

# The ‘unequaled artist and architect Senior Anthonio, il maltese’, pioneer of Renaissance architecture and military engineering in Europe

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**Abstract:** In the 1530s and 1540s the Maltese architect and military engineer Antonio (‘Fauczun’, ‘Anthoni Faissant’) signed responsible for the construction of several prestigious fortifications, fortresses, public edifices, and palaces in the German towns of Nuremberg, Lichtenau, Lauf, Hiltpoltsein, and Hersbruck, and most likely also in Heidelberg and Brzeg in Silesia (today in Poland). Most of these constructions were part of the avant-garde of early-sixteenth-century fortification technique and architecture and very much praised by the contemporaries. Until now the name of Antonio Falzon has escaped Maltese researchers and this paper aims to draw attention to this eminent architect and military engineer who apparently also was active as artisan and designer.

**Keywords:** Antonio Falzon, fortifications, architecture, Nuremberg

**G**erolamo Cassar, his son Vittorio, Tommaso (‘Tumas’) Dingli, Lorenzo Gafà, and Domenico Cachia have been named as the most eminent and influential Maltese architects of early modern times. The present paper intends to add another – until now neglected – name to this list. In fact, in terms of international influence the protagonist here presented did not only supersede the above-listed masters but is also the earliest Maltese architect and military engineer of highest reputation known until now. That the name of Antonio

Falzon ('Fauczun') is not listed in the works of Leonhard Mahoney,<sup>1</sup> Alison Hoppen,<sup>2</sup> Quentin Hughes,<sup>3</sup> Stephen Spiteri,<sup>4</sup> Albert Ganado,<sup>5</sup> Roger de Giorgio,<sup>6</sup> Emanuela Garofalo,<sup>7</sup> Victor Mallia-Milanes,<sup>8</sup> and John Bryan Ward-Perkins,<sup>9</sup> on the art of fortification in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Malta has to do with Falzon's activities abroad and his apparent absence in the local archival sources. The research carried out for compiling this paper was almost exclusively carried out in German archives and libraries. It is a first attempt to shed some light on this eminent but still enigmatic figure and hopefully will provoke some more research on Antonio Falzon, the 'unequaled artist and architect'<sup>10</sup> how he was called by his collaborators.

On 25 April 1538, in a chamber at the mayor's house in the free and imperial city of Nuremberg – then one of the largest, busiest, and

- 1 Leonard Mahoney, *A History of Maltese Architecture from Ancient Times to 1800* (Malta, 1988); and id., *5000 years of Maltese Architecture* (Malta, 1996).
- 2 Alison Hoppen, *The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St. John 1530–1798* (Edinburgh, 1979); and id., 'Military Engineers in Malta, 1530–1798', *Annals of Science* xxxviii (1981), 413–33.
- 3 Cf. Quentin Hughes, *The Building of Malta 1530–1795* (London, 1956); and id., *Fortress Architecture and Military History in Malta* (London, 1969); 'The Planned City of Valletta', in *Atti del XV Congresso di Storia dell'Architettura* (Rome, 1970), 305–33; *Malta. A guide to the fortifications* (Liverpool, 1985); 'The Architectural Development of Hospitaller Malta', in Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta 1530–1798. Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem* (Malta, 1993), 483–508.
- 4 Stephen C. Spiteri, *Fortresses of the Cross. Hospitaller Military Architecture (1136–1798)* (Malta, 1994); *Fortresses of the Knights* (Malta, 2001), *The Art of Fortress Building in Hospitaller Malta* (Malta, 2008) and numerous articles on a wide range of aspects of the fortification of the Maltese islands.
- 5 Cf. the passing references to 16<sup>th</sup>-century Maltese architects in Albert Ganado, 'The Siege Map of Malta by Francesco de Marchi', *Proceedings of History Week, 1984* (Malta, 1986), 101–40; and id., 'Matteo Perez d'Aleccio's Engravings of the Siege of Malta of 1565', *Proceedings of History Week, 1983* (Malta, 1984), 125–61; and together with Maurice Agius-Vadalà, 'The pre-siege maps of Malta 1536–1563', in *Annual Report and Accounts 30<sup>th</sup> September 1986. Investment Finance Bank Ltd.* (Malta, 1986), no pagination.
- 6 Roger De Giorgio, *A City by an Order* (Malta, 1986).
- 7 Emanuela Garofalo, 'Fra Tardogotico e Rinascimento: la Sicilia sud-orientale e Malta', *Artigrama* xxiii (2008), 265–300.
- 8 Victor Mallia-Milanes, 'In Search of Vittorio Cassar: A Documentary Approach', *Melita Historica*, ix/3 (1986), 247–70; and id., 'Scipione Campi's report on the fortifications of Valletta, 1576', *Melita Historica*, vii/4 (1983), 276–89.
- 9 John Bryan Ward Perkins, 'Medieval and Early Renaissance architecture in Malta', *The Antiquarian Journal*, xxii, 3–4 (October 1942), 167–75; and as single booklet (London, 1944).
- 10 State Archive, Nuremberg, 'Ratsbuch' (subsequently quoted as SAN), 19/18, entry dated 29 April 1538.

