

# **O**LD MONASTERIES AND NEW CEMETERIES. THE CASE OF THE CAPUCHINS IN CONVERSANO, ITALY

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## **1. From the walled garden to the garden of memory**

The destiny reserved to monastery complexes built in solitary places, far from the clamour of the world in order to indulge in the ideal of a contemplative life and ensure self-sustenance made up of alms and work in the fields, intertwines with that of the cities of the dead, which had to be situated outside urban perimeters, in compliance with the health laws passed in 1817 during the Bourbon Restoration, and the provisions of the Napoleonic edict of Saint-Cloud [1].

The latter had imposed the construction of burial grounds within an enclosure outside residential areas, taking advantage of the possibility of choosing locations near extra-urban churches, or suppressed monasteries, as well as existing Catholic places of worship and their walled gardens which, for reasons of necessity, could be partially or fully included in the construction of the cemeteries. This is how the stories of two foreign worlds became intertwined and were obliged to share a stretch of their journey. On one hand, we have the monastery complexes, real territorial garrisons, with all their religious, historical, artistic and social significance. On the other hand, we have the cemeteries, an equally rich heritage, exceptional open-air museums – as they have recently been called – of architecture, sculpture and decorative arts created between the 19th and early 20th centuries [2].

This is an unexplored topic whose study, stemming from research on the architecture of the Mendicant Orders – in particular the Capuchins – was initiated by taking as reference, monasteries with walled gardens whose surface area had been reduced in size, experiencing a true metamorphosis in the process of annexation to the cemeteries under construction. This entailed redesigning the relationship between the built and enclosed spaces of many Capuchin institutions in Puglia, as in Manfredonia, Conversano and Tricase, deprived of their walled gardens with the inevitable transformation of the site, and as a result, underwent semantic redetermination. The Capuchin monastery in Conversano, Bari, Italy, did not escape this fate, as it was deprived of a large part of its walled garden, which became part of the garden of memory (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>.

The concept of walled gardens in Capuchin monasteries is borrowed from that of the monastic garden [3], which, in turn, dates back to the tradition of ancient Rome. It encompasses a double meaning that can be summed up in the binomial *desertum-hortus conclusus*, where the first term recalls a natural and inhospitable environment, the

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Figure 1. Conversano, the cemetery site.

place of choice for hermit life, and the second evokes the cultivated countryside, characteristic of cenobitic life.

They are two seemingly irreconcilable aspects which, however, manage to merge harmoniously into a single structure, ensuring a harmonious coexistence between spiritualism and usefulness.

This is demonstrated by the dual role of Saint Fiacre (607-668 CE) – an Irish monk who was a hermit and a farmer, protector of the Gardeners' Guild and not by chance depicted with a spade and a gospel – but also by the distinction, within the same structure, between gardens and vegetable plots, with the equal distribution of the spaces intended, respectively, for prayer and work, well documented in the ideal plan for the Convent of Saint Gall on Lake Constance drawn up by Haito, Abbot of Reichenau, at the time of its rebuilding in the 9th century [4].

The articulation of the monastic complex provides for a *claustrum*, enclosing the *hortus conclusus*, a place for reading and meditation, and for meeting; it consisted of a four-sided space with a tree of life, well, or the central fountain which had a highly symbolic meaning and, only later, was transformed into a garden with a lawn and flowers; a *pomarium* (orchard) with fruit trees, a *hortus* with vegetables, a *herbolarium* (for medicinal herbs), made up of flowers and herbs (all Mediterranean species) in square or rectangular beds, which were raised and fenced, and arranged in a chequered pattern.

The layout of the monastic garden is reminiscent of the *villae rusticae* of Roman times, where four types of cultivated spaces are found in flowerbeds separated by pergolas: vegetable gardens, orchards (*pomaria*), gardens with trees (*viridaria*), and herb gardens (*herbaria*).

Therefore, it is a process of resemanticising the Roman tradition that is reflected in the monastic garden, borrowing layouts, elements and plant materials from classicism. These motifs persist in the architectural structures of the Benedictine monks, while they are partially reinterpreted in the complexes of the Cistercian monks.

The lifestyle of the former, driven by a strong hermitic tendency and therefore inclined to prefer wooded and isolated places, is counterbalanced by the preference for the cenobitic life of the latter, who preferred settling on the plains and were more inclined to give a new impetus to manual work in the fields by clearing marshy land.

Life in the Capuchin monastery complexes was reflected in the distribution of spaces, where nature, culture, work and spirituality met in a complementary relationship that epitomised the soul of the order [5].

The forest – a wooded area where the friars could immerse themselves in isolation and prayer but also collect wood for use in the monastery -, the walled kitchen garden, the monastery, the library, the infirmary and the church, echo a unitary design, in some cases preordained [6] and, in others, built by subsequent additions and acquisitions, but always responding to a precise formal and distributive idea, in a perfect balance between full and empty, closed and open spaces.

## 2. The case study

In the case of the Capuchin monastery in Conversano, the architectural structure that grew around an original unit that is still clearly recognisable today, has retained its primordial layout, despite additions and subtractions, such as the mutilation inflicted on the ancient garden.

