

2017

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### Recommended Citation

Beltramo, Silvia (2017) "Places of faith: architectures for hospitality in the Italian Sanctuaries in the Early Modern Age," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 5: Iss. 3, Article 8.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/D7142N>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol5/iss3/8>

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# Places of Faith: architecture for hospitality in Italian Sanctuaries in the Early Modern Age

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The strong affluence of pilgrims in monasteries and sanctuaries since the Middle Era, determined a veritable culture of hospitality, which was manifested by the building of new spaces dedicated to guest quarters. This research investigates in detail some meaningful examples amongst the main Italian sanctuaries - namely: Vicoforte and Oropa (Piedmont), Tirano (Lombardy) and Loreto (Marche) - looking at the solutions adopted to host the wayfarers: the hospitality spaces which characterised architecture dedicated to pilgrims between the Middle and the Early Modern Ages. Throughout this period of time, the continuous increase in pilgrimages implied new definitions of the space within the sacred enclosures, with the building of new shelters for the pilgrims, in addition to taverns and shops. The cases presented make it possible to analyse the arrangement of the areas dedicated to the travellers in their architectural components, which were either designed from scratch or were an adaptation of the space to the pilgrim's needs.

**Key Words:** religious architecture, hospitality, sanctuaries, sacred places, religious tourism

## Preface

This paper presents data which are primarily derived from archives and historical sources, which have heretofore not appeared in religious tourism and pilgrimage literature. The approach to the paper is historical and architectural in nature, but the findings are directly relevant to the modern day, as the needs and requirements of pilgrims in the Middle and Early Modern Ages were similar to those of the present - shelter, food and drink. As will be seen, a service industry emerged to facilitate this practice, which perhaps, forms the foundations of the modern hospitality industry.

## Introduction

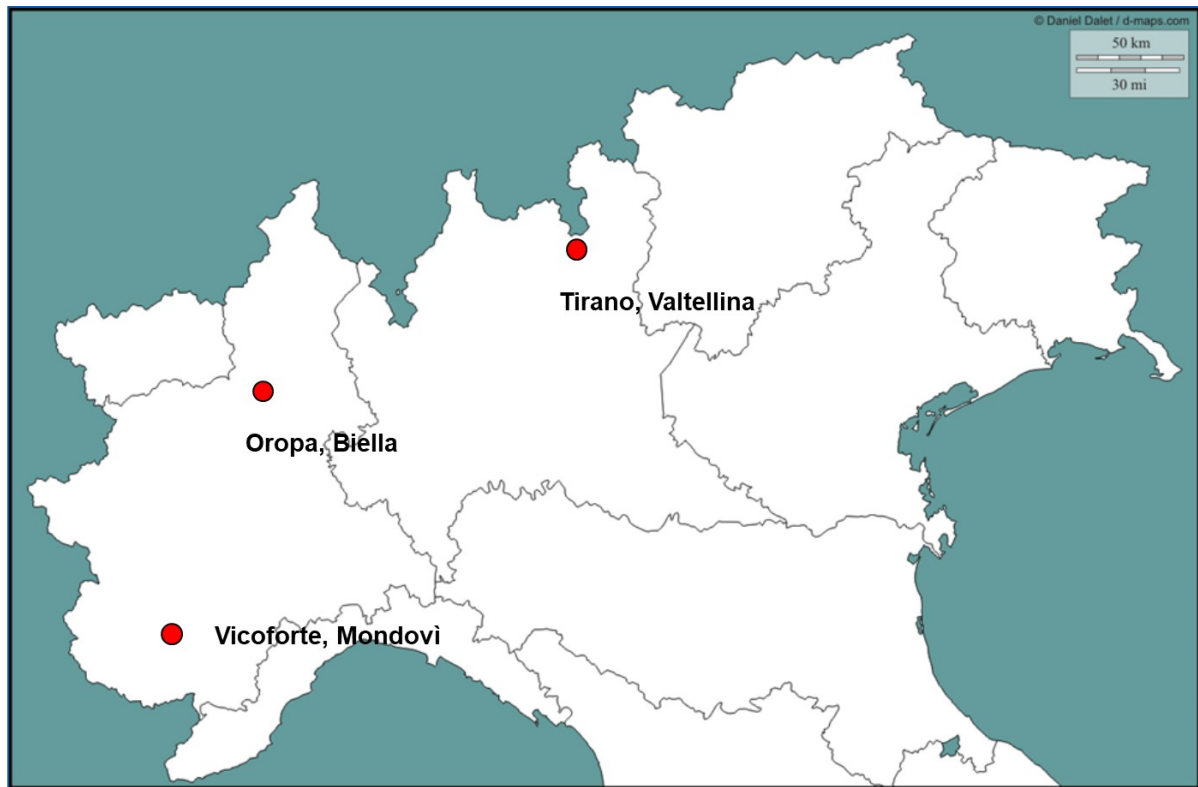
Since the Middle Ages, Northern Italy has been characterized as a territory of pilgrimages to monasteries, sanctuaries and *Sacri Monti* (Sacred Mounts). The affluence of pilgrims soon determined a veritable culture of hospitality, which was manifested by the building of new spaces dedicated to guest quarters. The sources testify a significant proliferation of *hospitiae* and *hospitales* in the main religious centers; in the monasteries from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and in the sanctuaries from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. An authentic architecture of hospitality can be identified in the

centre of Piedmont and Lombardy, with solutions which couple the guidelines dictated by the rules of the different monastic orders with adaptations which were required by the area and its geomorphologic conditions.

This research, which is still in progress, investigates in detail some meaningful examples amongst the main Italian sanctuaries - namely: Vicoforte and Oropa (Piedmont), Tirano (Lombardy) and Loreto (Marche) - looking at the solutions adopted to host the wayfarers: the hospitality spaces which characterised architecture dedicated to pilgrims between the Middle and the Early Modern Ages (Figure 1). Throughout this period of time, the continuous increase in pilgrimages resulted in new definitions of space within the sacred enclosures, with the building of new shelters taverns and shops for the pilgrims. The cases presented make it possible to analyze the arrangement of the areas dedicated to the travelers in their architectural components, which were either designed from scratch or were an adaptation of the areas, to suit the pilgrims needs.

The current research is based on the study of many unpublished archival sources and detailed analysis of architecture and spaces which are still preserved in the sanctuaries investigated.

