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## Migration and knowledge after earthquakes

This article will focus a aspect wich concerns the way in which a traumatic and catastrophic effect, such as an earthquake, has triggered mechanisms of human circulation, between victims, rescuers and workers who change their residences to the point of remaining citizens of that territory, creating an osmotic diffusion of knowledge that feeds on both the knowledge and cultures of origin and those of reception.

**Keywords:**

Citizenship; L'Aquila; countryside; earthquakes; community of Milanese

## MIGRATIONS AND RECONSTRUCTIONS: A LONG LASTING STORY

In L'Aquila, as is well known, earthquakes have marked the centuries following the birth of the city. There have been about one hundred and fifty earthquakes of various magnitudes, although those that have marked in a decisive way the various reconstructions are those of 1349, 1461, 1703 and 2009 (Mantini, 2020; Galadini; De Matteis 2009; Cerasani, 1999).

Since its foundation L'Aquila has had many presences, first of foreigners, then becoming citizens, who founded nuclei of consolidated settlements that attested to the presence and integration over the centuries (Centofanti, 2009).

Today in L'Aquila there are about 5000 foreigners, representing 8% of the population and 25,000 in the province. This percentage is not far from that of the modern age.

In the fifteenth century L'Aquila was a city of great importance: Abruzzo is a hinge in the geopolitics between the Middle Ages and the modern age: a borderland between the Kingdom of Naples and the Papal States, it is also a bridge between the Adriatic Sea and the East, maintaining its role as a transitional tissue where the circulation of ideas, culture and markets imprinted the richness of contamination and coexistence.

L'Aquila, therefore, had already since its foundation the characteristic of a composite city, formed by the numerous urban populations of the countryside and then by their dialects and their cultures, became a stop for merchants and pilgrims, who crossed it for the jubilee of Celestine V, for the richness of wool and the preciousness of saffron, and destination of artists, circulating in the peninsula and in Europe, who involved noble clients in the embellishment of houses and chapels. The earthquake of 1461, following the numerous ones of the previous century, had favored the arrival of many workers from Milan, Varese, Como, and the Intelvi Valley, who came to the city for the reconstruction of its urban fabric, bringing, together with their skills, also their reconstructive cultures in a phenomenon destined to repeat itself

for all subsequent earthquakes, until the recent one of 2009 (Castiglione & Canonaco, 2018).

These flows of men, and then of women and families, also created new settlements in the wounded city, which grew with stores where other dialects were spoken, as well as the Confraternities of Sant'Ambrogio and, later, of San Carlo, patron saints of Milan. An anti-seismic architectural consciousness also developed, which also compared with other areas of Europe (D'Antonio, 2013).

The presence of so-called foreigners, who later became citizens of L'Aquila, in moments of economic and social crisis related to earthquakes is a frequent phenomenon in the history of L'Aquila that is repeated until the present day (Mantini, 2016). The Milanese, and more generally the Lombards, were present since the medieval centuries: as for other nationalities, it was a presence linked to commercial reasons, but specifically also to the well-known fame of the Lombards as qualified construction workers, the "magistri lombaradi" who, for example, worked on the building site of Palazzo Margherita in its sixteenth-century version and again in its reconstruction after the earthquake of 1703 (Pasqua, 2005; Centofanti, 1984).

Lombard influences are recognizable in the frescoes with the stories of St. George, in the church of San Pietro a Coppito dentro le mura, in which the Lombard term 'tusella', that is 'maiden', appears under the scene of St. George freeing the princess from the dragon. A short distance from San Pietro a Coppito, the 'Via dei Lombardi' still reminds us of the presence of that large community that seems to have been particularly concentrated in the Quarto di Santa Maria Paganica.

The relationship between the Milanese and the Cathedral of L'Aquila is very close, where they had established since 1458 the chapel of Saint Ambrose and, in 1617, the chapel of Saint Charles Borromeo (Antonini, 2010).

In the new Cathedral of the eighteenth century, after the great earthquake of 1703, the Milanese were very active in the reconstruction and created an altar in front of the one dedicated to St. Emidio, protector of earthquakes, in which even today,

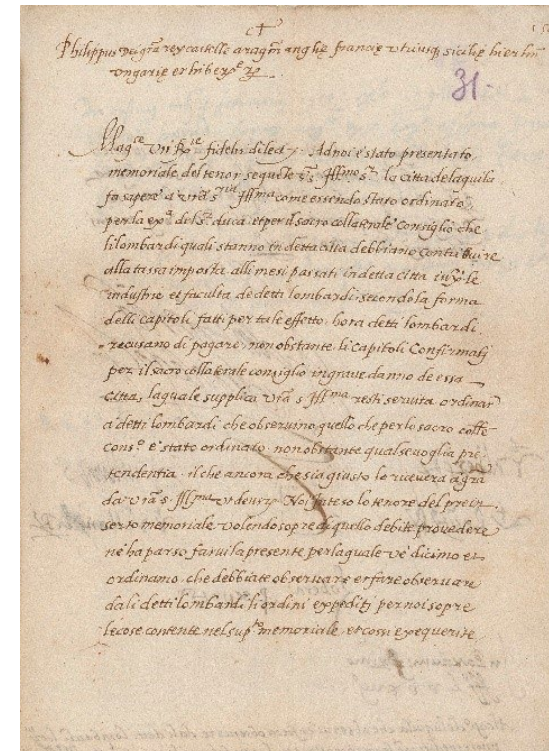


Fig. 1 - Document ACA U8 31 r

despite the destruction after 2009, are visible two coats of arms of the Milanese nation symbolized by the Visconti snake that swallows a human figure; a snake that today is better known to many as 'il biscione'. But the example of the Milanese communities can also be extended to other communities that came to L'Aquila with the earthquakes and formed brotherhoods of nations, such as the Albanians and Germans (Mantini, 2009; Boero, 2017).