This was the time when the life of the fraternity was drastically interrupted by the Napoleonic suppression of religious orders between 1806 and 1809 and irreversibly compromised by the law of 11 March 1817, when it was subsequently implemented at the Monastery of Conversano. "If, in a municipality, outside the residential area and on an appropriate site there is a church, or chapel, the cemetery shall preferably be built on an adjacent site [...]. Whenever there are convenient walled gardens adjacent to the premises of suppressed monasteries, whether they are granted to municipalities or remain owned by the State, the cemetery will be established there in preference, for the same reason" [7].

Located in the immediate vicinity of the municipal cemetery, the monastery of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin of Conversano was intentionally built half a kilometre from the town centre along the road that connects the town to the urban centres of

Cozze, Polignano and Mola di Bari. The extramural construction in correspondence with a public road met the need, as prescribed by the *Constitutiones* of 1643 [8] to follow a lifestyle marked by solitude, contemplative prayer and, at the same time, the apostolate through itinerant preaching along the pilgrimage routes connecting one monastery to another [9].

The distance from the urban centre, the introverted character of the architectural structure, the minimalism of the buildings, the rationality of its distribution and the use of poor materials, reflect a project of communal life based on poverty, marked by prayer and the collective activities reserved for the spaces on the ground floor (the church, the cloister, the workshops, the refectory) and the open spaces (the garden) and by personal meditation practised in the intimacy of the individual cells located on the upper floor (Figures 2 and 3)<sup>2</sup>.



Figure 2. Conversano, the Capuchin Monastery, view of the current condition of the Western facade.

The first unit, initially consisting of a hospice commissioned by Gian Gironamo of the Acquaviva-d'Aragona family, governor of the county of Conversano [10], took shape between 1572 and 1580 thanks to the donation of a nobleman, Andrea Matteo Martucci.

The bequest allowed for the construction of the church and the reorganisation of the rooms into three wings situated around a porticoed cloister, according to a recurring spatial scheme, with a taller church to the north and a monastery to the south, to ensure





Figure 3. Diagram showing layout of the Capuchin Monastery in Conversano.

greater protection of the residential part from the cold winter winds. Right from the start, the church and monastery reveal a relationship of mutual necessity, which is both functional and spiritual. The liturgical space, consisting of a simple hall developed lengthwise to facilitate listening to the Word of the Lord and preaching, had a quadrangular choir, separate from the presbytery, but communicating with it through two openings at the sides of the altar (Figure 4, 1)<sup>3</sup>. The monastery, centred around the four-sided portico served by a walkway through which one could reach the guardhouse in the south-west, the guest quarters in the west wing and the workshops in the south wing, was accessible from the main entrance at the front of the west wing. A direct connection to the church was provided by an opening in the wall shared with the cloister between the choir and the east wing, intended to house the refectory, the kitchen, the larder and the staircase connecting the dormitory cells, the night choir and the library on the upper floor [11]. The life of the architectural complex, conceived as a completely autonomous structure, was founded on the perfect balance between contemplative solitude and communal prayer and the profound link between the closed spaces of the monastery and the open spaces of the farm on which it was built, useful for taking advantage of the resources offered by nature and necessary for self-sustenance.

A high, rectangular limestone fence, which has remained unchanged for over two centuries [12], ensured that the monastery, surrounded on three sides by the kitchen garden was separate from the open countryside (Figure 5, 1)<sup>4</sup>. The 'garden', accessible from the hallway between the refectory and the kitchen, was divided into four rectangular sectors, crossed diagonally by interior pathways that survived until the early

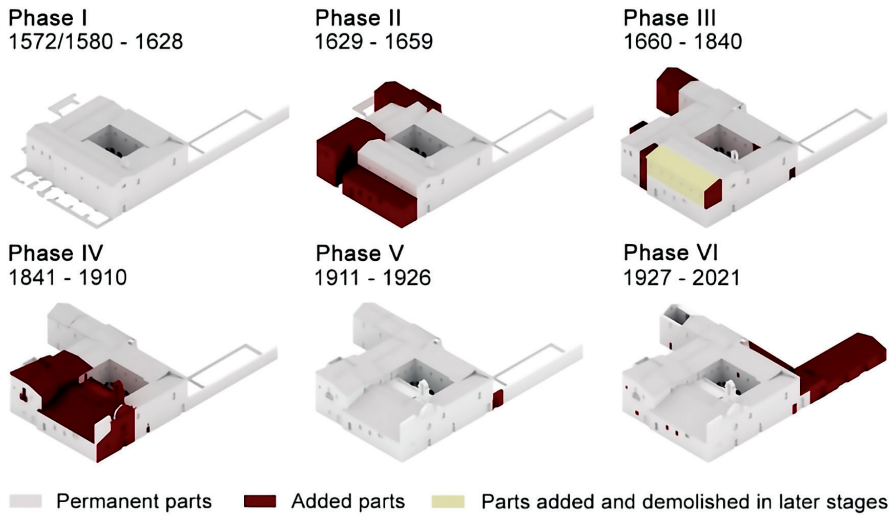


Figure 4. Conversano, the main construction phases of the Capuchin Monastery.

