the Palazzo di Monte Giordano, 1636 (north is at the top).



- 2 Rome, Palazzo Monte Giordano, the fountain in the *Cortile della Fontana* (from Falda, *Le fontane di Roma*).

Accompanying the plan is the following letter, from which the date, signature, and name of addressee are missing:⁴

Il prezzo del Palazzo di Monte Giordano è già stabilito in cento mila scudi, et adesso solo si negotia delle paghe, come, e quando si devono fare.

Si desidererebbe che il Venditore fusse aiutato ad havere dal S.r Duca Salviati il Palazzo suo della Lungara.

Si spererebbe che il Ser.mo S.r Card.l di Savoia con sua sodisfazione si ritorerebbe dal negotio.

S'avverta che nella pianta che si manda non c'è la nova stanza sopra il Portone che fa grandissima commodità all'appartamento principale, e communicatione con quelli della Galleria, et il detto Portone riesce di fuori bellissima et il didentro, e di fuori ha ricevuto con questa nova fabbrica grandissimo abbellimento [*in margin*: e con poca spesa si possono fare altri accomodamenti e miglioramenti] et il disegno che è stato fatto dall'Architetto Toriani al Ser.mo di Savoia è cosa superbissima e veramente reale, et occorrendo procurerei che si mandasse à Fiorenza.

The Cardinal of Savoia referred to above is Maurizio di Savoia, who had rented the palace beginning in 1621, at which time the Orsini were tenants in the Palazzo Salviati on the Lungara.⁵ It is tempting to think that Torriani's drawing (*il disegno che è stato fatto dall'Architetto Toriani al Ser.mo di Savoia*), which has not yet been found, had been made with the intention of securing the Cardinal's interest in 1621. The imminent negotiations implied in the letter apparently were not concluded, for Savoia was still residing there in 1642.⁶ However, it was not many decades later, in 1688, that the sale to the Gabrielli was effected, ending over 400 years of Orsini ownership.⁷ The Gabrielli, in their turn, sold the property to the Counts of Taverna late in the 19th century.⁸



5 Palazzo di Monte Giordano, *Cortile della Fontana* and the houses formerly of the Corsini Counts of P'tigliano.

By 1636, the date on Torriani's plan, the houses occupied by the Orsini Dukes of Bracciano had extended beyond their original limits in the southwest area of the complex to include the quarters of the Orsini Counts of Pitigliano, which were situated to the north, between the church of SS. Simone e Giuda and the *Cortile della Fontana* (Fig. 5). This acquisition dates from the early 17th century, and an overpass was soon built to effectively and conveniently connect the residences. The overpass at the same time divided the principal courtyard into two, identified on the plan as the *Cortile del Palazzo di Montegiordano* and the *Cortile Comune*, the latter serving the houses, to the east, then still inhabited by the Orsini Lords of Monterotondo.

As was implied in the letter, the year 1636 does not refer to the measuring of the site and drawing of the plan, since the new room above the entrance portal was missing from it. A notation on the plan provides a *terminus ante quem*: the houses to the east are inscribed with the name of Franciotto Orsini, who died in 1617⁹; and the large fountain in the courtyard suggests a *terminus post quem* of 1616, for in an *avviso* written in April of that year there is a reference to *una fontana che si deve fare nel [...] palazzo di Montegiordano* (Fig. 2).¹⁰ Torriani's plan, or the plan on which he based his version, must have originated therefore between 1616-1617.

The plan will be useful not only for clarifying the earlier architectural history of the palace, but also for correcting a few current assumptions. It reveals, for instance, that the Palazzo Tanari, believed to have been outside the limits of the Monte Giordano complex, in fact was constructed on the site of one of the Orsini gardens, identified as the *Sito di Gioco di Palla grotte e giardino e casette delli Sig.ri Franciotto Orsini*.¹¹ Pecchiai, in his description of Monte Giordano, had incorrectly supposed that the garden was identical with the area indicated on the plan as the *Sito scoperto che serve comune con il Palazzo di Monte Giordano dell' Ill.mo et Ecc.mo Sig. r Duca di Bracciano et con li Sig.ri Franciotto Orsini*.¹²