Figure 1. Sanctuaries in the Nord West of Italy: Vicoforte, Oropa e Tirano



Source : Author

The archives preserved in the sanctuaries and historical ones of the town next to the religious complexes have revealed the dense network of relations between private and public patronage aimed at building the hospitality architectures.

### The Sanctuary of Vicoforte: the *Palazzata* and Places for Pilgrim Hospitality

The Virgin of Vico (venerated in Mondovi in the Piemonte region) was the object of great devotion both by the local duke's court and the local population. The sanctuary, close to Mondovi (in the province of Cuneo), took form in a political and religious context which was strongly linked to the reasons of the Counter-Reformation (Erba, 1979:409-410; Catarinella, Salsotto, 1998; *Vita e cultura* 1967; Berra, 1928; Vidari, 1928). The decision of Duke Carlo Emanuele I to build the temple of Vico is linked to a precise dynastic project. The duke's will, drafted in 1598, is emblematic: a pantheon sanctuary will celebrate the Savoy lineage (Rosso, 1999). The document underlines that the construction site was not yet completed, but in progress, under the direction of the architect Ascanio Vitozzi, on the basis of projects he developed between 1596 and 1597.

The burial place was already decided: when the Marquis of Este travelled to Spain to define the details for the funeral rites of Catherine of Savoy, he declared that the funeral was to take place in Turin Cathedral and her remains were to be transferred to the chapel of Vico, in compliance with the will of the Duchess herself, who had been closely connected with the church, and often played a primary role in the decisions involving the sanctuary (Carboneri, 1966; Scotti, 1969; Griseri, 1983).

Thus, the vicissitudes of Vico's sanctuary, whose design history is long and complex, are rooted in the court's culture, in the marriage of the Caterina of Savoy and in the dynastic need to create a monumental sepulcher (Castiglioni, 2000; Mamino, 2000). The whole project, which began with a simple deacon, was then taken over by the bishop of Mondovi, and grew in importance to become a Ducal political project, a strong sign of power in a territory which had been recently acquired and did not always yield towards the court of Turin (Cozzo, 2002). The site of Vico as a burial place began to acquire importance. Until that time, other ancient sites in the Savoy Duchy, such as Hautecombe, had been more prestigious. The erection of the sanctuary-pantheon in Vico rose as a symbol of

**Figure 2. The Sanctuary of Vicoforte in the Iconography of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae*, vol. II, f.39 (1682).**



Blaeu, Joan, *Theatrum statuum regiae celsitudinis Sabaudiae ducis*, [...], apud heredes Ioannis Bleu, Amstelodami 1682.

the conquest of Mondovì, thus, strengthening the new supremacy of a territory ‘on this side of the Alps’, while in Savoy the political investments were beginning to wane.

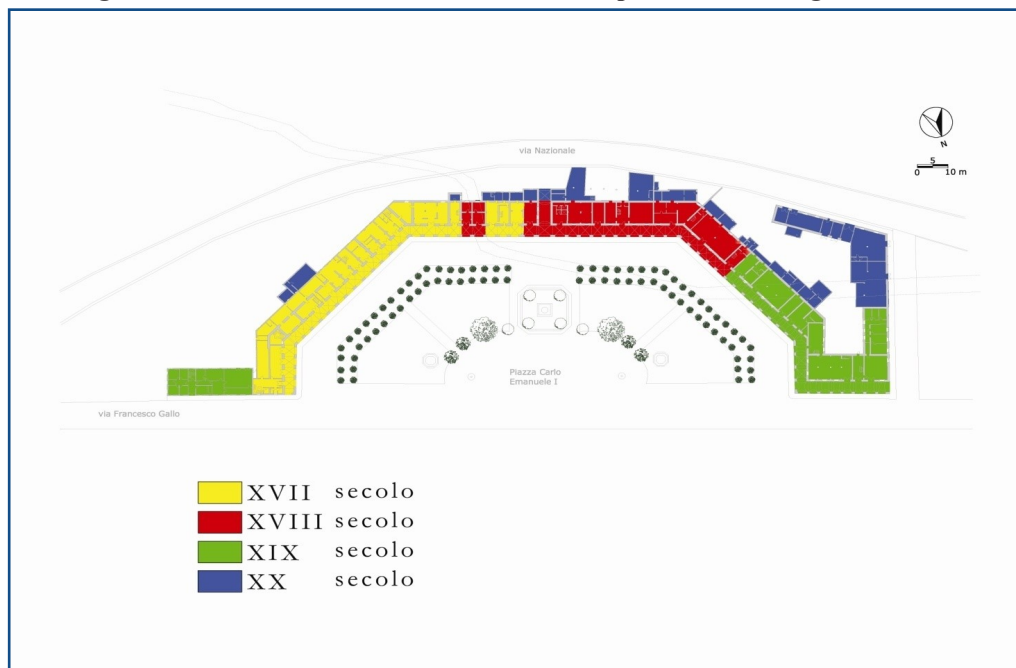
The historiography of the sanctuary of Vico, which was documented from the time of Carlo Emanuele I, insists on the duke’s manifest intention to enrich the erection site of Vico’s Temple with the structures and services required for the sustenance of the numerous pilgrims who were visiting the place of the apparition of the Madonna (Vacchetta, 1984) (Figure 2). Already in May 1597 Carlo Emanuele I appointed Vitozzi to study the arrangement of the building in front of the sanctuary, which was to be designed as a ‘beautiful and regular’ construction, provided with archways so that it ‘would surround a large circular square’, to be allocated as tavern and hospital (Cornaglia, 2004). The will of the duke to build a *Hospice* for pilgrims had been clear since 1595, but only through the three projects by Vitozzi an architectural shape for the complex was devised (National Library of Turin, *Manoscritti e rari, raccolta Tesauro*, RIS 59.24, f.28-33). In the final project, the square around the church was a lengthened octagon, partially in conflict with the

ography of the site where the monastery would have been built. A further design by Vitozzi better defined the internal spaces of the *Palazzata* in front of the church; the whole prospect is shown as porticoed with the openings of shops at the ground floor; there is an interruption corresponding to the entrance to the church, where the project included the implementation of two closed wings at the ground floor level, opening into a large passageway which gives access to the sanctuary complex. The yard which would have completed the square in front was long and difficult, and would have been concluded only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the erection of the last west wing.