most prosperous cities of Europe, home of the inventors of the pocket watch, centre for the production of globes, cartography, and mechanical instruments – a secret interview was being conducted. The person who was the object of the city councillors' questions, amongst them the rich patricians Paulus Grunherr and Hieronymus Holzschuher, was a mysterious stranger.<sup>11</sup> In the documents, he is mentioned vaguely as an 'Italian artist' ('*wellschen Künstler*'), while later art historians, such as Alfred Peltzer, refer to him as 'Italian by birth'.<sup>12</sup>

The entries for this day in the 'Ratsbuch' (book of the council), preserved in the State Archive ('Staatsarchiv') of Nuremberg, give more details. Here the stranger is referred to as 'Senior Anthoni Faissant from Malta, who introduced himself as being a skilled artist in the service of his imperial highness, as an expert in architecture and a site foreman' ('... *Senior Anthoni Faissant von Malta genannt, so sich für ein sonder künstner und pawverstenndigen mann ausgeben, auch in der kay. m. dienst als ein gepeuengeber und zurichter sein soll.*')<sup>13</sup>

In subsequent entries, the stranger is also referred to as 'Antonio Fazuni', 'Vazuni', 'Falsone', and 'Vascani' or even 'Faggioni'.<sup>14</sup> Considering that, at that time, the scribes of the city took note according to how the foreign architect and the councillors pronounced a name, it appears that his real name was Fauczun or Falzon. These different spellings could explain why this Maltese connection has not been researched and is not known in Malta.<sup>15</sup>

In the literature of the last hundred years Fazuni alias Falzon nearly always appears as an Italian, most likely because the mainly German

- 11 Ibid., entry dated 25 April 1538; cf. also the references in Heinz-Joachim Neubauer, 'Der Bau der grossen Bastei hinter der Veste 1538–1545', *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg*, lxxix (1982), 199 *et seq.*; Michael Diefenbacher, 'Antonio Fazuni', in *Von nah und fern. Zuwanderer in die Reichsstadt Nürnberg. Catalogue* (Nuremberg, 2014), 129–34.
- 12 Alfred Peltzer, *Anthoni, der Meister vom Ottheinrichsbau zu Heidelberg* (Heidelberg, 1905), 13 *et seq.*
- 13 SAN, 'Ratsbuch', 19/18, entry dated 25 April 1538.
- 14 Ibid., entries dated 25 April, 20, 25, 28, and 29 May 1538; SAN, 'Verlässe des Inneren Rates', 889/12, entry dated 2 May 1538. For the versions of the name, cf. also Manfred H. Grieb (ed.), *Nürnberger Künstlerlexikon. Bildende Künstler, Kunsthandwerker, Gelehrte* (...), 4 vols. (Munich, 2007), 372.
- 15 Antonio Falzon is, for example, not mentioned in the list 'Uomini illustri di Malta [...] notizie di alcuni pittori, scultori, architetti, e capi maestri si maltesi, che forastieri, che operarono in Malta [...] diretta a suoi concittadini amatori e intendenti del Conte Saverio Marchese', National Library of Malta (subsequently quoted as NLM), MS 1123.

Behaim Freyherrn von  
Schwarzbach und Kirchenlittenbach.



Coat of arms of Antonio  
Falzon's collaborator  
Paulus Beheim

historians who have written about him and his achievements were not familiar with Maltese surnames. They classify him according to the location of his previous employment. For example, in Germany's main reference work on biographies of artists and architects, Ulrich Thieme's *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler*, he is referred to as Italian.<sup>16</sup> In the records of the Nuremberg archives, however, the architect himself clearly refers to himself as being 'Maltese'.

Falzon's former life is still shrouded in mystery. This paper intends to provide an incentive for Maltese historians to shed some light on the darkness surrounding this character. This would not only benefit the island's heritage; it would also contribute to a better understanding of European artistic and architectural influences and networking in early modern times.

We know that, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, descendants of the Maltese family of Falzon ('Fauczuni', 'Falzuni') provided lawyers, notaries, and masters of the rod. Some of its members were involved in 'scandals', as, for example, when Matteo ('Mattheo')

16 Ulrich Thieme *et al.* (eds.), *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1907 *et seq.*), 552.

Falzon, Senior and his son, in the 1540s, converted to the Protestant faith. 'Our' architect and military engineer Antonio Falzon could hardly be the Antonio Falzon ('Fauczuni') who in 1532 headed, as *Capitano della Verga*, the *Mdina Universitas*. He could also hardly be Antonio Fantino who, in 1517, appeared in the records as *supramaremmarius* of the *Castrum Maris*.<sup>17</sup>

According to historian Georg Wolfgang Karl Lochner, it must have been Emperor Charles V personally who had sent Falzon to Nuremberg.<sup>18</sup> If this were true, Falzon would have certainly carried with him letters of reference and credentials. Reading over the archival records of the city council of Nuremberg, this was not the case. It is true, however, that in April 1538 Falzon himself stated that only a short time before he had worked in the direct service of Charles V.<sup>19</sup> Where could that have been? The emperor did not commission any works in Malta then and, after their move to the island in 1530, the knights of St John hesitated to take on major fortification projects as the majority of them saw Malta as a provisional residence and hoped for a return to Rhodes.