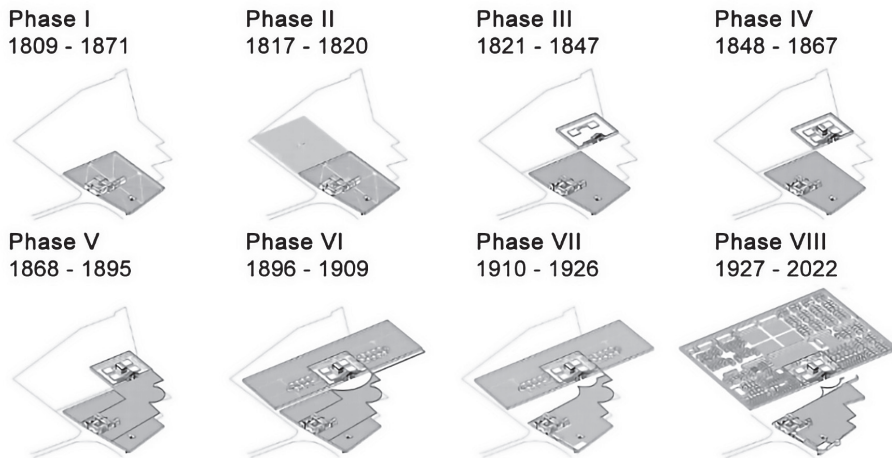


Figure 5. Conversano, construction phases of the cemetery.

1920s, two of which were presumably used for cultivating olive trees, fruit trees and vines, and the other two for vegetables and pulses [13]. Over time, the configuration of the architectural complex, while maintaining its original layout for a long time, demonstrated a certain flexibility with gradual adaptations to the changing needs of an ever-growing fraternity [14]. A first expansion was documented between 1629 and 1659, when the addition of four chapels and the sacristy [15] to the north of the church, and the expansion of the west wing to accommodate a woollen mill on the ground floor [16] and a new library on the upper floor (Figure 4, II)<sup>3</sup> were recorded. In 1694, a new phase of development began for the monastery. The letters and numbers – A.D. 1694 – are engraved on the lintel of a door in one of the rooms of the woollen mill, which dates its construction. When a novitiate was established in 1769 [17], various works were un-

dertaken including the construction of a new chapel to the south-east of the church (Figure 4, III)<sup>3</sup>, the extension of the choir towards the east, the enlargement of the refectory, the extension of the southern wing towards the southeast.

The ancient staircase and two porticoed wings of the cloister were eliminated and replaced by a new vertical connection between the ground floor and the upper floor in which the number of cells, built above the chapels located north of the church, was increased.

### 3. The transformation of the site and expansions from 1817 to 1927

In 1811, the monastery was suppressed when the Napoleonic laws were implemented. It reopened in 1817 and recommenced accommodating the community of friars, even though it had suffered a drastic reduction in numbers [18].

It was during this time that the area pertaining to the monastery, which had remained unscathed by the transformations that had affected the Capuchin structure, became the object of interest for the public authorities who, for reasons of hygiene and health, and because the tombs had reached full capacity in the cathedral, pushed for new burial places outside the town centre.

The problem was addressed in 1812, after a local debate developed around the health emergency, when the out-of-town churches of the suppressed monasteries of the Carmelites, the Paulites and the Capuchins were earmarked to house the first tombs [19].

Gennaro Carelli (1797-1818), the Bishop of Conversano, had for some time been saying, "I have ranted about it infinite times, proposing the solution of a regular cemetery which could very well be done in a corner of the garden of the suppressed Capuchin monastery [...], but never have my wishes been granted" [20], regarding the discontent about church burials. The idea of building a real cemetery on vacant land gained strength in 1817, when it was decided to allocate part of the Capuchin land for future burials.

From this moment on, the fate of the fraternity's walled garden changed, marked by the events that led to the construction of the Conversano Cemetery [21].

In fact, the construction of the cemetery, over time, entailed demolishing some sections of the monastery's boundary wall, resulting in the current layout.

Only a few portions of the ancient wall survive today: a section of the west wall along the road, Strada dei Cappuccini, part of the east wall stretching 20 linear metres, and the entire south wall, which, despite some lean-to buildings, retains its original position and reach (Figure 6)<sup>5</sup>.

Once the site was chosen, on 12 September 1817, Alessandro Sciorsi drew up an expert's report to build the cemetery, "in the northern portion of the Capuchin Garden, known as the back garden". The cemetery would be bordered by a wall to be built from scratch on three sides, with the north wall of the Capuchin enclosure as the fourth side. This would have made it possible to comply with the instructions contained in Article 4 of the Regulations issued on 21 March 1817.

The intention to build the cemetery seems to have been realised on 19 August 1819, when the Cathedral Chapter resolved the voluntary transfer to the municipality of a piece of arable land bordering the Capuchin estate (Figure 5, II)<sup>4</sup>.

The executive project (Figure 7)<sup>6</sup> was entrusted to the engineer Matteo Pascazio, who, having abandoned the initial idea of building the cemetery inside the Capuchin Garden, on 15 January 1820, drew up an evaluative report of the site where the cemetery was to be built (*Stato estimativo della opera che richiede la costruzione del camposanto*), accompanied by a map of the municipality of Conversano and its surroundings (*Pianta ostensiva del comune di Conversano e sue adiacenze*) [22].





