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# The involvement of the students in the scientific research: the hidden proportions of the churches of Chieti-Vasto Archdiocese

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## Abstract

In the course of “History of Architecture”, at the II school year of the Architecture University of Chieti, an experimental activity linked to theoretical studies has been developed by involving about 200 students in a scientific research. This study, already started before, concerns the analysis of Renaissance and Baroque architecture of about 70 churches bordering on the university, dated between XV and XVIII Century, and built by minor Italian architects, for who we have scarce documents and studies.

The importance of the proposed argument consists in the simultaneity between teaching and research activity, that allowed also to progress in the knowledge of the studied architectural heritage.

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*Keywords: History of architecture; Renaissance and Baroque architecture; Chieti and Vasto Archdiocese; research activity.*

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## 1. An experimental didactic activity for the History of Architecture<sup>1</sup>

The ancient building is a peculiar and very complex construction requiring a multidisciplinary approach. The purpose of the History of Architecture teaching is to know the architectural heritage, in relation to the aesthetics and formal aspects as well as to the materials, the techniques and the static principles, by combining the stylistic interpretation and the notions concerning the technical instruments and the implementation phases.

To know the historical monuments and their constructive events, students are encouraged to study a specific bibliography.

For the teaching of History of Architecture, in addition to the theoretical study, we consider useful to propose to the students a direct analysis of some historical architectures, through specialized seminars and some workshops made during the visits to the buildings. Essential in didactic activity is the collaboration of students who, during the meetings, may communicate to their colleagues the new acquired knowledges by elaborating graphic samples (Cacciavillani, 2005).

In the Academic Year 2009-2010, we wanted to combine the university method to the scientific activity carried out in the same period, aiming to show to students the importance of the research concerning the historical and architectural heritage, as well as the story of the construction, of the materials and the techniques, of the anthropic or natural transformations and damages occurred during the time.

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After the earthquake that in 2009 hit the city of L'Aquila and its territory, also in the rest of the Abruzzi Region we have registered many damages, especially in the monumental historical buildings. To verify the conditions of the religious architecture of the Chieti and Vasto Diocese we formed a Scientific Committee, composed by some professors from the Architecture Faculty, University of Chieti-Pescara - C.A. Cacciavillani, M. D'Anselmo, C. Falasca, C. Valente; collaborators: F. D'Adamo, A. Di Evangelista, L. Zuccarino, C. Mazzanti -, experts in different subjects such as history of architecture and techniques of construction, statics of the structures, environmental science, consolidation and restoration of buildings. As a result of the earthquake, investigations have been made in about 40 damaged churches which often have been closed for security reasons.

The interested area was the North-Western part of the territory of the Archdiocese, including buildings that are located more than 100 km from the epicenter of the earthquake. In order to obtain more information about these buildings we also made archive research of historical documents and graphic materials.

### 1.1 Purpose of Study

In the course of "History of Architecture", at the II school year - professor C.A. Cacciavillani -, an experimental activity linked to theoretical studies has been developed by involving more than 200 students in the scientific research. This analysis concerned most of the churches of all the Chieti and Vasto Archdiocese, even in the areas not affected by the earthquake. The study concerns the historical buildings of Chieti and Vasto Archdiocese that includes 157 parishes in 92 municipalities in the Abruzzi Region, 79 in the province of Chieti and 13 in the province of Pescara. Parishes are grouped into 10 pastoral areas: Atessa, Casoli, Chieti, Chieti Scalo, Fossacesia-Casalbordino, Francavilla al Mare, Gissi, Guardiagrele, Scafa and Vasto (Liberatoscioli, 2000).

The most important churches, that are already widely known, such as the St. Justin Cathedral in Chieti and the St. Joseph co-cathedral in Vasto, or the churches that maintained the original medieval architecture and for this reason are particularly protected, such as the San Liberatore a Majella Abbey, are not analysed. On the contrary, we want to study the buildings built or modified between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries by minor workers inside the Italian architectural landscape. For these constructions we have scarce documents and scientific studies. In many cases they are medieval foundations that, during the centuries, have undergone important changes or reconstructions of their original shapes, totally or partially substituted.

Subjects focused during the Course are Renaissance and Baroque Architecture. As a consequence the buildings of the Chieti and Vasto Archdiocese considered for this didactic activity have such architectural styles: churches built or altered since the end of the Fifteenth Century until the Eighteenth Century and beyond. The objective of this experimental activity is to encourage the interest of the student towards the buildings of the past and thus obtain a skill that can be shared with other matters and disciplines. The workshop held during the Academic Year 2009-2010 was conceived as an important training moment for students, by providing graphic works and by planning different difficulties according to the different learning phases foreseen during the course (Cuneo, 1995).

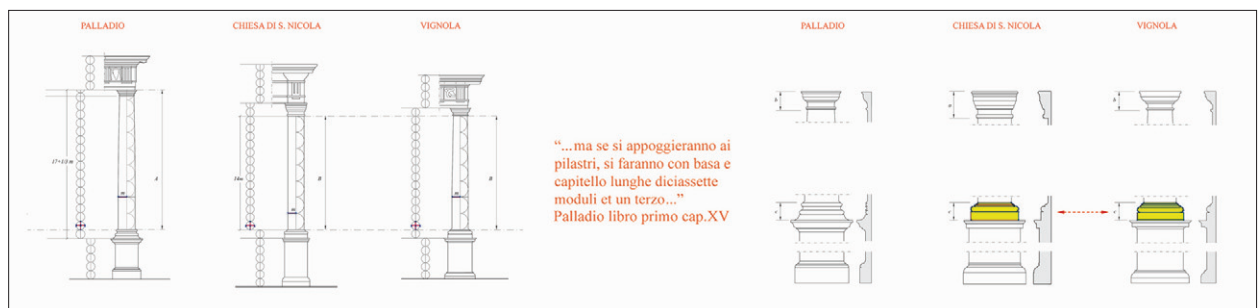


Fig. 1. Caramanico. Church of San Nicola di Bari. The study of architectural orders.

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