It appears likely that Falzon was employed in the team of the famous Antonio Ferramolino who, from 1534, worked in Sicily as military engineer in the service of Charles V.<sup>20</sup> At the instigation of the new viceroy, Ferrante Gonzaga (1535–43), various projects were undertaken in the following years to strengthen Augusta, Palermo, and Messina.<sup>21</sup> This was interrupted by a lengthy trip of Ferramolino to Tunis and Goletta. Ferramolino accompanied Charles V's expedition corps to conquer these strongholds. On the occasion of this expedition, Ferramolino also visited Malta in 1535 where he might have taken Falzon into his service.<sup>22</sup>

In the winter of 1537/38 Ferramolino received a call from Dalmatia from where the Ottomans had just been driven out. The

17 NLM, Univ. 12, f. 161v. The author expresses his thanks to Prof. Stanley Fiorini who brought this reference to his attention.

18 Georg Wolfgang Karl Lochner, *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte*, x (Vienna, 1875), 9.

19 SAN, 'Ratsbuch', 19/18, entry dated 25 April 1538.

20 Cf. Guido Tadini, *Ferramolino da Bergamo. L'ingegnere militare che nel'500 fortificò la Sicilia* (Bergamo, 1977).

21 Cf. the investigations on the situation in Sicily by José Hernando Sánchez (ed.), *Las fortificaciones de Carlos V* (Madrid, 2000); Maria Giuffrè, *Castelli e luoghi forti di Sicilia XII–XVII secolo* (Palermo, 1980); Marino Viganò, 'El fratìn mi ynginiero': i Paleari Fratino da Marcote ingegneri militari ticinesi in Spagna (Bellinzona, 2001).

22 Cf. Hoppen, 'Military engineers', 413–32.

highly reputed architect was then commissioned to strengthen and reconstruct some sea fortresses and to inspect certain fortifications of the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik). This might have also been the time when Falzon decided to call it a day and to move from Sicily to north of the Alps. Certainly his arrival in Nuremberg at the end of April 1538 was not preceded by a long stay in the lands of Germany. What we know from the comments of his interpreters is that, on his arrival in the Franconian capital, he spoke and understood no German at all.<sup>23</sup>

What might have been the motives which led Falzon to leave the Mediterranean region and seek employment north of the Alps? If we assume that he worked with Ferramolino in Messina, where workmen of all sorts and nationalities – also from the region of Franconia – were employed, he might have conceived the idea that with his knowledge he could make a promising career in northern countries. It could also be that he had trouble with his colleagues or masters; we will see later that also during his activities in the lands of Germany he clashed several times with his collaborators and the authorities. Certainly Falzon was later to design in Nuremberg and Lichtenau fortifications which in some important ways very much resemble what Ferramolino had built a few years before in Messina, namely the so-called ‘Forte Gonzaga’ (or ‘Castel Gonzaga’).

Let us return to Falzon’s work in the city of Nuremberg. The interviewers in Nuremberg wanted to find out what the interests of the stranger were and maybe exploit his obvious knowledge in engineering and fortifications for the needs of the city. For that purpose, on 26 and 29 April, more interviews were carried out.<sup>24</sup> This time the councillors were joined by experts on the subject, amongst them the well-known masters Paulus Beheim and Simon Rößner. The architect Paulus Beheim was familiar with the developments in Italy; in the 1520s he had undertaken an educational tour to Padova, Treviso, and Venice. An interpreter was engaged as the foreigner was not able to understand and speak German.<sup>25</sup>

23 SAN, ‘Ratsbuch’, 19/18, entry dated 25 April 1538.

24 Ibid., entry dated 29 April 1538.

25 The councillors Paulus Grundherr and Hieronymus Holzschuher were immediately ordered to find an interpreter, cf. SAN, ‘Ratsbuch’, 19/18, entry dated 25 April 1538.

In the course of these conversations, the foreigner showed an impressive knowledge ('such a knowledge as they [the interviewers] had never encountered before') of military engineering.<sup>26</sup> What was even more important for the councillors was the fact that he had been trained in the latest techniques of fortifications. It was well known in the territories of Central Europe that Italian architects and engineers had revolutionized the art of fortifying cities and strategically important locations, adapting their art to the increased firepower of guns and new military machinery. The elite among these experts were exclusively employed by Charles V and the Italian princes in the Mediterranean regions. Now one of these avant-garde experts was right at hand, ready to be employed.

What we learn from the records of 2 May is that the councillors as well as the local experts were keen to employ the foreigner; the scribes were advised to take careful note of what 'Fazuni' recommended regarding improvements to the bastions and fortifications of the city. When asked about the defects in the present fortifications of the city, he suggested radical alterations to the walls behind the imperial castle. He explained why. In the previous fortification models, there were several weak points, mainly because there were spaces in front of the walls and towers which the artillery or crossbows could not cover – 'blind spots'. In Italy, in the course of the fifteenth century systems of square bastions were developed from where guns and other types of fire arms could be aimed to reach all spaces. Fire weapons were now no longer placed only on top of the curtains and walls but also on a lower level in casemates and chambers with well-protected embrasures. According to the new 'Italian manner', fortresses were constructed with patterns of regular rectangles, where length and width were calculated exactly to guarantee flank defence. The artillery of the bastions and cavaliers could therefore offer mutual protection. Going beyond what Falzon was proposing at Nuremberg, this type of set-up was used in his plan for the reconstruction of the fortress of Lichtenau, c.30 miles west of Nuremberg, an enclave of the imperial city in the territories of the margrave of Ansbach-

26 '.... Daß sie bey disem Senior Anthonio ein solichen verstandt über gepew gefunden, dergleichen sie zuvor nie von jemand gehört, daß er auf alle ime furgeworfene fragstück und gehaltene gegenpart so geschickte verstennidig und lauter antwort geben und dessen allemal seine ursachen mit angezeigt, daß augenscheinlich ze greiffen sey, daß sein fürgeben grundt hab.' Ibid., entry dated 29 April 1538.