In drawing the area intended for the cemetery, the author resorts to graphic devices that make the design idea clear.

North of the walled garden of the monastery is a red rectangle, intended as the future cemetery, included in a larger yellow area coinciding with farmland owned by the Cathedral Chapter.

The plan for the cemetery is entrusted to a second drawing that clarifies the conceptual layout [23].

The rectangular area, bordered by a 2-palm-thick and 11.5-palm-high boundary wall, is separated into four equivalent sections for burials by two mutually orthogonal paths and a circular one. An entrance portal in the centre of the western side, leading into a distribution vestibule with side entrances to service rooms, emphasises the east-west axis that becomes the preferred direction of interior circulation in the courtyard (Figure 8)<sup>7</sup>.

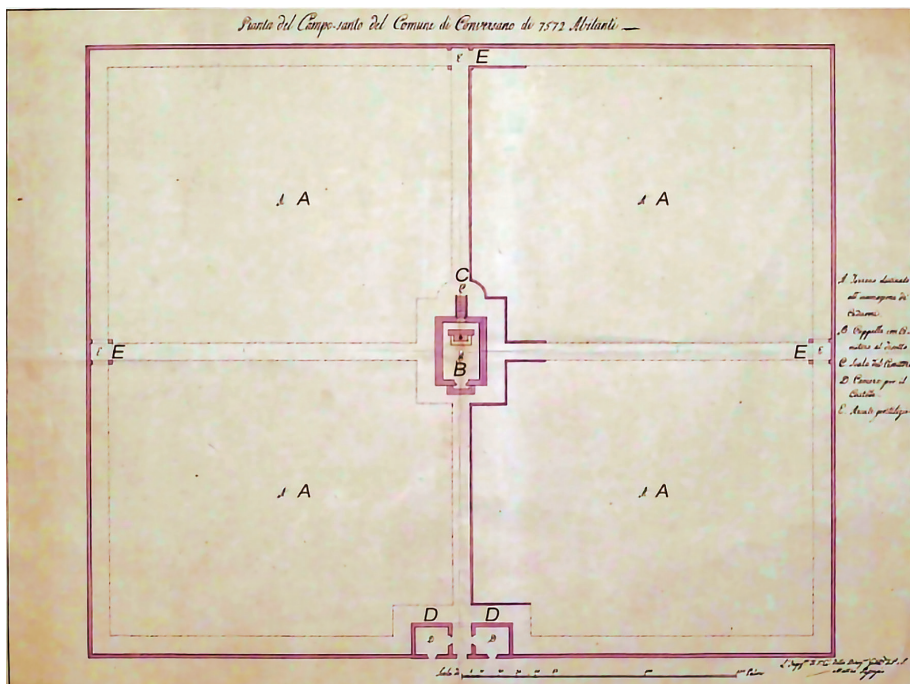


Figure 8. Plan of the Camposanto of the municipality of Conversano with 7572 inhabitants, Matteo Pascazio, 1820 [23].

The project, which envisaged a chapel with an underground burial ground in a barycentric position at the junction of the two perpendicular paths and arches at the midpoints of three of the four sides at the junction with the circular path, was soon shelved due to the lack of funding.

Throughout the 1920s and much of the 1930s, planning for the cemetery came to a standstill, which is why it was decided to use the burial areas of the Carmine, Capuchin and Isola churches.

But a cholera epidemic forced the problem of building the cemetery to be brought up again, so much so that the Chapter clergy confirmed their willingness – already

expressed in 1819 – to give up the land bordering the Capuchin estate and thus allow the cemetery to be built.

The following sentence is quoted in the resolution of 20 June 1838: “*il Capitolo cede al Comune per uso di camposanto il fondo seminatoreale di circa tomola cinque, detto Chiuso di Margaritonda, continuo alle fabbriche del giardino del convento de’ Cappuccini*”, which meant that a part of the agricultural land pertinent to the Capuchin monastery was to be yielded from the college of canons to the municipality to be used as a cemetery in return for some lease payments.

The project entrusted to the architect Saverio Alfaraño [24] echoed the 1820 version as it had the same layout, the same elements, and the same distributive aspects, but it modified the extension of the cemetery and its position to the east of the estate, with access on the south side, unlike the previous solution (Figure 5, III)<sup>4</sup>.

The work, started in 1840 and interrupted in 1847, concerned the construction of a part of the monumental buildings of the cemetery, in particular the access portal in neoclassical style and the entrance hall equipped with two rooms for the caretaker; however, the construction of the quadripartite space, of the church in the center and of the noble ‘arcades’ located along the perimeter wall, had not yet been completed.

Life in the monastery, meanwhile, continued undisturbed. In fact, work resumed within the Capuchin structure in 1841, this time aimed at reconfiguring the church with the construction of a new, lower barrel vault, the erection of a semi-circular tympanum on the façade and the reconstruction of the bell gable [25], the addition of two more chapels on the south side, the demolition of the cells that had been erected above the chapels on the north side of the church [26] and the demolition and reconstruction of the north-east wing (Figure 5, IV)<sup>4</sup>.

The completion of the works, begun in 1840, was entrusted to the architect, Sante Simone (1823-1894), who, on 10 January 1860, drew up an art project for the completion of the cemetery (*Progetto d’arte per il completamento del camposanto*) [27].

