
FOREWORD

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Ever since its foundation, and in line with the aims of the existing "PACT Network", the European University Centre for Cultural Heritage has pursued the objective of promoting and organising exchanges and comparisons of various techniques and sciences, by applying them to the cultural heritage of Europe. Its purpose is to study the issues and suggest solutions arrived at via a multidisciplinary approach.

The Centre has thus played a leading role in measures taken under the Open Partial Agreement signed in 1987 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to protect cultural heritage from natural and man-made disasters. Earthquake zones are a particular focus of attention and constitute a case in which close cooperation between geologists, architects and historians is absolutely essential.

Fundamental concepts such as the vulnerability of old buildings, the "earthquake culture" generated in areas hit by disasters, apparent "anomalies" which are justified by their role in helping structures to withstand earthquakes - all these were explored and tested in San Lorenzello, a small village in the Province of Benevento (Naples) devastated by earthquakes in 1688, 1805 and recently in 1980.

One of the most noteworthy features of the study, carried out in San Lorenzello by Italian and French scientists and coordinated by Ferruccio Ferrigni, Giuseppe Luongo and Bruno Helly, is its attempt to identify the techniques devised by the people of San Lorenzello through the centuries to protect their living environment against seismic shocks. Valuable lessons can be learned from an analysis of the buildings, the oral tradition and an "archaeological reading" of the village's ancient built heritage which, when forgotten - and when present-day precautions are not observed - make the effects of earthquakes worse.

Protection of the cultural heritage through the revival of local "earthquake cultures" is made possible by collaboration between technical experts and researchers from all the disciplines involved.

The San Lorenzello experiment detailed in this volume shows what can be achieved by methods and criteria based on the exact sciences, when these are combined with a humanistic approach consistent with what has been termed as the "spirit of San Ravello".