The *Palazzata* was built, in front of the church’s façade in 1597, starting from the east end, on land donated by the municipality of Mondovì. The brickworks building with stone pillars had a regular form (Beltramo, 2008). The first part to be built was an inn, followed by the *Hospice* and the *Penitenzieria*.

In 1601 the erection of the central body of the *Palazzata*, a three-arcade sector allocated to host the duke and his court, began (State Archive of Turin (ASTo), *Luoghi pii di qua dai monti*, mazzo 24,

**Figure 3. The *Palazzata* of Vicoforte - historical phases of building construction**



(by the author).

*Memoria di quello ch'si ordinato alli deputati . . .*, sd). The duke's intent was to plan the whole space around the church according to his indications, evidence of which is reported in the official documents: it was decreed that no houses could be built which were not in compliance with the designs.

The shops, which were devised by Vitozzi and are still utilized today, would be defined following the timing of the long protracted construction site. The documentation found in the Sanctuary archives provides evidence of the articulated stages of implementation, with particular reference to the *Hospice* for the pilgrims and the tavern. Several deeds from 1599 to 1603 exist, following the erection site of the pilgrims' tavern: in 1599, the building was completed up to the first floor, whilst the erection of the stairways and vaults dates to 1601. The service spaces and the stables were completed in 1602. A deed dated February 28<sup>th</sup> 1604 recalls the areas which organized the tavern:

*last year, improvements were made in the Tavern by the erection - by Master Alberto Vignola, head of the builders, in compliance with Vitozzi's design - of the kitchen with stove, separate stairway from the hospital, oven and shops (Sanctuary Archive of Mondovì (ASMo), Nota dei patti intercorsi tra Mastro Alberto Vignola . . . C/23 e Attestazione di Mastro Alberto Vignola capomastro . . . , O/20, 28 febbraio 1604).*

In May 1599, the duke granted tax exemption to the tavern and - in a later document - ordered private citizens to open taverns and shops outside the fencing of the square and pay an amount which should be used for the construction of the complex (Vacchetta, 1984: 322) (Figure 3).

The yard for the *Hospedale del SS. Sudario* (Hospital of the Holy Shroud) was active within the same period of time, i.e. between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The design was by Vitozzi, under the supervision of Vignola himself, who - in 1599 - stated he had completed the building up to the first floor whilst - in 1601 - the covers and vaults were built. The *Pio Istituto d'Orfani* was built beside the *Hospedale*, between 1601 and 1603, by the will of marquis Alberto di Ceva, whilst the *Penitenzieria* (or Casa Cordero) was pursued in the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century for a length four arcades. Casa Cordero, completed in 1751, and the duke's house, were divided by the stream Ermena, flowing between the two buildings, which were separated from each other by the length of two porticoed arcades. On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1603, it is reported that the construction of the duke's palace was pursuing with the erection of the:

*pillars, arcades and bridge and the stream has been straightened so that shops will be made under the bridge and a corridor - or whatever will please your Highness - will be built over it (ASMo, Attestazione di Mastro Alberto Vignola capomastro [...], O/20).*

Figure 4. The sanctuary and the Sacro Monte of Oropa



in The Iconography of the Theatrum Sabaudiae, vol. II, f.39 (1682).

The will of defining a space for the hospitality of the pilgrims and organize it so that a control could be exerted on all the activities involved, is stressed in the *Memoriale per servizio della fabrica della chiesa, Monastero et hospitale alla Madonna di Vico*, where - apart from the indication of erecting a tavern besides the *Hospedale* for the pilgrims - it is underlined that it is mandatory to use the spaces around the sanctuary for the development of other shops and taverns, leaving clear the circus in front (ASTo, *Luoghi pii di qua dai monti*, mazzo 24, *Memoriale per servizio della fabrica della chiesa* [...], 1599).

Carlo Emanuele I's determination in pursuing the construction in the *Palazzata* area is proven by several provisions, amongst which it is worth mentioning the one dated April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1601, which ordered that

*among the other things, the monastery, a Penitenzieria, a palace for our lodging and one for their Majesties the Princes and a hospital for the service of the poor, and a free tavern for the comfort of the comers; . . . they are allowed to build an apothecary, taverns and shops for food, candles, rosary crowns, medals, images*

*and the like . . .* (ASTo, *Luoghi pii di qua dai monti*, mazzo 24, *Essentione per l'Hospitale e Hostaria* . . . , 1610).

The duke was encouraging new trading settlements through the exemption from taxes. The market activities planned by the duke spread around the sacred space: religious furnishings, sacred silverware and jewels, devotional objects, as well as the physical and moral sustenance of the pilgrims, were a remunerative business for merchants and for the Sanctuary itself, which was benefiting financially from the offerings related to the arrangement of the stands.

The activity of providing food to the pilgrims was particularly florid during the yearly festivities, when the sole tavern opened in the *Palazzata* was not sufficient. Another tavern, defined as *ordinary*, was implemented in 1628 (ASMo, *Rescritti civili per il santuario*, B/23). The Jubilees, the Nativity of the Virgin Mary and Madonna di Vico's day were events attracting crowds of pilgrims. After numerous discussions with the inhabitants of Vico, the monks asked the duke to forbid the setting up of restoration huts or *small extraordinary taverns* in the sanctuary

during such holidays and that no gambling would be allowed or that *people suspected of a life of crime* could be hosted in the taverns. Furthermore, it was forbidden to sell *any sort of thing* in front of the main gate of the church or to take animals inside the fencing (Comino, 1983). In 1752 Cordero di Pamparato, general procurer of the *Congregazione della Fabrica*, asked the king for permission to elect a person who would take responsibility for defining the location of the merchants and of their stands, as well as the prices to be applied in the taverns.