The architect placed the single-chamber church in the centre, in line with the entrance towards which the façade is oriented, surrounded on three sides by the Capuchin burial sections (Figure 4, IV)<sup>3</sup>.

While work was proceeding, in 1861, the Capuchin monastery fell victim to the suppression of religious orders and congregations ratified by Royal Decree No. 3036 of 7 July 1866, at first passing to the state and then to the municipality [28].

Immediately afterwards, a violent cholera epidemic broke out in 1867, which forced it to be converted into a hospital.

Having examined the possibility of occupying part of the Capuchin garden “for the burial of the corpses of the cholera ridden” and, immediately after verifying the impossibility of arranging a “provisional cemetery for burials” due to the objective difficulty of excavating the rock in a short time and filling it with soil, the work was accelerated and concluded with the construction of the fourth and last section, in addition to those completed twenty years earlier.

In 1874 the definitive configuration of the cemetery was determined: the noble tombs were built, the avenues were created, and square-shaped spaces were created in front of the church with the aim of enlarging the churchyard. Although the areas designated for the noble burial grounds were arranged along the inner perimeter, as documented in the plan, these would, in fact, not retain the dimensions and precise symmetry envisaged in the plan because they were left to the discretion of individual private patrons.

Another cholera epidemic in 1886 necessitated a new expansion of the cemetery area. Having resumed architect Sante Simone’s only partially realised plan, it was de-

cided to set aside the monumental part, which was considered less urgent and more expensive, and opt for batches of work deemed more pressing and could be started in separate stages.

In October 1888, the municipal technical office drew up a plan, divided into two plots, which provided for the arrangement of two new burial areas, called terraces, in which entombment would be prohibited [29] (Figure 5, V)<sup>4</sup>. Pending the completion of the new terraces, an area of land was to function as a “temporary cemetery for inhumation”.

The work to expand the cemetery, consisting of demolishing a section of the monastery wall on the eastern side and “filling in the terraces” with soil taken from the Capuchin Garden, continued in 1893, followed two years later by supplementary works and repairs to the monastery walls.

As further expansion of the cemetery became necessary, in 1896, the Conversano municipal council passed a provision for works, in order to complete the cemetery (*Provvedimento pei lavori di completamento del cimitero*), proposing the construction of a second section [30].

In keeping with the desire to respect the layout of the old cemetery, the expansion project identifies two new burial areas to the east and west of the existing cemetery, with the necessary areas being purchased from the land owned by Francesco Berardi and the heirs of Accolti Gil (Figure 5, VI)<sup>4</sup>.

In the report attached to the project to enlarge and reorganise the Conversano Cemetery (*Progetto dell’ampliamento e sistemazione del cimitero di Conversano*) drafted in 1898 [31], the engineer, Oronzo Grassi transposed the administrative provisions by planning for the relocation of the inhumation sections from the garden of the Capuchins to the side plots of the old cemetery intended for new burials [32] (Figures 9 and 10)<sup>8</sup>.

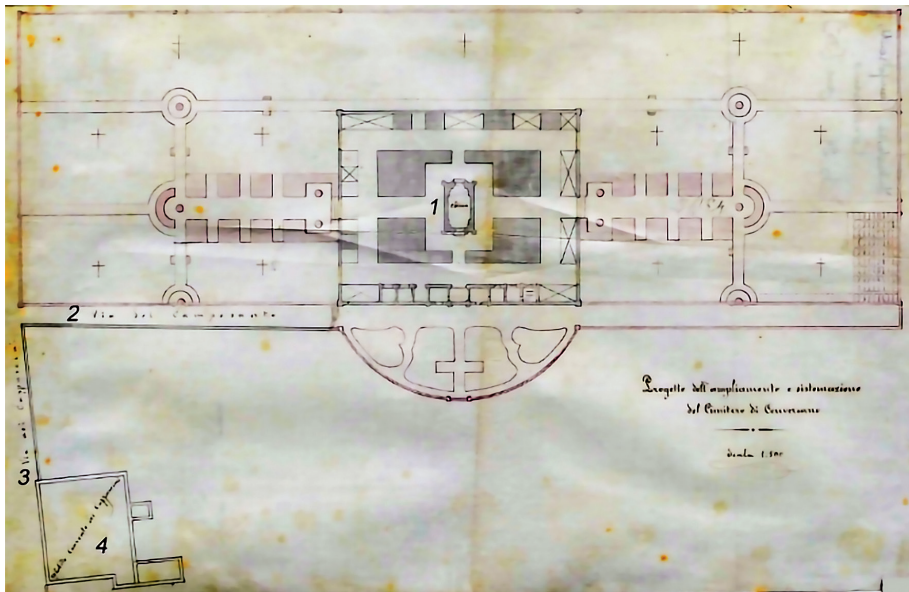


Figure 9. Project for the enlargement and reorganisation of the Conversano Cemetery, plan, Oronzo Grassi, 1899 [32].