Bayreuth. In the meantime the Maltese architect had carried out some sketches to support his ideas.<sup>27</sup>

The carpenter Sebald Rech was to be employed to make a wooden model according to 'Fazuni's' proposals and Master Simon Rößner was ordered to assist the foreign architect in his work. Jobst Tetzl was ordered to provide Falzon with a chamber in his house (the so-called Tetzelhof, Egidienplatz 7) and to guarantee that he could work undisturbed.<sup>28</sup> The council of Nuremberg was to assume the costs involved. In a meeting on 7 May it was decided to involve the stranger also in the reconstruction of the above-mentioned fortress of Lichtenau.<sup>29</sup> It was once more stressed that everything had to be undertaken in utmost secrecy.

In late May 1538, Falzon's schemes were discussed in more detail and the architect inspected the envisaged location where the new bastions and walls were to be built. The focus was laid on the space between the so-called 'Vestner Gate' and the 'Thiergärtner Gate' of Nuremberg. Measurements were taken and wooden beams installed to mark the profile of the works. On 28 May discussions were held as to how to reward Falzon. The architect himself had asked for a monthly salary of 80 *florins*. He also pointed out that he would be overwhelmed with too much work. The representatives of the council proposed to pay him 60 *florins* every month with a one-year contract guarantee.<sup>30</sup> If the work then pleased the members of the city council, he would be rewarded with more generous gifts and the contract extended. Falzon had to pay for the services of a private interpreter himself.<sup>31</sup> For work purposes, the foreign architect was provided with the interpreters Bonaventura Furtenbach, Jörg Römer, and Jobst Tetzl. Subsequently the lawyer Dr Kötzer worked out a contract in Italian which had to be renewed every year. The salary was to be paid every four months.<sup>32</sup>

In the next weeks Falzon's collaboration with the local masters continued and a wooden model of the bastions was completed. In June there were some arguments between masters Paulus Beheim and Jörg

27 Ibid., entry dated 2 May 1538.

28 'Damit er sein gemachsams wesen desto bas haben und volpringung des models desto weniger überloffen werde'; SAN, 'Ratsbuch', 19/18, entry dated 2 May 1538.

29 SAN, 'Verlässe des Inneren Rates', 889/12, entry dated 7 May 1538.

30 Ibid., 890/7, entry dated 28 May 1538.

31 SAN, 'Ratsbuch', 19/19, entry dated 29 May 1538.

32 SAN, Rep. 16. B 8, S I, box 206.



Weber over the – allegedly exorbitant – costs of the constructions.<sup>33</sup> As the city councillors were fully convinced of the usefulness of the project, this problem was soon settled. Wilhelm Schlüsselfelder, Clemens Volckamer, Sebald Pfinzing, and Hans Ebner were chosen to be the patrons and representatives of the council responsible for the administrative supervision of the constructions.<sup>34</sup>

By July the work had started with pulling down the existing walls and digging out the ditches and spaces to lay down the foundations and the basements for the erection of a system of casemates.<sup>35</sup> Already a few months after the beginning of the work, the fame of Falzon had spread to faraway places. In late November 1538, the resident architect of Olomouc (today in the Czech Republic), who was travelling through Franconia, applied to the city council of Nuremberg for permission to have a look at the ongoing constructions. The members of the council – obviously afraid of espionage – refused the request.<sup>36</sup> In May 1539 the council received a letter from the city of Gdansk (today in Poland) with the request to send a plan of the new bastions. This was also refused but the representatives of Gdansk were permitted to send an architect to Nuremberg to inspect the new constructions.<sup>37</sup> In August 1539 the architect from the city of Nördlingen, Heinrich Schnitzer, was permitted to visit the construction site but not to enter the underground system of corridors and casemates.<sup>38</sup> Considering this, it is no wonder the archival documents refer to ‘the skilful and famous master Fazuni’ who was now also called a stonemason (‘*Steinmetz*’).<sup>39</sup>

33 On the exploding costs, cf. also Rainer Gömmel, *Vorindustrielle Bauwirtschaft in der Reichsstadt Nürnberg und ihrem Umfeld (16.–18. Jh.)* (Wiesbaden, 1985), 73: ‘*Das von ihm entworfene Projekt eines Bastionssystems geriet kurz darauf jedoch in Gefahr, als die einheimischen Werkmeister die Kosten auf 80 000 fl. bis 96 000 fl. schätzten. Militärfachleute sollten ein weiteres Gutachten erstellen (1). Noch im Juni 1538 wurde dann der Bau beschlossen und begonnen.*’