For a comprehensive investigation of the Palazzo di Monte Giordano the material will have to be gathered from a variety of sources. Regarding the earlier period, the information is bound to be rare, but the situation becomes markedly improved already for the 16th century.¹³ We know, for instance, that the palace frequently was rented to cardinals and ambassadors, and much could be gleaned from the correspondence files of these individuals.¹⁴ The succeeding century offers even more documentation. Besides the contemporary groundplan, there exist numerous inventories of the contents of the houses, and these often are informative also on the layout and use of the quarters.¹⁵ For example, one inventory drawn up in 1597 when the Duke of Bracciano's palace was rented to the Cardinal d'Avila provides a detailed description of two areas: the gallery above the entrance gate and a no longer extant garden overlooking the *Strada che va alla strada del Fico*, both of which had received the particular attention of Paolo Giordano I Orsini, sometime during the period of his residency, 1572-1585:

Appartamento di Galeria stanze cinque con una capelletta. Galeria sgabelli tredici pintati a grotesco con l'arme di casa Ursini di rilievo et altarno il nome del S.or Paulo Giordano. Statue tredecì di marmo cioè teste con mezzi busti delli 13 imperatori posti sopra detti sgabelli dei quali nove di essi anno il naso rincollato, et uno è senza naso.¹⁶

Also the garden, visible just to the left of centre at the bottom of the plan, was decorated with pieces of antique sculpture:

Giardino con spalliere di aranzi attorno et decidotto piedi di aranci simili in mezzo la corsia tutti verdi e grandi. Porta una serratura e catenacio. Statue tre di donne di giusta statura vestite poste e murate in tre nicchie che una di esse al naso posticcio l'altra alquanto scollato e impennato il braccio dritto et l'altra senza man dritta et le dita della manca. Teste due di due giovani con collo e petto grosse assai, l'una con capigliaria l'altra con [...] delle quali una a meno il naso. Torsi quattro grandi di giusta statura con [...] senza gambe ne braccia ne teste. Termini quattro di giusta statura tra quali solo uno ha la testa et uno è in due pezzi. Torsi due di giusta statura, ignudi. Vasi sette grandi con piante grandi e verdi, et due di cedri uno di limone et quattro di aranci. Chiusini due di legno con serrature et cattenucci posti nel mattonato del detto giardino per coperto della conserva.¹⁷

A later inventory includes the information that the fountain at the centre of the garden, not to be confused with the more notable one in the main courtyard, was composed of an *ovata di marmo con orlo tondo con 4 Rose*.¹⁸

Throughout its existence the palace of Monte Giordano has reflected significant phases of Roman architecture and culture, and thus for more reasons than one it merits a thorough investigation. It was the purpose of this brief note to contribute one tool, an early plan, with the hope that it will stimulate architectural historians to begin to tackle a long neglected problem.

NOTES

* My most cordial thanks to Donna Carla Sanminiatielli Griccioli and Donna Lavinia Gallarati Scotti for their interest and help.