### **La fabrica de' Disciplini and buildings for pilgrims in the sanctuary of Oropa**

Attention to the local forms of worshipping always played a major role in the religious policies of Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy. In the cases of Graglia and Oropa, in the mountains surrounding Biella, such interest took different dynamic shapes in comparison with Vicoforte (Dell'Oro, 1983). The formation and development process is similar to that of the Madonna di Vico, even though - in this case - the local component continued to play a significant role beside the duke's one. The significant connotation as an area of pilgrimage played by Oropa since the late Middle Ages received a remarkable impulse during the Counter-Reformation, thanks to the action played by the civil and religious community of the neighboring town of Biella (Figure 5). During the plague of 1599, the population of Biella decided to make a vow to the statue of the Black Madonna with Child in Oropa. Bishop Ferrero of Vercelli, close to Federico Borromeo, convinced the community to link the vow to the erection of a new church. The reconstruction of the

church was associated with the definition of the new Sacred Mount, of the tavern buildings and of the house of the *Disciplini* within the fencing (see Figure 6).

The increment of pilgrims to Oropa recorded between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the following century, deeply influenced the decision to extend the religious nucleus of the Middle Ages. The hospitality offered to the *viatores* coming from the neighboring areas, the dioceses of Vercelli, Ivrea, Novara, and also from Milan and Aosta, had been the main mission since the beginning of the history of the sanctuary.

The availability of a consistent number of rooms then became a contingent need for the complex. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the opportunities to host pilgrims in Oropa was limited to the '*domus sancte Marie et eius porticus*', but - already in 1507 - Sebastiano Ferrero, member of one of the most prestigious families in Biella, promoted the building of a two-story house with kitchen at floor level, to host the pilgrims (Lebole, 1998). Besides *Casa Ferrero* (see Figure 7), the pilgrims could use other small rooms made available by the noble families of Biella when they were not using them themselves. The accommodations were very simple and comprised only a few rooms: the one of Messer Maffiotto consisted of a space to be used as a cellar for wine and wood, a heated room, a service space and an inhabitable room, with the image of Saint Francis painted on the door, to distinguish it from the other housing facilities of the area (*Acta Reginae Montis Oropae* (ARMO), Tomo III, Biella 1999, II, doc. 35, col. 197; II, doc. 49, col. 244). The new building for the pilgrims, introduced into the area a

**Figure 5 : Oropa - The Sacro Monte and the Sanctuary of Oropa in the Mid-seventeenth Century**



*Historia della Madonna Santissima d'Oropa ne' monti della città di Biella nel Piemonte dedicata a S.A.R. Anna Bourbon d'Orleans duchessa di Savoia, Biella 1684.*

**Figure 6 : Oropa, The Ancient Church and the First Courtyard**



Source : Author

**Figure 7 : Oropa. Casa Ferrero (XVI Century)**

Source : Author

new form of hospitality, housing for farmers and the stable - a *caminata* and *bottega*, were completed between 1580 and 1585 (ARMO, II, doc. 49, col. 242, col. 244, doc. 69, coll. 313-15, doc. 91, col. 404, doc. 101, col. 434, doc. 131, col. 550) (see Figure 6).

In 1621, Bassiano Gatti described the complex of Oropa, with its new buildings, as it should have appeared to the numerous pilgrims who went to Oropa for the first Coronation of the Madonna in 1620:

*Around the square, you can admire some comfortable houses built by private noblemen of Biella which – when they do not use them - are made available to host People of Rank. Moreover, the Disciplinanti di Biella built a wide Hospitio, to be used to rest and restore, and also as a shelter for the strangers (Gatti, 1970).*

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Oropa recorded the processions of some brotherhoods of Biella, which - throughout time - became more regular and repeated, according to an accurate calendar. The great participation of brothers led to the erection of a building to host them, beside the church, which thus, defined the first wing of the large cloister and that can be identified with certitude as the one which articulates in the double arcade on the left-hand side of the church, thanks to a document dated to 1628, relevant to the demolition of the *Roc*, where the religious building and the wing of the *Disciplinanti* were built (Archivio Santuario Oropa (ASO), *Libro degli Ordinati*, 17 giugno 1628).

In May 1609, the complex of *Disciplini* also featured a tavern, run by Giacomo Mestiatis, before the establishment of a purposely-allocated building, started in 1619 and completed 1623. The double order arcade was ended in 1618, as evidenced by the legacy of Nicola Viono, drafted in Oropa, in the Galleria '*de Disciplinanti*' (Biella Municipal Historical Archive (ASCB), *Insinuazione Biella*, vol. 14, ff. 34v-38r, in ARMO, III, doc. 181, col. 591).

The consistently increasing flow of pilgrims, which occurred during the Coronation in 1620, called for the opening of a new tavern within the fencing, which - in the 17<sup>th</sup> century - was committed to laymen external to the sanctuary. Similarly to the case of Vicoforte, on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1607 the Duke of Savoy, Carlo Emanuele I, was requested to grant tax exemption to the tavern of Oropa (ARMO, III, doc. 71, col. 226). The plea clearly depicts the status of the hospitality of the pilgrims and the planned organization: it reports that

*there are some rooms and housing facilities to accommodate the pilgrims, but since not all of them can receive food as they are some 7 miles far from Biella, someone should establish a tavern to sustain the poor (ASCB, *Insinuazione Biella*, vol. 14, ff. 34v-38r, in ARMO, III, doc. 181, col. 591).*

On March 26<sup>th</sup> 1607, the town council of Biella decided to exonerate the tavern of Oropa from the payment of duties (ASCB, *Ordinati comunali*, 6 maggio 1609, doc. 86, col. 255 e *Insinuazione Biella*, vol. 14, ff. 34v-38r, in ARMO, III, doc. 181, col. 591).

Once the management issues were solved, there was still the need to enhance the spaces used for restoration. It was then decided to proceed with the building of new spaces next to the *fabrica dei disciplini*. The construction site was committed to builders from Lugano who were concomitantly attending the erection of the church, in particular to Giovanni Troni and Pietro Somazzi, whilst the stone decorations of both the doors and the windows were committed to masters Francesco Aprile and Alberto Solaris. Procurement of material for the building of the taverns, the stable and other places, according to the defined design, is reported between 1621 and 1622 (ASO, *Libro degli Ordinati (1614-1629)*, 10 novembre 1621). The site was concluded in 1623 and the premises were committed to Pietro Cuzza for three years (ASO, *Libro degli Ordinati (1665-1669)*, 26 gennaio 1667) (see Figure 7).



