

quaderni delle regaste

8

Regaste is an old Veronese term for a tract of the Adige riverbank
that has been built up and is protected by a wall.
From the Regaste one has an excellent view of the city.

Acknowledgments

This editorial initiative is supported by the Comune of Verona; thus we wish to thank Cultural advisor Antonia Pavesi and the director of the Settore Musei e Monumenti Paola Marini. Thanks also go to Alfredo Buonopane, Patrizia De Bernardo Stempel, Marco Girardi, Maria Teresa Grassi, Viviana Tagetto and the Accademia di Belle Arti (for the use of drawings by students of Diego Arich and Franco Spaliviero, in consultation with the author, for the publication *L'Arena di Verona*, 2002).

The images furnished by the Coordinamento Musei d'Arte e Monumenti of the Comune of Verona cannot otherwise be reproduced. Various photographs from the archives of the Museo Archeologico at the Teatro Romano (here abbreviated MATR) and the Museo Maffei are anonymous.

Italian edition: *Verona Romana* (2015; republished 2019)

English translation: Penelope Brownell

ISBN: 978-88-5520-160-5

© 2022 Cierre edizioni

via Ciro Ferrari 5, 37066 Sommacampagna, Verona

tel. 045 8581572

edizioni.cierrenet.it, edizioni@cierrenet.it

MARGHERITA BOLLA

ROMAN VERONA

CIERRE EDIZIONI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Verona and Antiquity	9
Roman Verona	17
The name of the city	17
The first settlement on the hillside and the resources of the territory	17
The urban plan on the right bank of the Adige	27
The city wall and events of war	41
City gates	54
Bridges	64
The forum area	69
Arches	74
Cult sanctuaries	80
Buildings of entertainment	87
Baths	94
The <i>horrea</i>	98
Houses and villas	99
Cemeteries	104
Churches	107
Antique images of the city	110
Reuse of Roman stone blocks and sculptures	114
For further study	129

N.B.

The text aims to provide an introduction to the historical-archaeological vicissitudes of the city of Verona in Roman times intended to enrich the knowledge of the general reader. A personal itinerary for visits can be constructed by consulting the entries for individual sites and museums published on website www.archeoveneto.it of the Region of the Veneto. For the Arena and the Roman Theatre, the reader is referred to the volumes in this same series. Except for brief mentions, the territory is not dealt with.

Much of the material presented, based on published sources, is subject to revision resulting from updated information regarding sites excavated, maintained and supervised by the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Verona, Rovigo e Vicenza.

The chronological limit chosen is 526, the year of the death of Theodorich the Great. Dates are to be understood as CE (Christian era), except when specifically indicated as BCE (before the Christian era).

MARGHERITA BOLLA
ROMAN VERONA



Verona and Antiquity

By the 14th century, Verona's heritage of grand Roman monuments had stimulated a precocious interest in antiquity. About the middle of the next century the notion of a parallel between the capital of the empire and Verona, which came to be described as the "sister" of the *Urbs*, or a "second Rome", began to spread among cultivated circles in the city.

The study of Latin sources, sometimes misinterpreted, fostered various beliefs, for example about the Veronese origin of illustrious Romans: poets Catullus and Aemilius Macer; Vitruvius, author of the treatise *De architectura*; both Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger; historian Cornelius Nepos; politician and writer of tragedies Pomponius Secundus. Much was written, occasionally with annotations of archaeological interest, to confute the allegiance of great men of the past to other cities.

As studies progressed, they became more objective: Lucius Vitruvius Cerdo, architect of the Arch of the Gavi in Verona, was soon distinguished from the celebrated architect and theorist, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio. And it is considered unlikely that Ostiglia, in antiquity part of Veronese territory, was the birthplace of Cornelius Nepos. Only Aemilius Macer and Catullus remained "Veronese", the fame of the latter adding lustre to the city already in Roman times.

Notions that took root in the local culture produced tangible



1. Loggia del Consiglio in Piazza dei Signori.



2. Stele of Valerius Montanus, Augustan age (Museo Maffeiano, inv. n. 28358).
 3. Stele of Valerius Montanus, drawing by Felice Feliciano in the Codex of Faenza, f. 61r.

effects in literature and art, for example with the creation of a series of statues for the cornice of the Loggia del Consiglio in Piazza dei Signori towards the end of the 15th century (Fig. 1), or the assembly of ideal portraits in the Protomoteca of the same Loggia (now in the Biblioteca Civica) in the 19th. Although many early assumptions no longer held sway, such notions contributed to make Verona a lively centre for the study of classical civilization. By the 15th century embryonic collections of Roman inscriptions were being formed among the bourgeoisie as well as the nobility, and care was taken to document them. For this the work of Felice Feliciano (Figs. 2-3), creator of the *Alphabetum Romanum*, was fundamental. Contemporaneously, the desire grew to preserve antiquities for the sake of future generations. While Andrea Mantegna was involved in work at the church of Santa Maria in Organo, two Roman slabs were inserted in the façade (at the extreme right), one of which, the funerary stele of *Curtia Procilla*, was inscribed with the date 1496 to commemorate its recovery (Fig. 4).