¹ The bibliography on the architecture and decoration of Monte Giordano is limited to the following: *F. Asso*, Sull'origine dell'altura detta prima 'Monte di Giovanni Roncione', poi 'Monte Giordano', in: Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura, I, 1953, pp. 12-15; *C. Cecchelli*, Roma e il pensiero della Rinascita: il Castello degli Orsini e un dialogo celebre, in: *L'Urbe*, 6, Feb. 1941, pp. 2-10; *P. Fleuriot de Langle*, La surprise du Palais Taverna. Ses fresques néo-pompéiennes, in: *Connaissance des Arts*, 177, Nov. 1966, pp. 112-117; *V. Golzio*, Palazzi romani dalla Rinascita al Neoclassico, Bologna 1971, pp. 157-159; *G. Marcotti*, Il giubileo dell'anno 1450 secondo una relazione di Giovanni Rucellai, in: *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, IV, 1880, p. 578; *R. Mode*, The Monte Giordano Famous Men Cycle of Cardinal Giordano Orsini and the 'Uomini Famosi' Tradition in Fifteenth-Century Italian Art, Ph. D. diss. University of Michigan, 1970, *idem*, Masolino, Uccello and the Orsini *Uomini Famosi*, in: *Burl. Mag.*, 114, 1972, pp. 369-378; *idem*, The Orsini *Sala Theatri* at Monte Giordano in Rome, in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, 26, 1973, pp. 167-172; *P. Pecchiai*, La chiesa di Monte Giordano, in: *Archivi*, 28, no. 3-4, 1961, pp. 189-207; *idem*, Palazzo Taverna a Monte Giordano, Rome 1963; *C. Pietrangeli*, Guide rionali di Roma, Rione V - Ponte, Part 2, 3rd. ed., Rome 1981, pp. 32-42; *P. Portoghesi*, Roma del Rinascimento, vol. 2, Milan 1971, p. 485; *W. A. Simpson*, Cardinal Giordano Orsini († 1438) as a Prince of the Church and a Patron of the Arts. A Contemporary Panegyric and Two Descriptions of the Lost Frescoes in *Monte Giordano*, in: *Warburg Journal*, 29, 1966, pp. 135-159; *Vasari-Milanesi*, I, p. 621, II, p. 264. See also *H. Günther*, Das Trivium vor Ponte S. Angelo, in: *Röm. Jb.*, 21, 1984, pp. 165-251; and the forthcoming studies by Monica Donati on the *Sala degli Uomini Famosi*, and by Salvatore Settis on the *Camera delle Sibille*.

² *Asso* (n. 1), Fig. 17.

³ ASF, Misc. Med. 93, Inserto III. C, c. 111.

⁴ *Ibidem*, c. 110.

⁵ *Pecchiai* 1963 (n. 1), p. 27.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 25, n. 30.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 35-36.

⁹ *Litta*, ser. 2, vol. 5, Orsini tav. IX.

¹⁰ Published in *Asso* (n. 1), p. 14.

¹¹ *Pietrangeli* (n. 1), p. 46.

¹² *Pecchiai* 1963 (n. 1), p. 51.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 18-21.

¹⁴ To cite only one case: in 1522, in preparation for the coronation of Hadrian VI, the agents of the Duke of Urbino were charged to find accommodations for the Duke and Duchess since the Palazzo della Rovere (now Doria) was occupied by the Cardinal Minerva who refused to leave. Various quarters were taken into consideration, among them ones in Monte Giordano: "Una Casa per le S.re Duchesse ho firmato in Monte Giordano, qual'è bona et honorevole in luoco aperto, et non costarà niente. Et l'ho havuta dal Sig.or Nicolò dalla Ruvere et dal S.or Camillo Ursino, et è casa litigiosa infra lor." (ASF, Urbino, Cl. I, Div. G. Fa. 134, c. 233 v: 7 June 1522, Alessandro Nerio to the Duke of Urbino; see also cc. 105 v, 228-229.) Another agent had a different reaction to the proposed residence: "Ero stato a vedere quella Casa del S.r Nicolò per V. Ex.a et per essermi sommamente spiacciuta, come quella che ha le camere tutte piccole, basse, afumate, che paiano fatte per habitazione di la melenconia." (*Ibidem*, Fa, 132, c. 258: 20 August 1522, Giovannmaria della Porta to the Duke of Urbino.)

¹⁵ Rome, Archivio Storico Capitolino, Archivio Orsini 414, inserto 7: (13) Inventario del palazzo di Monte Giordano, 22 marzo 1597; (14) Inventario dei beni dell'eredità del cardinale Virginio Orsini a Monte Giordano, 27 agosto-3 settembre 1676; (15) Inventario e nota della parte del palazzo di Monte Giordano consegnato agli Sig.ri Ginetti, 29 marzo 1677; (16) Nota delli appartamenti nel palazzo di Monte Giordano, 17th c.; (17) Inventario del palazzo di Monte Giordano, 17th c.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, Archivio Orsini 414, inserto 7, (13), c. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, c. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, Archivio Orsini 414, inserto 7, (15), c. 6 v.

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