The tavern wing, built in the block perpendicular to the church, in front of the current entry of the sanctuary, is shown in the views of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the two votive paintings of the processions held by the communities of Perloz and Lilliane in 1685 and Fontanamora in 1684 (Figure 8), the prospect of the structure is similar to the current one (Galliano, 2003). The arcade of the first level is divided into niches between the wall septum which supports the arches. The upper floor, of lower height, is scanned by pillars. The arrangement of the space in front appears to be different: currently, an embankment facilitates the overcoming of the remarkable difference in height between the center of the fencing, the parvis of the church and the gallery floor of the tavern, while, in the original arrangement, a stairway located next to the first arcades towards the north allowed reaching the floor, beside a ramp close to the passage which still exists. The remarkable size of the wing is reported also in the historical descriptions: in 1621, Bassiano Gatti could see the site in progress and described it as a 'comfortable tavern, where hundreds of people can be accommodated' (Gatti, 1999: 45).

Beginning from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the administration of the sanctuary defined the activities of the innkeepers in Oropa. The rules were almost unchanged throughout

the centuries and concerned also the behaviour which the innkeeper should observe towards the pilgrims and the way pilgrims behave during their stay at the tavern.

### Tirano and the Palace of Saint Michael

The mountain sanctuary of Tirano in Valtellina represents a meaningful case because of the importance attained by a religious space, which conjugates and receives in its spaces a set of structures related to the hospitality of the pilgrims (Xeres, 2005; Cannobbio, 2005). Its strategic position, at the center of the Alps, in an area which can be easily reached from the Grigioni (Switzerland) through the Bernina pass, from Milan and Lombardy, as well as from Trentino and Tirol, has always made of it - since its origins - a place of trading traffic, so that since 1514 the fair of Saint Michael has been held on the very day of the Saint's holiday. Moreover, the popularity of the miracles ascribed to the Madonna di Tirano made it a significant point of call (see Figure 9).

On May 14<sup>th</sup> 1528, Cesare Trivulzio, bishop of Como, went to Tirano on a pastoral visit and consecrated the oratory of *Santa Maria de Nive*, dedicating the main altar to the Virgin of the Graces and granting indulgence to all those who visited the church (Bormetti and Casciaro, 1996). Since the first

**Figure 8 : Oropa - The Tavern and the Buildings of the Disciplines Represented During the Procession of the Communities of Perlo and Lilliane (1685).**



Voting picture. Museum of the Sanctuary of Oropa.

**Figure 9 : The Madonna di Tirano?**

Fresco on the left aisle inside the church. Apparizione (1513). Source: Xeres, 2005

acknowledgement by the bishop in 1504, the temple had been stimulating intensive devotional practices outside the valleys, arousing the generosity of the devotees and obtaining acknowledgement from the authorities of Christianity. The building of the *oratorium* dedicated to the Blessed Virgin of Tirano - started in the spring of 1505 - corresponded to a stage of remarkable expansion of the settlement and economic structures of Tirano. As a result of the strong attraction exerted from the 13<sup>th</sup> century on both the local population and the ones of the bordering alpine regions, the neighbourhood was the most populated centre of the medium and high valley. Its geographic position - besides consolidating the position as a crossroad for the transit of goods and people - was the fulcrum of the defense system designed by the Sforza against the Grigioni (Scaramellini, 2000).

The square around the sanctuary soon became the area selected for trading activities and for the hospitality of the numerous pilgrims coming from the whole Alps. The palace called of Saint Michael - originally *hostaria granda*, a place for the rest of the merchants, travelers and pilgrims who were passing along this section of the

Alps - began to be erected on the space in front of the sanctuary, at the same time as the church site. The construction was already at an advanced stage in the first decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: the columns which circumscribed the archway were erected in 1513 and then the activities accelerated as a result of the concession to hold the fair on the church yard. The goods used in the tavern and offered to its customers soon became significant, and also a remarkable source of revenue (Zoia, 1996) (Figure 10).

Tirano is reported to have been an area of hospitality for travelers since the Middle Ages, i.e. before the building of the sanctuary, because of the presence of the *xenodochii* of San Remigio and Santa Perpetua as well as the *ospitale* of Santa Maria for the poor (Pedrotti, 1957; Masa, 1996).

The sanctuary yard was progressively completed with the implementation of shop wings, which were served the flow of people during the fairs and pilgrimages. The ones on the south side, beginning from the Rector's house, were completed first and then they extended to the east and north sides, and also - only partially - on the west one. Provisional wooden *casotti* (huts) were erected beyond the stream of the river, on the occasion of the fairs. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>

**Figure 10 : Tirano**Antonio Caimi, *La fiera di Tirano*, oil on canvas, 1860, Milano, collection Luigi Caccia Dominioni, in Xeres S (2005), p. 193.

Figure 11 : Tirano. Facade of the Church.



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1379971>

century, 22 shops could be counted along the *corso maggior* (main alley), 13 of them along the east side, seven huts along the north and 10 along the south. The records show continuity in the families which managed the trade shops; prevalently of local origin, with some German, French and Venetian presence (Cannobbio, 2005:67-73) (Figure 11).

### ***Locande Hosterie and Hospitalia in the Sanctuary of Loreto***

The Holy House of Loreto is one of the most interesting cases for the study of the themes linked to pilgrim hospitality, because of the significance attained by the sanctuary as a centre of pilgrimage between Northern and Southern Europe (Figure 13). Furthermore, the remarkable richness of documentary sources kept in sanctuary archives is still today a remarkable opportunity for study and knowledge (Sensi, 1994; da Monterado, 1979; Citterio and Vaccaro 1997; Grimaldi, 2001).

The first information on the church of *Santa Maria de Laureto* is reported in a document dated 1315 which

witnesses the level of devotion reached and the steady frequentation by different types of people, even some who were not animated by most noble purposes. The document reports the trial of some *tirannes loci* accused of stealing the alms, the church candles, the lamps, the donations and the votive images which adorned the icon of the Virgin with Child (Vogel, 1859). Evidence of a first urban settlement born around the church dates back to 1336, when *villa Laureti* is mentioned, and then - from 1361 - *villa Sancte Marie de Laureto* (Historical Archive of Casa Loreto (ASCL), *Miscellanea Vogel*, X, c.9; VII, c.72; Theiner, 1862). The church soon became the worshipping centre of the Madonna for the diocese and community of Recanati, as it seems to be ascertained by the visits of the bishop and religious authorities in 1369 and - a few months later - visits of the *podestà* and priors of the city (Leopardi, 1945). In the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, mainly as a result of the granting of indulgences to the worshippers by Pope Gregory XI, in 1375, and by Urban VI in 1389, the origin of the worshippers stretched beyond the local borders of the March (Benedettucci, 1916). The worshipping of Loreto received a special boost in the last years of the century, when central Italy was invested by the penitential processions of the *Bianchi*, which made the church of Santa Maria the main sanctuary *contra pestem* of the medium Adriatic area (Sensi, 1987; Sensi, 1990). Since then, the fame of the thaumaturgy power of the Virgin of Loreto grew; she was the one addressed by both individual devotees and entire communities; even whole towns put themselves under her protection, throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the hope of being preserved from the plague (Grimaldi, 1987).