It was, however, in the first half of the 16th century that the study of the Roman character of Verona truly flourished, passing down to us works still important today. In 1540 Torello Sarayna published *De origine et amplitudine civitatis Veronae* (Fig. 5) in the form of a dialogue. Soon translated from Latin to make it accessible to a wider public, it analyses available antique sources to determine how the city was founded, and carefully reviews the Roman monuments. These are illustrated with drawings by Giovanni Caroto, which the artist republished in 1560. His splendid reconstruction of the theatre circulated thanks to the phenomenon of printing. Enormously popular, it came to represent Verona in the *Cosmographia universalis* of Sebastian Münster, a book republished many times (Fig. 6). Also from the Cinquecento are the incomplete *Antiquitates veronenses* of Onofrio Panvinio (not published until 1648) and the work of Alessandro Canobbio, which has remained partly in manuscript form.

In the same period important collections of antiquities – not only of local provenance – were being formed in the city. Especially renowned was that of nobleman Mario Bevilacqua, with acquisitions from Rome, Venice and Bologna displayed in the handsome family palace in Corso Cavour. These collections were eventually dissolved and sold (the Bevilacqua marble statuary is now in Munich), with the exception of part of the noble Giusti collection: originally consisting of sculptures and around forty epigraphs, it was displayed to embellish the famous Giardino