34 On the persons in charge and Falzon’s collaborators, cf. Neubauer, 208 *et seq.*

35 Cf. the citation of the respective sources in Heinrich Heerwagen, ‘Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kunst und des Kunsthandwerks in Nürnberg 1532–1542’, *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* (1908), 121: ‘*September 1538: Item als meine herrn umb gemaine stat nutz willen, die kayserlichen pergk, das ohesten und Tiergarten thor zu beyhestnen furgenomen, und den 31. Juli zu fronen angefangen, haben si den ersten stain legen lassen, den 3. September, zwischen 2. Und 3. Gen tag als zu 3 Uhren des halben segers 1538, des selb stain war rund, und ausgehauen, wi etwan en reibstain und bedeckt, worin haben sie legen lassen.*’

36 Cf. SAN, ‘Verlässe des Inneren Rates’, 896 / 22, entry dated 22 November 1538.

37 *Ibid.*, 903/7, entry dated 12 May 1539.

38 *Ibid.*, 907/1, entry dated 28 August 1539.

39 *Ibid.*, 907/10, entry dated 3 September 1539.

Documents show how, in the process of the works, the new master and ‘project manager’ Antonio Falzon became more and more influential.<sup>40</sup> For the first time north of the Alps, so-called cornerstone medals were cast. The *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* of Nuremberg still holds copies (silver with a diameter of 7.5 cm) of these medals commemorating the laying of the cornerstone of the improved fortifications around Nuremberg Castle.<sup>41</sup> In commissioning the medal, the Nuremberg city council followed a custom that originally accompanied the heathen sacrifices preceding the construction of a building, a practice widespread in fifteenth-century Italy too. Several copies of cornerstone medals would be produced, of which one would actually be cemented into the stone itself. The remaining copies would be distributed as mementos among the building’s patrons and architects. Depending on their rank, they were given versions in gold, silver, or lead.<sup>42</sup> There is no doubt that this custom was introduced to Germany by Falzon. We have more proofs of the Maltese engineer’s multifaceted output and his efforts to extend his activities into other different branches. Very often these enterprises were not welcome in a

40 For reflections on the ongoing works in Nuremberg in 1538 to fortify the city, cf. also Sebastian Münster – François de Belleforeste, *La cosmographie universelle de tout le monde* (Paris, 1575), 1434. Both Münster and Belleforeste were direct contemporaries of the events.

41 For a description of the copy held in the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* of Nuremberg, cf. *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg, 1300–1500, Catalogue* (Munich, 1986), 447–8: ‘Peter Flötner (model for the obverse), Hans Moslitzer (cast), Johann Neudörfer (design for the reverse). Medal Commemorating the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Improved Fortifications around Nuremberg Castle 1538 (silver), diameter (7.5 cm). The obverse and reverse were cast separately and then soldered together. Obverse: Beneath the crowned, two-headed eagle of the empire are the two Nuremberg coats of arms, the Jungfrauenadler and the so called small coat of arms; behind, are war trophies. Below, is a panel suspended from ribbons, with an inscription. Reverse: A seventeen-line Latin inscription tell of the strengthening of the castle fortifications in the time of Emperor Charles V, his brother Ferdinand I, and Christoph Tetzl, Leonhard Tucher, and Sebald Pfinzing (...) This is the first of the so-called cornerstone medals made north of the Alps. In commissioning the medal, the Nuremberg city council followed a custom that originally accompanied the heather sacrifices preceding the construction of a building, but the practice was widespread in fifteenth-century Italy. Several copies of cornerstone medals would be created, and one would actually be cemented into the stone itself. Christoph Scheul, who, presumably, had seen the ceremony in Nuremberg, reports: The stone in question was round and hallowed out like a pestle, with a lid. Inside it they placed a silver coin. (It contains a detailed description of the medal). The remaining copies would be distributed as mementos among the building’s patrons and architects. Depending on their rank, they were given examples in gold, silver, or lead.’

42 On the Nuremberg medal from 1538 and its text, cf. also Münster–Belleforeste, 1434.

city which was shaped by the strict regulations of the powerful guilds for craftsmen.<sup>43</sup>

In March 1544 the goldsmith's guild of Nuremberg filed a case against Falzon as the latter was employing in his house four journeymen to produce clocks, compasses, and other sorts of instruments. When, on 20 March, he was cited to the city council Falzon defended himself arguing that he would need those instruments and tools for his work as an architect. Apparently the foreign architect was also able to design and construct these instruments himself.<sup>44</sup>

Various German architecture and art historians refer to 'Meister Antonio' as a truly *uomo universale* in the Renaissance tradition.<sup>45</sup> That until now only his works in the field of military architecture appear in the documents matches other profiles of contemporary architects; only their occupations in the 'noble' art to design palaces, fortresses, or cities is mentioned.

Falzon's character caused problems and friction more than once. There are some entertaining entries in the records concerning problems he had with his chambermaid who ran away from the architect to the neighbouring city of Fürth in the Margraviate of Ansbach. When Falzon intended to proceed to Fürth himself to bring her back personally, the city council of Nuremberg refused to provide him with guards. Conflicts with the authorities of the Margraviate of Ansbach were to be avoided. Several times there were clashes between Falzon and his foremen and workers which were attributed to the Maltese architect's arrogant and haughty behaviour.<sup>46</sup> Falzon also quarrelled with the members of the city council when in March 1540 he tried to push through the employment of 'some compatriots' (Maltese?).<sup>47</sup> The city council refused this.