The growth of the devotional flow determined the birth - within the core of the villa - of different building structures to the service of the church and to pilgrims. A series of *loggie* next to the church and the housing facilities of the presbyteries had been used by pilgrims and by *merciarii* since the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A first *hospitale*, i.e. a *hospice* for poor pilgrims, was built at the beginning of the following century, and a second one was completed in 1468; in 1485, the brotherhood of San Giacomo arranged for the building of the large hospice (Historical Archive City Recanati (ACR), *Annali*, vol. 39, c.36, 25 aprile 1465 e vol. 59, cc.35-36, 26 aprile 1485). The need for new systems for the supply of water determined the implementation of new wells and reservoirs and these activities are documented in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century (ACR, *Annali*, vol.3, c.98, 18 maggio 1423; ASCL, *Miscellanea Vogel*, X, c.18, 11 aprile 1450; Grimaldi

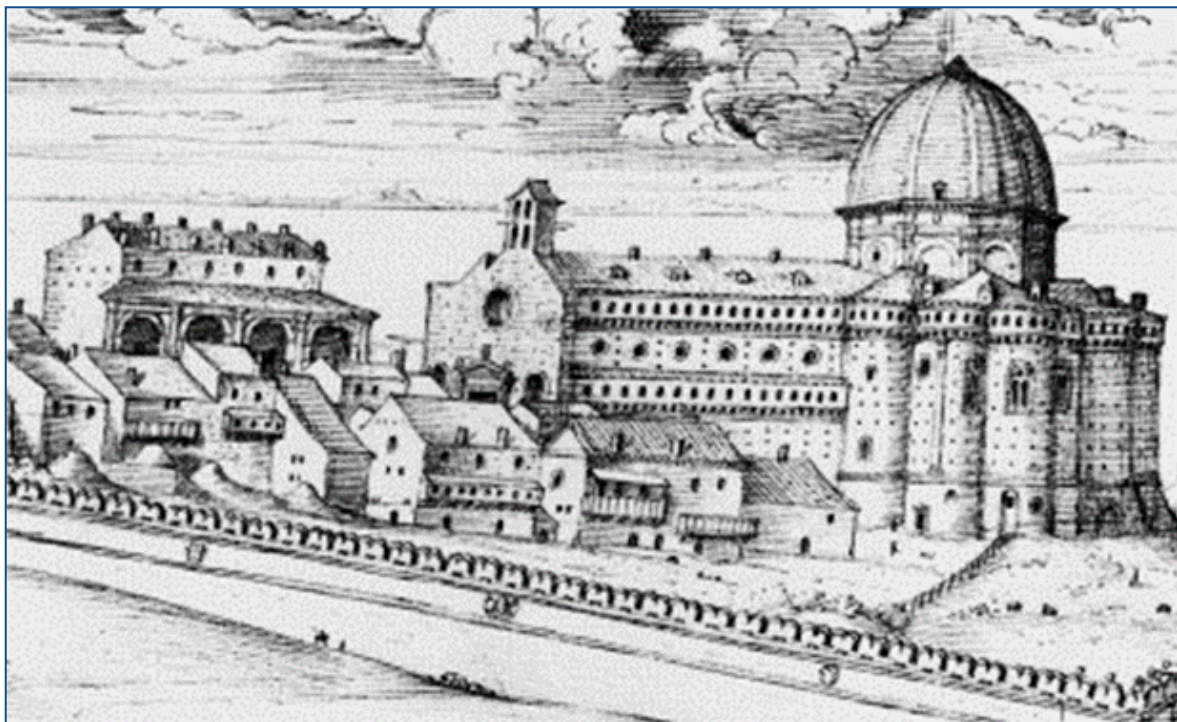
and Sordi, 1990). In addition, private citizens contributed to building works allocated to trading and to hospitality, which were then rented to *mercariii* and *hospitatores* (Grimaldi, 1984). The new houses were built at the edges of the road that led to the devotional centre running along the ridge of the hill of Monte Prodo. The very urban pattern was modeled in compliance with the flow of devotees: houses and shops, hotels and inns were set in a row and aligned along the ancient road which led to the basilica; behind this road, called *via dei coronari*, a second road, essentially allocated as a service structure, opened from the 15<sup>th</sup> century (*La città murata*, 1979). When, in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the dimensions of the settlement were too small to support the mass of pilgrims and a fast growing population, Pope Sixtus V widened the borders of the villa in the South-West direction, towards Monte Reale, dictating all the communities of the Marche to build up their own building in the area called ‘*addizione sistina*’ (Bruschi, 1997; Grimaldi, 1997).

In 1586, Pope Sixtus V granted Loreto the title of *civitas*, promoting the church to cathedral and making it independent from Recanati (Sensi, 1997; Zenobi, 1994; G.L. Masetti Zannini, 1997). The town-sanctuary of Loreto tended to overlap the Holy House, living in

strict correlation with the history and economy of the religious centre (Duprè Theseider, 1959; Moroni, 2000). These new transformations of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were linked to a continuous demographic increase, whose peak was reached in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see Figure 12).