The presence of the Lombards in the city had been regulated through the granting of a series of privileges, granted by Ferrante d'Aragona and

confirmed by Charles V, which provided for exemption from ordinary taxes, which were instead required of the citizens of L'Aquila.

The privileges were also of a judicial nature: the Lombards could have their own consuls in L'Aquila for the administration of civil and criminal cases (Archivio di Stato dell'Aquila -from now on Asaq-, Archivio Civico Aquilano -from now on ACA-, U 8, c. 69r), within a separate jurisdiction from the body of the *civitas*. These dispositions gave a notable impulse to the migration of individuals who found in Abruzzo advantageous conditions from an economic, social and fiscal point of view.

The Lombards claimed throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the preservation of their rights, especially in tax matters: they emphasized, in this regard, that the stay in L'Aquila was still temporary, where their intent was still to return to the State of Milan in their homes by their spouses (ASaq, ACA, U 8, c. 59v). In fact, this was in many cases a ploy with which they intended to escape the payment of the provisions and collections that were required in Naples: their presence in L'Aquila was often stable and lasting, as the local magistrates informed those of the state, since "some of them kept wives and families in that city, et robbe stabili" (ASaq, ACA, U 8, c. 41r).

The issue of Lombard emigration, in the perception of the *universitas* of L'Aquila, risked taking on broader implications: similarly to what the Lombards had done, even the Florentines and other foreign communities "have recused themselves, and recuse themselves from paying the taxes of this city as the citizens pay them, not respecting that they have lived and live there" (ASaq, ACA, U 8, c. 67r). Between the seventies and eighties of the sixteenth century, during the reign of Philip II, the requests of the Royal Chamber of Sommaria coming from Naples in tax matters intensified. In this regard, the Lombards, as a "nation", formulated in 1592 a memorial, of which a copy is kept in the State Archive of L'Aquila, in which they claimed the need for them to be treated differently from the "citizens", since they were passing through L'Aquila exclusively for reasons connected to "mercantie et altre lor arte" (ASaq, ACA, U 8, c. 53v).



Fig. 2 - Cathedral of San Massimo in L'Aquila, "Saint Charles among the plague victims". The painting was commissioned by the Confraternity of Saints Ambrose and Charles of the Milanese People and was created by artist Teofilo Patini

The will of the Collateral Council in Naples to reorganize matters of a fiscal nature led to a wider involvement in payments of foreign communities in the Kingdom (ASaq, ACA, U 8, c. 31). The Milanese, for their part, continued to claim for a long time their position of "extraneousness" with respect to the body of the *civitas* aquilana in order to derogate from the duties that citizenship, especially on the fiscal level, implied with respect to the privileges that had incentivized their migrations in the preceding decades (Cavallera, 1995 and 1998). The intervention of the Regia Camera della Sommaria in 1607 led to a clearer definition of the position of the Milanese, Genoese, Alemanni and French foreigners: it was reiterated that they had to pay taxes in the *universitates* where they resided like all "citizens".

So who are the citizens? Those who pay taxes: all residents, regardless of their origins must participate in the tax project in a definition of citizenship aimed at extending the theme of sharing collective duties.

The presence of so many nuclei of extra-moenia provenance attests to the fact that the territory of L'Aquila, subject to the numerous catastrophes linked to earthquakes, has always been an area of crossings, of new settlements of communities and new citizens who, in the reconstruction of the buildings, contributed to the reconstruction of the social fabric in a circulation of men and women, of trades, of knowledge and habits that became circular and integrated and that are still repeated today with the actors of the current reconstruction. From the survey that the municipal authorities

carried out in 1628, with the aim of making tax payments to foreign communities effective, it can be seen that in L'Aquila in that year there were two "tailors", seven "shoemakers", nine masons, eleven carpenters and four "hosti" of Lombard origin (ASAq ACA, U 8, c. 95r-v).

The attempt, on the part of the Crown and the magistrates of Aquila, to equalize the position of the nation forestiere to that of the citizens emerges also from a memorial written in 1641 by the community of the Milanese. The mayors of the nation Giovanni Salvini, Camillo Marchi, Antonio Giordano and Andrea Bonazi complained that the privilege of having their own consul for the administration of justice was not respected and that there was a constant attempt to "abuse" this right of the Lombards (ASAq, ACA, U 8, c. 20v).

The Lombards, residing in various areas of the city and in particular in the quarter of S. Maria, made an important contribution to the reconstruction after the earthquake of 1703, making their manufacturing skills available for the rebuilding. In many cases they suffered the consequences of the earthquake, as evidence of the fact that their presence had become permanent. In the list of the damaged houses we learn how the house of the Milanese Mastro Domenico Grillo had been "damaged by the earthquake and is uninhabited, the house of the Milanese Francesco Maria Gezzi, "who came to the city to do the art of carpenter", was "half-destroyed" and the residence of the Milanese "mastro chivettero" Pietro Zafran was in the area of the "houses of Santissima Anna damaged by the earthquake" (ASAq, ACA, U/97/IV, 1712, Quarto di San Pietro, List of houses damaged by the earthquake of 1703, cc. 8 v and 15b.).

At present, the thousands of foreigners living in L'Aquila have come to the city because of the job offer linked to the reconstruction site, in a line of continuity that links the past to the present, in a framework that combines the dimension of today's new inhabitants, with the uninhabited historical center, with that of the future and its new citizens.

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