Meanwhile Falzon also was employed in projects to modernize the gates and walls of the towns of Lauf, Hiltpoltsein, and Hersbruck, all close to Nuremberg. In collaboration with Sebald Beck and the

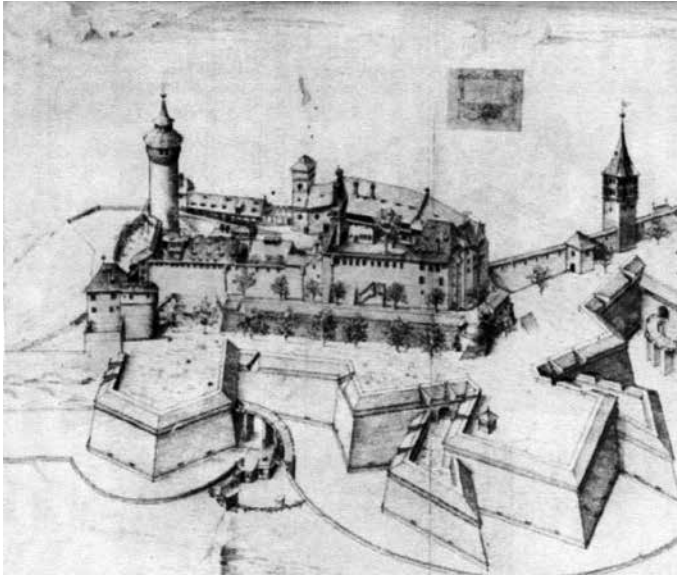
43 Cf. the complaints of the guilds against Falzon in the summer of 1539; cf. SAN, 'Verlässe des Inneren Rats', 907/10, entry dated 3 September 1539.

44 Ibid., 967/39, entry dated 20 March 1544, and ibid. 967/41, entry dated 21 March 1544.

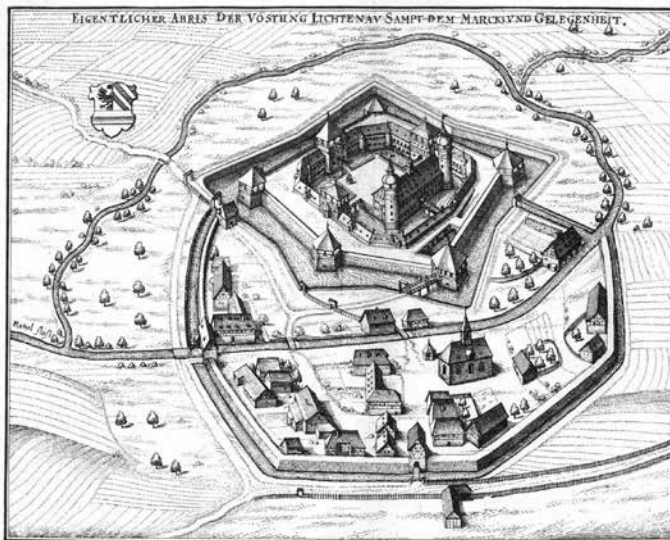
45 Joseph Baader, 'Kleine Nachträge zu den Beiträgen zur Kunstgeschichte Nürnbergs', *Jahrbücher und Kunstwissenschaft. Zweiter Jahrgang* (Leipzig, 1869), 81; Neubauer, 202 *et seq.*; Peltzer, 12 *et seq.*, 16.

46 SAN, 'Verlässe des Inneren Rats', 908/26, entry dated 16 October 1539; ibid. 920 / 2, entry dated 19 August 1540.

47 Ibid., 913 / 31, entry dated 9 March 1540.



Anonymous sketch of the 'Fazuni-Bastion', after 1593, preserved in Stadtgeschichtliche Museen (Nuremberg), no inventory number



The fortress of Lichtenau (engraving of 1640), constructed after 1552 according to older plans by Antonio Falzon

famous painter Georg Penz ('Pencz'), Falzon worked out a detailed and richly illustrated plan to improve all the walls and fortifications of Nuremberg.<sup>48</sup> Although the Nuremberg period of his life is the best documented time of his activities, there remain several open questions. We have no information, for example, as to where he went exactly, when in September 1542 he was allowed to leave the imperial city for some months to travel to Italy. The agreement stipulated that he had to be back in Nuremberg by the following March.<sup>49</sup>

In late 1544 work on the 'grand bastion' ('Große Bastei') – soon called 'Fazuni-bastions' – was more or less completed. The finished construction shows that Falzon laid special emphasis on the strength of the tenailles. Eminent architecture historians have stated that the 'Fazuni-bastions' behind Nuremberg Castle belong to the oldest – if not *the* oldest – Italian-style bastions of their kind north of the Alps.<sup>50</sup>

After the completion of the bastions, Falzon appeared to have left Nuremberg. For the year 1545 we do not have information about his whereabouts and activities. From the archival sources for 1546, we can presume that he had been in Vienna. The fact is that in summer of that year Falzon was back in Nuremberg stating that he had been robbed on the long voyage from Vienna to the Franconian capital.<sup>51</sup> According to his own words, he was 'happily back' in Nuremberg. He was now employed to improve the defence ramparts near the river Pegnitz crossing the city and the positions of the local artillery.<sup>52</sup> In November 1546 Falzon was commissioned to examine the older parts of the city fortifications and to make suggestions to improve them.<sup>53</sup> In 1547 Falzon appears to have left Nuremberg once more and for the next years we do not have any information about his whereabouts.