A little after the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, the persistent increase of the devotional flow led the bishop of Recanati, Nicolò Delle Aste, to devise the construction of a large temple, encouraged by Paul II, who decided to invest, taking responsibility for the building of the new church. The legend related to the foundation of the Holy House materialised at the same time as the erection of the new church. The pope invited the devotees to cooperate generously to the pursuit of the works, since the chapel was then defined as *miracolose fundata*, with reference to the foundation in only one day as a result of the participation of the whole community. Resuming the tradition of Loreto’s iconography, where the Virgin is always surrounded by angels, the pope added that the image of the Madonna was located in Loreto thanks to a flight of angels (Grimaldi, 1984). The first document which reports the identification of the church of Santa Maria as the house which was inhabited by the Madonna in Nazareth and then miraculously transported by angels to the hill of

**Figure 12 : View of Loreto, detail with the facade of the unfinished Apostolic Palace and the Basilica.**



Francisco de Hollanda, 1539. Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional, Antigualhas, f. 15, in Borsi, Bramante, p. 321.

Figure 13. View of the sanctuary of Santa Maria di Loreto



Source : <http://www.viaggispirituali.it>

Loreto is the report by Pietro di Giorgio Tolomei, called *il Teramano*, written in the same years as the works for the erection of the sanctuary began, i.e. around 1470 (Cracco, 1997).

The most ancient structures of the sanctuary in support to the pilgrims reported in the archive documents, date back to the last thirty years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The text of a trial sentence issued on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1372 against a certain Antonio di Coraduccio da Montesanto allows the identification of *loggie* next or adjacent to the church, against the external walls of the church itself or in the immediate proximity of it. Some evidence, mainly drawn from the so-called '*riformanze*' of the municipality of Recanati, allow the evolution of the buildings erected around the church of Santa Maria and the construction of new *loggie* and '*transanne*' to meet the increased requirements of the pilgrims.

In 1426, Andrea di Giacomo di Atri, governor of the Holy House, requested the municipality of Recanati to allow the free transport of tiles and bricks which had been purchased for the construction and a portion of land the *loggia* had to be erected on. In 1439, the *loggia* was extended up to the *ospitale* (Grimaldi, 1984). The building of these spaces generated a fenced area neighbouring the church and the square (ACR, 18, *Annales*, cc. 2-3, 12 novembre 1441). A few years

later, in 1445, in the interest of providing the pilgrims with the best possible hospitality, Andrea di Giacomo requested the municipality to provide another license to build a new *loggia* which would have connected the stables of the church to the town hall. While granting the permit, the Council reserved part of the property and demanded that no shops or other trading activities were ever opened by either private citizens or church authorities (Grimaldi, Sordi, 1990). The archaeological excavations highlighted some foundations of wall structures with an average thickness of 60 to 70 centimetres, oriented towards the ancient road which led to the chapel. The two almost parallel walls, of a length of 16 and 19 meters respectively, seem to outline the structure of the *loggie* built during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A fenced area - which was perhaps used as a stable - was developing southwards (Grimaldi, 1986).

Starting from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, the brotherhoods of Santa Lucia (1467) and San Giacomo, and then the one of the Schiavoni, built hospices for the pilgrims. Also led by economic motives, private citizens started to build inns and taverns, aimed at the pilgrims and travellers who could personally cater for their own board and lodging.

The existences of these services added to the numerous bishops and cardinals, dukes, marquis and sovereigns of many small Italian and European States, who

generated no negligible issues for the management of their stay. The public authorities had to guarantee and bear the accommodation expenses of the high-rank aristocrats and clergymen. In order to deal with the numerous requests, a small municipality palace was built between 1437 and 1441 so that - besides its being used to serve the community as a gathering point and residence for the major and the captain - it could also host the illustrious visitors to the holy chapel (Grimaldi, Sordi, 1990).

A mixed religious-private hospitality service must have already been built in the first decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, since the records show that personalities with a large retinue had gone on pilgrimage to Loreto. On January 6<sup>th</sup> 1424, Gentile Pandolfo da Varano visited the Holy House with a party of 60 people, whilst - in 1432 - the records mention the *officiales* of the Macerata community with their respective wives (ASCL, *Miscellanea Vogel*, vol. X, c. 15; Leopardi, 1945: 155). In April 1437, Alessandro Sforza, prince of Pesaro, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, prince of Rimini and Nicola III d'Este were in Loreto with a retinue of 400 horses (ACR, 18, *Annales*, c.11). On December 10<sup>th</sup> 1442, Sigismondo Malatesta was in Loreto with his wife Polissena Sforza and 160 knights (ASCL, *Miscellanea Vogel*, vol. X, c. 18). In 1443, the sanctuary recorded the presence - in May - of Alfonso V the Magnanimous, king of Aragon, and of Ramòn de Cardona, his viceroy, at the end of the fast action which liberated the Marca di Ancona by Francesco Sforza (ASCL, *Miscellanea Vogel*, vol. X, c. 18; ACR, 18, *Annales*, c.11). In June and September 1449, a crowd of clergymen and servants accompanied Nicholas V to Santa Maria di Loreto (*Cronaca Malatestiana*, in *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*, XV, parte 2, pp. 130-131; ASCL, *Miscellanea Vogel*, vol. X, c. 19). When crowned as emperor in Rome, Frederick III stopped in Loreto on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1452 with an extensive retinue established for the occasion (Gianfranceschi, 1954).

Towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Girolamo Basso Della Rovere, bishop of Recanati, decided to establish a new parsonage, which was called Palazzo Maggiore and then also Palazzo Apostolico (Borsi, 1989; Renzulli, 2004; Grimaldi, 1977). The opening of the site for the new religious building of the church in the second half of the century involved the demolition of the old *loggie* the pilgrims were using as a resting place while waiting to go and worship the Virgin; new environments then needed to be defined as appropriate to the renewed space and architectural language. The

increased number of laymen, who were attending to the complex organisation of the house, and the clergymen, as well as the diocesan priests and friars present in the sanctuary, determined an urgent need to radically review the spaces of hospitality.

Julius II invited the architect Bramante to Loreto with the task of 'doing great things' to honour Virgin Mary; the architect also dealt with the general layout of the Palazzo Maggiore (Figure 12), designing a building which could cover the functions of sanctuary, fortress, hospice and housing facility (Bruschi, 1997).

As soon as some rooms of the new Palazzo Maggiore were ready, the governors of the Holy House started to grant free hospitality to cardinals and bishops, so much that in 1514, Leo X felt he needed to intervene and limit the habit (ASCL, *Bollario Lauretano*, c.72).

