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## SAN LORENZELLO AND ITS EARTHQUAKES

In our attempt to understand how the problem of earthquakes was addressed in the past it seemed a good idea to look at the marks left by the various earthquakes on local buildings. But in order to know how the culture was gradually altered by experience we need to know the location and spread of dwellings at the time of each earthquake.

It was found that it was more useful to consider urban development in the historic centre of San Lorenzello in relation to the main earthquakes (those which left traces in the archives and the local folk memory) rather than in relation to different periods of history.

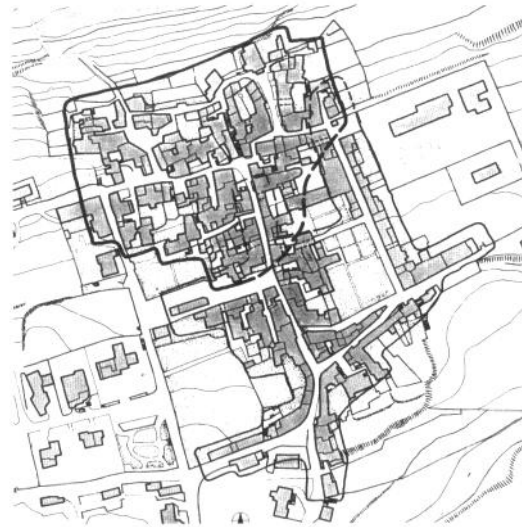
This kind of analysis requires no special investigation. It is enough to organise differently the factors one usually studies when tracing the town planning history of a centre, that is to say to check and compare:

- a) a morphological analysis of the urban fabric;
- b) a typological and stylistic analysis of the buildings;
- c) an analysis of building methods;
- d) historical records;
- e) the oral tradition,

and to relate these to the findings of historical seismology and compare the whole lot with the major earthquakes which have occurred. In the case of San Lorenzello these are the earthquakes of 1456, 1688, 1805 and 1980.

The morphology of the urban fabric was analysed on the basis of the relationship between roads and

buildings (houses bordering on and back from the road, constant or irregular street widths, etc.) and yielded an idea of how the centre had probably



developed at the time of the two biggest and best documented earthquakes, those of 1688 and 1805. A second element was an analysis of individual building types; this was difficult because buildings had been extensively restored after each earthquake.

There are fundamentally two types: "organic" additions (medieval in origin) and curtain-type additions (18/19th century). Building methods provide a third means of dating buildings. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that it may be relatively easy to say when a particular method first made its appearance (for example, hammer faced rather than dressed stone), but it is very difficult to establish when it ceased to be employed (chisels are still in use today). Analysis of bays and openings is usually a good guide in dating

a building. As for the oral tradition (there are countless legends about how San Lorenzello was founded), this states that the original core of the village first arose in the area of Muro Filippo, that is to say at the northern end of the present-day centre, close to the old parish church of San Lorenzo. This tradition is confirmed both by the presence of ruined doorways and man-made excavations on the mountainside above the Via Muro Filippo and by the opinion of the team's geologists. There is evidence, however, that the southern part of the original centre was developed fairly recently (recollections by great-great-grandparents) and that it contained ceramics workshops.



It should be noted, regarding documentary sources, that we used a record written by the village priest discovered during the author's search of public and private archives and libraries. This text contains useful information but is only one part of the original documentation. The study conducted by the team's seismicity historians demonstrated the value of always going back to original sources (cf. page 60).

Nevertheless the text helped to date buildings in relation to the earthquakes in question.

In conclusion it may be said that the 1456 earthquake struck a village which was probably somewhat bigger than the original core, around the church of San Lorenzo (built before, at the same time as, after the original village? - we do not know) and occupying the area now bordered by the streets called Cesolle, Avanti Santi and Muro Filippo. The 1688 earthquake affected a much larger village which had developed southwards along the road going past the Carmelite convent and on to the terraces bordering the centre.

After this earthquake buildings were reconstructed and strengthened, preserving the integrity of the urban fabric. The oldest covered passageways probably date from this period. Development tended to be from east to west and southwards. The area of housing encompassed the Via Surripe, Via Croce and the Via P. Massone. In 1805, the year of the third major earthquake, the village was almost the size of the present-day historic centre.