The personality of the eminent foreign master kept creating moments of mystery and suspicion. In 1552 some nasty rumours were circulated

48 Joseph Baader, *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Nürnbergs*, ii (Nürnberg, 1860), 9. On Beck, cf. Neubauer, 205 *et seq.*

49 SAN, Rep. 54, No. 183/178, 208.

50 Cf. Torsten L. Meyer and Marcus Popplow, *Technik, Arbeit und Umwelt in der Geschichte* (Münster–New York, 2006), 42.

51 This is stated by Max Bach, 'Die Mauern Nürnbergs. Geschichte der Befestigung der Reichstadt', *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg*, v (1884), 82; cf. also Baader, *Beiträge*, ii, 9.

52 SAN, 'Ratsbuch', 23/349, entry dated 30 October 1546.

53 On the return to Nuremberg, cf. also Baader, 'Kleine Nachträge', 73 *et seq.*

concerning Falzon's involvement in the destruction of the fortress of Lichtenau.<sup>54</sup> In the late 1530s he had inspected this late medieval fortress several times.<sup>55</sup> When, in 1552, Margrave Albrecht Alcibiades also besieged Lichtenau in the course of his campaign against the imperial city of Nuremberg, the governor handed over the fortress without any effort to defend it. Albrecht Alcibiades subsequently blew up the fortress and it was alleged by some that it was Falzon who had advised the conquerors how to do it.<sup>56</sup> Ironically, it was Falzon's plan of a pentagonal citadel with projecting platforms for guns which was used in the following years to rebuild the fortress completely anew.

Are there traces of Falzon in other parts of the lands of Germany or elsewhere? According to the eminent art historians Peltzer and Thieme, he was the author of the famous *Ottheinrichsbau* at Heidelberg palace.<sup>57</sup> In the mid-1550s, the newly elected duke elector of the Palatinate, Ottheinrich, commissioned the extension and reconstruction of the famous castle of Heidelberg according to the taste of the Renaissance. In the focus of interest stands the *Ottheinrichsbau*. Alfred Peltzer could not prove his conclusion by direct archival evidence but he believes that the architect of this impressive Renaissance palace, 'Master Anthoni' and 'Antonio Fazuni', are one and the same person.<sup>58</sup> The close connection of Duke Elector Ottheinrich with the artistic scene of Nuremberg and his explicit request to the members of the city council to provide him with two architects supports this theory. Moreover, in most of the Nuremberg archival sources Falzon is only referred to by his first name 'Senior Antoni', 'Senior Anthoni, the architect', or 'Signor Anthoni, the Italian architect'.<sup>59</sup> In the annals of the free and imperial city of

54 Ibid., 81: '*Auch gab er damals sein Gutdünken und den Rathsschlag, wie der Stadt Festungswerke gebessert und den Mängeln dabei abgeholfen werden möchte. Einige Jahre später fiel auf ihn der Verdacht, er sei es gewesen, der im zweiten markgräflichen Kriege die Nürnbergische Veste Lichtenau gesprengt und niedergedrissen.*'

55 SAN, 'Verlässe des Inneren Rats', 889/20, entry dated 7 May 1538.

56 Baader, 'Kleine Nachträge', 81: '*Antonio Fazuni gab (...) damals sein Gutdünken und den Rathsschlag, wie der Stadt Festungswerke gebessert und den Mängeln dabei abgeholfen werden möchte. Einige Jahre später fiel auf ihn der Verdacht, er sei es gewesen, der im zweiten markgräflichen Kriege die Nürnbergische Veste Lichtenau gesprengt und niedergedrissen.*'

57 Cf. Thieme *et al.*, 552; Peltzer, 12 *et seq.*

58 This followed by other historians, cf. Rainer Gömmel, *Vorindustrielle Bauwirtschaft in der Reichsstadt Nürnberg und ihrem Umfeld (16. –18 Jh.)* (Wiesbaden, 1985), 37.

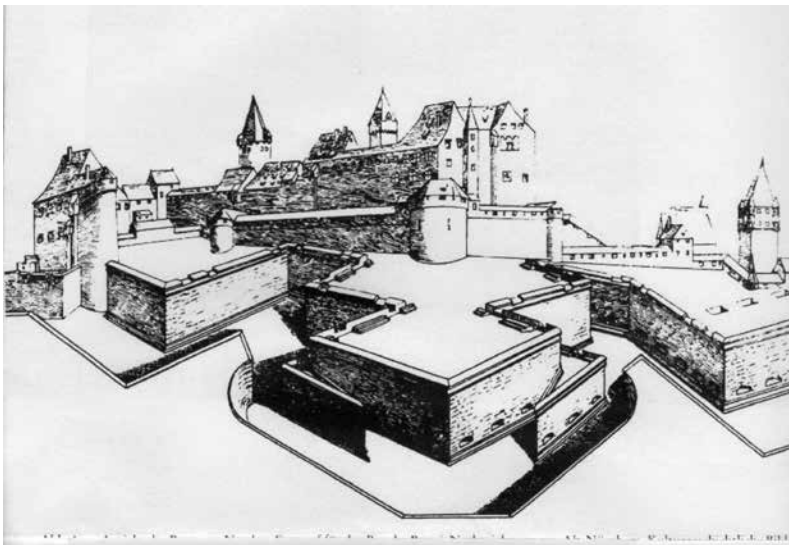
59 Cf. SAN, 'Ratsbuch', 19/19, entries dated 25, 28 and 29 May 1538; SAN, 'Verlässe des Inneren Rats', 889 / 12, entry dated 2 May 1538, and more entries for 1538 and 1539.