The apostolic visit by Marcello Pignatelli in 1620 (ASCL, *Relazione della Santa Casa*, 1620) dictated the rules of hospitality within the villa of the sanctuary in Palazzo Apostolico, as well as in the common taverns of Loreto, reviewing some of the most widely spread habits: the cardinals were hosted free of charge - with appropriate differences between a principal cardinal and an ordinary one - as well as the princes, the papal nuncios, the governors of the Marca provinces, the ambassadors and the knights of rank. Some of them thanked their hosts for the hospitality they received in the palace leaving remarkable amounts in alms. The governor of the Holy House received the guests in the Prince Quarters, also called *Foresteria*, in the North-West corner of the Palace, which consisted of several rooms located in the wings of the building at either the noble floor or at the mezzanine one.

Taverns and inns had been opened by private citizens in the villa of Loreto since the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in order to deal with the growing demand for board and lodging facilities by both pilgrims and travellers. Within the same period of time, the municipality of Recanati had to issue regulations so that the guests would not have been overcharged, and established new duties and taxes as a source of revenue for the municipality. Hospitality to the poorest was ensured by the structures of the brotherhoods of Santa Lucia and San Giacomo, as well in a tavern opened by the rector of the Sanctuary, who would have liked to manage it without having to pay taxes, in order not to burden the pilgrims of the lowest rank. The priors of Recanati appealed to cardinal Girolamo Basso Della Rovere to have the activity withheld and the tavern closed (Grimaldi and Sordi, 1990).

Beginning from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the notary deeds report the names of the hosts and innkeepers; they came from Italy as well as from the eastern shore of the Adriatic sea. The first innkeeper to be documented was Giovanni del Regno, in September 1448 (Grimaldi, 2001). The inventory also recorded the internal furnishing of the taverns: in the case of Alessio Borella, his place consisted of only one room, where several beds were arranged and even used by more than one person a time. His hostel included 29 beds with blankets, bed sheets and pillows; on the occasions of special crowding, the guests could also be accommodated on *pagliericci* directly set on the floor. The customers who could afford more were offered a better accommodation, in rooms with floors covered by carpets, and furniture such as a ‘banco da scrivere’ (desk), various cupboards and shelves for their clothes, or even in beds provided with a ‘sopracielo’ (canopy) and the heads decorated with the arms of the owner, softer mattresses and luxurious blankets. Meals were offered to the guests sitting on benches in the kitchen, where the food was arranged in plates, chopping boards and bowls on a ‘tavolone per apparecchiare’ (dining table) (*Inventario dei beni di Alessio Borella, [...]*, ASCL, Confraternita Sacramento, *Pergamene*, 1542 agosto 28).

The tidiness and cleanness of the areas seems to have been the major issue the customers had to deal with during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1581, Miquel Eyquem de Montaigne underlined

*there are almost no other inhabitants than the ones who are needed for the different services in this area of pilgrimage, with many innkeepers, but the taverns are very bad* (Eyquem de Montaigne, 1972: 228).

Several directions issued by the pope and numerous notifications regulated throughout time, record the activities of the taverns and inns besides the accommodation of the pilgrims. Starting from the times of Julius II, the pilgrims and those who managed the activities linked to their hospitality were allowed to reach Loreto without paying any duties or taxes for wine, bread and whatever else was required for their stay, and the communities who did not comply with such directions were severely sanctioned (ASCL, *Istromenti* 3, 1511-1538, c. 154; cc. 173-175; *Pergamene* 119; 129; 130; 135).

The inns and taverns needed to be kept neat and tidy, and frequently white-washed to remove any writings or drawings left on the walls by the customers. They could not carry a sacred image as a banner. The

innkeepers had to communicate the beds they had available and - every night to deliver the list of the guests in order to identify the strangers so that suspected or undesired people could be checked. Before hosting them, the innkeepers were due to request from them their *fede* which they received at the starting point of their pilgrimage and - in the periods of plague - also a health report. Monsignor Pignatelli’s report also establishes that the hosting of courtesans was forbidden in the taverns as was gambling of dice in rooms and in taverns (ASCL, *Relazione della Santa Casa*, 1620, c.3). The pilgrims had to be treated well, not defrauded when paying their bill, which should be prepared in compliance with the prices indicated in tables placed on public view. The price list was often established in detail for eating either ‘a conto’, i.e. on order, or ‘a pasto’, i.e. according to the list of the daily courses. The transport of strangers from one place to another was regulated as well. The inn and shopkeepers were forbidden to go to the streets and take the strangers by their cloaks or clothing to lead them to their shop. For greater security and quietness, the innkeepers had to take immediate custody of their guests’ luggage to prevent theft (ASCL, *Relazione della Santa Casa*, 1620, cc. 157-158).

In spite of the aforementioned decrees, the issue of tidiness and - in general - good hospitality of the customers seem to characterise an issue throughout all the centuries of the Modern Age: in numerous travel reports, the guests complain about the treatment they received in Loreto’s inns and taverns. About her journey to Loreto in 1771, the English poetess Anna Riggs Miller wrote:

*the tavern we have been hosted is ordinary and dirty. We have been served on the filthiest pewter plates I have ever seen and given greasy cutlery. The dinner consisted of stale fish soaked in sauce and garlic, with cabbage as vegetables. It was so sickening that we caught up with some bread and cheese* (Brilli, 1997).

Johann Caspar Goethe was luckier and about his visit to Loreto in 1740, he wrote:

*I was in the house of Mr. Bartolomeo Cleri, merchant of rosary crowns, at the Banner of Coral, with well fitted rooms to lodge. I lost here my disgust for food prepared in oil, while eating some fishes without noticing it. And we can say - amongst other things - on the grounds of the magnificent meal and tidiness of the rooms, that Loreto is one of the main and most lively places of catholic Christianity’* (Brilli, 1997: 79).

**Figure 14. Today's Tourists: Modern Pilgrims (Oropa)**

Source : Author

### Conclusion

These various case studies provide a fascinating insight into the various political influences on the construction and evolution of religious sites in this area of Italy; they demonstrate the blending of religious, administrative and financial motives for the promotion of pilgrimage, and the management of hospitality services. As suggested by the likes of O'Gorman (2010) the origins of modern hospitality are rooted in antiquity, so also are many of the practices and activities of pilgrimage. With appropriate investigation of archival sources the motives and process of site development can be understood more fully, leading to a deeper appreciation of these wonderful heritage sites of pilgrimage and culture.

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