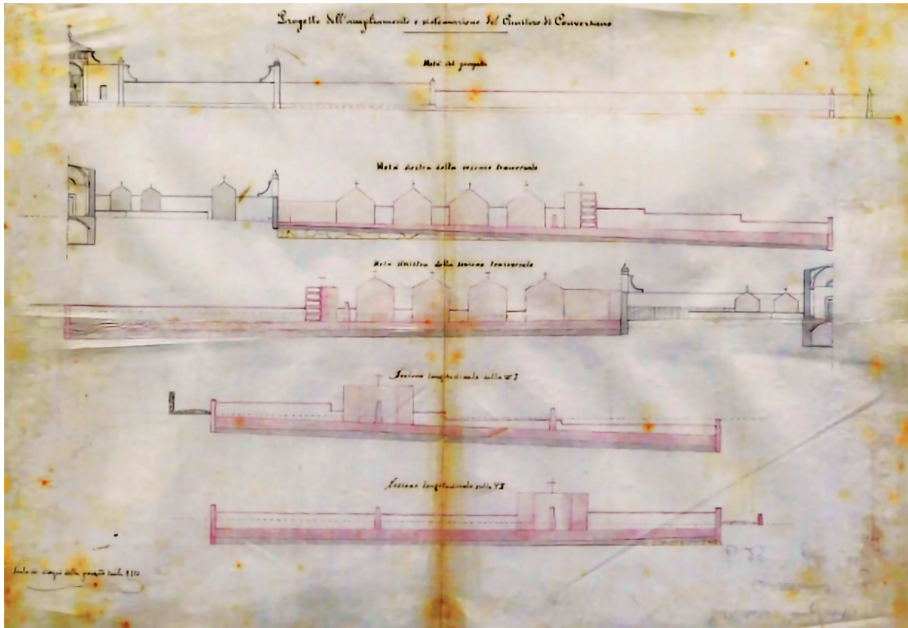


Figure 10. Project for the enlargement and layout/reorganisation of the Conversano Cemetery, perspectives and sections, Oronzo Grassi, 1899 [32].

The pre-existing cemetery was placed between two new burial areas and was emphasized through the creation of a semi-circular open space in front of the entrance; this semicircular space was delimited by a retaining wall with flower beds and bordered by an avenue connecting with the Strada dei Cappuccini.

Thanks to the new configuration of the cemetery (which would have allowed the ex-convent garden to be freed) and to the excellent quality of the soil, the garden could be used for agricultural cultivation and no longer for burial, guaranteeing a significant annual income (*"rilevante rendita annuale"*).

The proposal made by the municipal authority as early as 1893 to transfer the architectural complex to the Capuchin friars with the obligation to keep and maintain the cemetery, can be traced back to a not entirely disinterested desire for rehabilitation.

The clause included in the agreement submitted to the religious order to give up part of the monastery in the event of an epidemic to establish a lazaret there, was not met with the favour of either the friars or the provincial council.

Once the project failed, the church was abandoned and the residential part remained unused with the inevitable consequence that it rapidly deteriorated, until the architectural complex, described as "small and damp" [33], was abandoned in 1901.

Ten years later, the Capuchin residence was converted into a masseria (ie. a farm), the garden rented out [34], and the cloister used as a shelter for herds.

It was at this juncture that a project to adapt the monastery as a lazaret was approved, drawn up by Oronzo Grassi [35], who had arranged for the demolition of a section of the garden wall near the south-west corner, with the aim of creating an autonomous entrance and constructing an exterior staircase [36] to reach some cells on the upper floor that had been converted into isolation rooms (Figure 4, V)<sup>3</sup>.



No trace remains of the new staircase, which was demolished with the decommissioning of the lazaret and the 1927 addition, on the south side, of a stable and storehouse [37] (later converted into a marble works, which was, in turn, decommissioned) (Figure 4, VI)<sup>3</sup>.

Grassi drew up another plan for the cemetery, described in a brief report dated 31 March 1910 [38], which envisions the demolition of the previous boundary wall to eliminate any separation between the old cemetery and the new one (Figure 5, VII)<sup>4</sup>. Instead, to enlarge the space in front of the entrance, he planned and implemented the demolition of the north wall of the Capuchin Garden and the removal of a portion of the land belonging to the monastery.

From the 1920s onwards, the cemetery area was further expanded to the north and, in time, filled to capacity (Figure 5, VIII)<sup>4</sup>, while the Capuchin organisation did not undergo any further substantial changes, despite the attempt of the municipality of Conversano to lease the monastery to the Bishop's Curia, with the aim of establishing an orphanage there, which was, however, questioned and contravened with the termination of the contract signed the following year [39].

A new configuration thus took shape, in which the ancient spatial relationships between the filled and empty spaces, the built-up and enclosed space of the Capuchin structure, the walled garden and the farm outside the enclosure changed.

Following the deprivation of two northern sectors used as parking for the cemetery, the garden irreversibly changed its extension, its planimetric conformation and the distribution of crops in three distinct areas: in the northern area, an orderly planting of olive and fruit trees arranged parallel to the boundary line; in the central area, rows of vineyards arranged at a different angle to the previous position; finally, in the South-West area, an orchard with a chaotic arrangement of trees (Figure 11)<sup>9</sup>.