Sketch of a detail of Antonio Falzon's design for a new line of fortifications around the imperial city of Nuremberg (City Archive of Nuremberg, B 1/I, No. 69)



Sketch of a detail of Antonio Falzon's design for a new line of fortifications around the imperial city of Nuremberg (City Archive of Nuremberg, B 1/I, No. 69)



Sketch (1895) of the 'Fazuni-Bastion' at Nuremberg, preserved in Stadtgeschichtliche Museum (Nuremberg), Inv. No. Nor. K. 7147.

Nuremberg, compiled in the early seventeenth century, he is referred to ‘Sennor Anthonio Faissant de Maltha’.<sup>60</sup> The contacts of artists and architects from Nuremberg with the duke elector of the Palatinate Ottheinrich were multifaceted. The fact that Falzon’s close collaborator Michael Beheim worked for Ottheinrich on various projects is well documented; in so far one might presume that also Beheim’s master Falzon was contacted by the duke elector, a prince who was extremely open-minded *vis-à-vis* new styles and artistic output and a great patron of Renaissance art.

As was the case in Nuremberg some years before, the works in Heidelberg also received great international attention. On 28 June 1559 the English envoy Christopher Mundt reports to Lord Burleigh: ‘*Otto Henry had begun at Heidelberg a magnificent and sumptuous building, for which he assembled from all parts the most renowned artists, builders, sculptors, and painters ....*’<sup>61</sup>

If Falzon was the author of the plans of the *Ottheinrichsbau*, then it was most likely that he also worked on the construction of the Piasten palace (‘*Piastenschloss*’) in Brzeg in Silesia (today in Poland).<sup>62</sup> Stylistically and as regards the ground plan, the *Ottheinrichsbau* and the *Piastenschloss* – even if the latter is of smaller dimensions – are extremely similar. This would also provide some new hints on Antonio Falzon’s identity, as in Brzeg in 1547 the architect introduced himself as ‘Antonio, son of Teodor(o)’.<sup>63</sup> The period of construction of the palace in Brzeg between 1547 and 1553 would tally, chronologically, with Falzon’s departure from Nuremberg and tour to Italy and his appearance in Augsburg in the spring of 1555.

The last definite news on Falzon’s whereabouts is dated 21 April 1555. On this day the rich merchant Sebastian Welser reported to the city council of Nuremberg that ‘Antoni Fasoni, the Italian architect’ had written to him from Augsburg and reported that he had been robbed in Italy.<sup>64</sup> He was without any financial means and he therefore was

60 Here quoted from Michael Diefenbacher (ed.), *Die Annalen der Reichsstadt Nürnberg von Johannes Müllner von 1623*, iii (Nuremberg, 2003), 669.

61 Here quoted from Maximilian Huffschmid, ‘Zur Geschichte des Heidelberger Schlosses’, *Neues Archiv für die Geschichte der Stadt Heidelberg und der rheinischen Pfalz*, iii (1898), 30.

62 This for example is believed by Adolf von Öchelhäuser, ‘Sebastian Götz, der Bildhauer des Friedrichsbaues’, *Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Heidelberger Schlosses*, ii (1890), 220.

63 Here quoted from Peltzer, 24; Öchelhäuser, ‘Sebastian Götz’, ii, 220.

64 SAN, ‘Verlässe des Inneren Rats’, 2438/11, entry dated 11 April 1555.



requesting the council members to help him out. After some further inquiries via the Nuremberg patricians Sebald Haller and Jobst Tetzl, who happened to be in Augsburg, he received some money for new clothes and decent accommodation. Some days later the city council transferred more money to Augsburg so that Falzon could acquire a horse to continue his travels. We do not know whether the Maltese architect moved on to Nuremberg.<sup>65</sup> The archival sources in the imperial city are silent about it. The members of the city council communicated to Falzon that at that time they did not have any work for him. Art historian Alfred Peltzer thinks – as previously mentioned – that Falzon at this point turned to Heidelberg and took on commissions from Duke Elector Ottheinrich.

What really happened to Antonio Falzon after 1555? Did he return to Nuremberg? Did he go to Italy? Or did he return to his native island of Malta? Perhaps, in future, some of these questions will be clarified.

The author wants to express his thanks to Dr Albert Friggieri, Dr Giovanni Bonello, and Prof. Stanley Fiorini for their help.

65 Cf. Grieb (ed.), *Nürnberger Künstlerlexikon*, 372.