*Figure 11. Conversano, view of the Garden in its current state.*

#### 4. Conservation and enhancement perspectives

The fate of the Conversano monastery is not dissimilar to that of other Capuchin structures abandoned to themselves, like the monastery of Manfredonia in Capitanata, which was eventually swallowed up by the city of the dead, thus losing the reason for its existence, or that of Tricase in the extreme southern part of the Terra d'Otranto, irreversibly separated from and deprived of its ancient vegetable garden.

These are architectural complexes that have not recovered from the severe blow suffered when the confiscation of ecclesiastical heritage followed the suppression of religious orders. The Capuchin monasteries, which sprang up outside the walls along the routes of alms collection and preaching, are tangible evidence of a broad process of diffusion and stabilisation of the Capuchin in the region, between the 16th and 17th centuries, becoming, over time, undisputed and indispensable resources for local communities. The splitting up of the property following State acquisition, the transformations that have taken place as a result of changing needs, additions, amputations, replacements, subsequent decommissioning and consequent abandonment have downgraded these structures from territorial garrisons to marginalised places.

From this point of view, the Conversano monastery is a paradigmatic case that offers particularly significant food for thought on the meaning and role that an architectural structure, such as the one described, can assume in a profoundly changed context. The change in spatial relationships that has occurred over time, compared to the wealth of available documents, useful for retracing its complex history, makes it possible to debate not only the reality of the layers that characterise its architecture and main site, but also the possibility for restoration to reinterpret the whole and redefine its current identity as a stratified structure.

These are architectural structures with extraordinarily rich historical layers, which are the result of centuries-old events whose signs have been obscured, altered and disfigured over time for reasons related to the contingency of the historical moment but which have become part of a new figurative context.

These are events that must be investigated and understood to raise awareness of the value of what remains in its varied configuration as well as the vulnerability of a heritage that is still not taken enough into consideration. If history is able to unveil the signs of change through the investigation of sources, the analysis of material data with their great documentary potential, restoration has the task of interpreting, making sense of the multiplicity of traces found, but also preserving and transmitting to the future the information, messages and meanings that the artefact expresses, even within a changed context – which must certainly be welcomed – allowing it to be used and enjoyed again as far as possible.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Top view of the cemetery site of Conversano (drawing by N. Catella, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> In Figure 2, western facade of the Capuchin Monastery in Conversano, survey of current state, photo by M.A. Catella, N. Catella, V.A. Barnabà, 2011. In Figure 3, horizontal section of the Capuchin Monastery in Conversano, survey of current state (drawings by M.A. Catella, N. Catella, V.A. Barnabà, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> The main construction phases of the Capuchin Monastery in Conversano: I. The original unit; II. The addition of four chapels and the sacristy, the expansion of the west

wing to accommodate a woollen mill on the ground floor and a new library on the upper floor; III. The new chapel to the south-east of the church, the expansion of the choir towards the east, the expansion of the refectory, the sacrifice of the old staircase and two porticoed wings of the cloister to make a new staircase, the increase in the number of cells in the dormitory above the chapels to the north of the church, the further expansion of the southern wing towards the south-east; IV. The reconfiguration of the church, the addition on the south side of two more chapels, the demolition of the cells above the chapels on the north side of the church, the demolition and reconstruction of the north-east wing; V. The plan for the municipal technical office; VI. The addition on the south side of a stable and storage room (drawings by M.A. Catella, N. Catella, V.A. Barnabà, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Cemetery of Conversano construction phases: I. The original walled garden; II. Matteo Pascazio's plan; III. Saverio Alfarano's plan; IV. Sante Simone's plan; V. The plan for the municipal technical office; VI. Oronzo Grassi's first plan; VII. Oronzo Grassi's second plan; VIII. The most recent expansion (drawings by N. Catella, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> The surviving boundary wall of the Capuchin Garden in Conversano (drawings by N. Catella, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Matteo Pascazio, 1820, *Pianta ostensiva del Comune di Conversano e sue adiacenze*, ASBA, Intendenza, b.23, file no. 155. Drawing on a scale of 2,000 palms, 46 x 59 cm, colour paper, 15/01/1820. Transcription of the Legend: A. Pianta della Città di Conversano; 1. Porta del Castello; 2. Porta di Acquaviva; 3. Porta del Carmine; 4. Porta del Casal Vecchio; 5. Strada di Castellana; 6. Strada di Monopoli; 7. Strada di Polignano; 8. Via del Monte; 9. Via vicinale; 10. Monistero degli Ex Padotti; 11. Strada de Cappuccini; 12. Cappella di S. M. della Miseria; 13. Monistero e Giardino de Cappuccini; 14. Strada dell'Isola; 15. Cappella di S. Rocco; 16. Strada di Acquaviva; 17. Strada di Turi; 18. Monistero del Carmine. Nota: Il color giallo indica la pianta del territorio prescelto per lo Camposanto. Il color rosso indica la posizione, figura ed estensione di detto Camposanto. Translation of the text in the Figure: Extensive plan of the Municipality of Conversano and its surroundings, with indication of the site chosen for the construction of the Camposanto Legend: A. Plan of the city of Conversano; 1. gate of the Castle; 2. Acquaviva Gate; 3. Carmine Gate; 4. Casal Vecchio gate; 5. Castellana road; 6. Street of Monopoli; 7. Polignano road; 8. Via del Monastero; 9. Local road; 10. Monastery of the Ex Padotti; 11. Strada de Cappuccini; 12. Chapel of S. M. della Miseria; 13. Monastery and Garden of the Capuchins; 14. Island Road; 15. Chapel of S. Rocco; 16. Acquaviva road; 17. Street of Turi; 18. Carmelite Monastery. Note: The yellow color indicates the plan of the territory chosen for the Camposanto. The red color indicates the position, shape and extension of said Camposanto. The engineer of the 3rd division of the General Directorate of Bari Matteo Pascazio.

<sup>7</sup> Matteo Pascazio, 1820, *Pianta del Camposanto del Comune di Conversano di 7572 abitanti*, ASBA, Intendenza, b.23, file no. 155. Drawing on a scale of 150 palms, ink and watercolour. Transcription of the Legend: A. Terreno destinato all'inumazione de cadaveri; B. Cappella con Cimitero al disotto; C. Scala del Cimitero; D. Camere per il custode; E. Arcate gentilizie. Translation of the text in the Figure: Plan of the Camposanto of the Municipality of Conversano of 7572 inhabitants. Legend: A. Land intended for burial; B. Chapel with Cemetery below; C. Staircase of the Cemetery; D. Caretaker's rooms; E. Gentile Arcades. The engineer of the 3rd division of the General Directorate of Bari Matteo Pascazio.

<sup>8</sup> Oronzo Grassi, 1899, *Progetto di ampliamento e sistemazione del Cimitero di Conversano*, ASBA, Intendenza, b.29, file no. 35. Plan on a 1:500 scale, 33 x 52.5 cm

and Perspectives and sections on a 1:250 scale (transcript of captions from top to bottom: Metà del prospetto; Metà destra della sezione trasversale; Metà sinistra della sezione trasversale; Sezione longitudinale sulla WJ), 41 x 62 cm, ink and watercolour on glossy canvas. Translation of the text in Figure 9: Project for the expansion and arrangement of the Conversano Cemetery – Scale 1:500. Legend: 1. Church; 2. Via del Camposanto; 3. Via dei Cappuccini; 4. Abolished Capuchin Convent. Translation of the text in Figure 10: Project for the expansion of the Conversano Cemetery. From top to bottom: Half of the Project; Right half of cross section; Left Half of Cross Section; Longitudinal section on the WJ; Longitudinal section on the YX. Scale of the drawings in this plate 1:250.

<sup>9</sup> View of the Garden in its current state (photo by N. Catella, 2019).

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## Summary

In the first decades of the 19th century, local authorities in Capitanata, Terra di Bari and Terra d’Otranto set about acquiring extramural land and preparing plans for new cemeteries in application of the health laws passed in 1817 during the Bourbon Restoration, complying with the provisions of the Napoleonic edict of Saint-Cloud.

The idea of acquiring places of worship outside the city walls, including suppressed monasteries, with their walled gardens that could be included in the enclosures of the erected cemeteries, immediately appeared to be a useful expedient for overcoming the difficulty of devising a new spatial model for burials, taking advantage of architectural structures that offered the dual advantage of counting on significant cost containment and maintaining a strong link to the ancient Christian tradition of burial in a sacred place. This entailed redesigning the relationship between the built and enclosed spaces of many Capuchin structures, which were deprived of their walled garden with the inevitable transformation of the site and, as a result, were forced to redetermine its semantics.

In the case of Conversano, the varying spatial relationships pose a problem that can be addressed by resorting to a project to conserve and enhance the Capuchin structure, so as to renew the mutually beneficial coexistence between the monastery and the cemetery by bringing together what has survived of the walled garden and what has become part of the garden of memory.

## Riassunto

Nei primi decenni del XIX secolo le autorità locali in Capitanata, Terra di Bari e Terra d’Otranto si accingono ad acquistare terreni extra moenia e a predisporre progetti per i nuovi composanti in applicazione delle leggi sanitarie varate nel 1817, durante la Restaurazione Borbonica, a conferma delle prescrizioni dell’editto napoleonico di Saint-Cloud. L’idea di acquisire al patrimonio comunale luoghi di culto esterni alla cinta urbana, ivi compresi i conventi soppressi con i loro giardini murati che potevano essere inclusi nei recinti degli erigendi composanti, appare subito un utile espediente per

superare la difficoltà di ideare un nuovo modello spaziale destinato alle sepolture, potendo usufruire di organismi architettonici che offrivano il duplice vantaggio di contare su un significativo contenimento dei costi e di mantenere un forte legame con l'antica tradizione cristiana dell'inumazione in un luogo sacro. Questo ha comportato un ridisegno del rapporto fra i volumi costruiti e gli spazi recintati di molti organismi cappuccini, mutilati del giardino murato, con un'inevitabile trasformazione del sito costretto ad una rideterminazione semantica.

Nel caso di Conversano i variati rapporti spaziali pongono un nodo problematico che può essere affrontato ricorrendo ad un progetto di conservazione e valorizzazione dell'organismo cappuccino, attento ad una rinnovata convivenza fra il convento e il camposanto, fra quanto sopravvissuto del giardino murato e quanto entrato a far parte del giardino della memoria.