4. Cast of the inscription on the stele of Curtia Procilla at S. Maria in Organo (MATR, inv. n. 22680b).

5. Tomb of Torello Sarayna in the church of San Fermo.

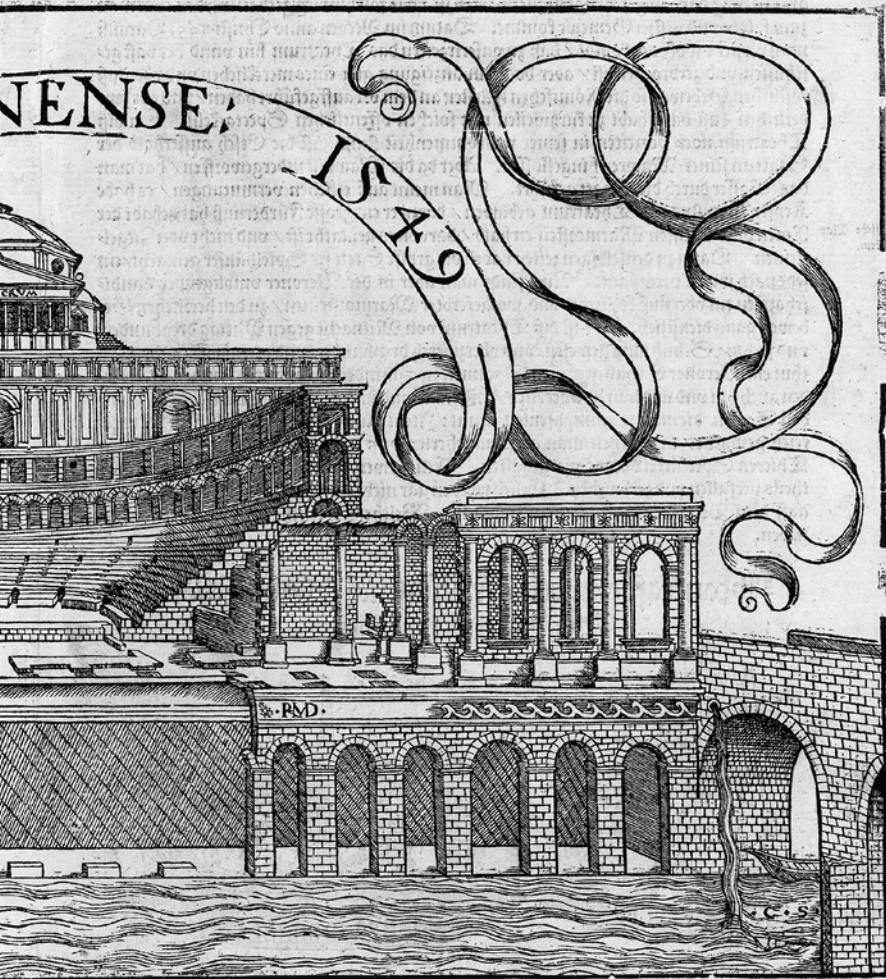


Weiter schreibt gemelter Torellus von Veron also: Wie groß Veron sey gewesen / mag man darauff nennen / das sie hat gehabt ein Theatrum / ein Amphitheatrum / vñ ein Kriegsrüstung Platz / der also groß ist gewesen / das er auch nicht viel hinder ward geacht dan der Platz Martis zu Rom. War. hat darauff geübt die Körper zu Röss / mit Schies sen vnd Waffen / Stechen vnd Fechten / wiewol die Festschul im Amphitheatro ist ge

6. Reconstruction by Caroto of the theatre of Verona in *Cosmographia universalis* of Sebastian Münster (German ed. 1550).

amphitheatri/ Schau oder Spielhauses zu Veron/
dem gewesen ist.

ccciii



halten worden/ vnd andere öffentliche Spiel im Teatro. Das Theatrum ist nun vast
zerfallen/ auch hat man auß geheiß Königs Berengarij viel darvon gebrochen. Dann es
schreibt dieser König also darvon : Die weil es sich in kurzverruckten zeiten hat begeben/
daß in der Statt Veron ein theil vom Spielhaus so vnder dem Schloß ligt / von grosser
ette herab gefallen ist/ vnd zererschlagen hat alle Häuser vnder ihm gelegen/ auch bey vierzig
M m ij Menschen



Giusti along with the fountains and pavilions that so delighted visitors.

In the 17th century Ludovico Moscardo created a noteworthy collection of bronzes, ceramics, glass and inscriptions, published in *Note overo memorie del museo di Lodovico Moscardo nobile veronese*. Here the artifacts in the collection are integrated with written sources to illustrate various aspects of antiquity, Roman in particular. Some of the objects came from Verona and territory, others from the antiquarian market. Some of the epigraphs are now in the Museo Archeologico at the Roman Theatre, while the Museo Miniscalchi-Erizzo contains a substantial nucleus of the collection.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of the Seicento the Accademia Filarmonica commissioned Domenico Curtoni to build a meeting hall next to the “portoni” (double gateway) adjacent to Piazza Bra. He erected the grandiose pronaos (Fig. 7), adopting as his model and generating element for the height of the colonnade a base in Greek

marble (Fig. 8). The base was recognized in the last century as having belonged to the major Roman temple in Verona, the *Capitolium*, and presumably it was Curtioni himself who found it during construction work near Piazza delle Erbe. In a certain sense, the frontal view of the Teatro Filarmonico suggests something of the imposing façade of the Verona *Capitolium*, whose remains inspired the architect even in the decision to whitewash the shafts of the columns of the new pronaos.

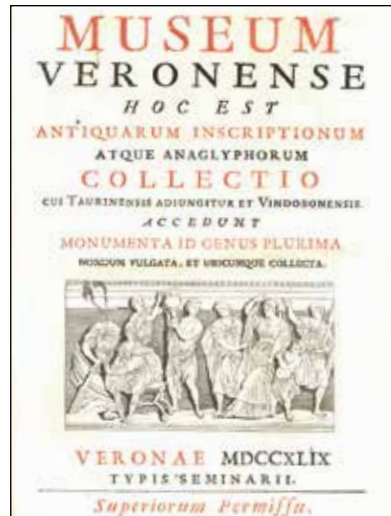
The column base just mentioned was probably the first antique artifact displayed in the area of the pronaos. In subsequent decades numerous epigraphs of mainly local origin were transferred there from the collections of recently deceased members of the Academy, among them Policarpo Palermo

7. Pronaos of the Teatro Filarmonico, architect Domenico Curtioni (1604; photo Offica Nodari).

8. Marble base of a column from the *Capitolium* (Museo Maffeiano, inv. n. 28179), compared to a column base of the pronaos of the Teatro Filarmonico.

9. Portrait of Scipione Maffei, by Antonio Elenetti, signed and dated "Verona 1745" (Museo Maffeiano).

10. Frontispiece of the *Museum Veronense* by Scipione Maffei, 1749.



and Cesare Nichesola. A century later, when Scipione Maffei (1675-1755; Fig. 9) assumed the task of improving the Academy's collection, it counted at least a hundred inscribed and figurative stone slabs, some of large dimension. Maffei wished to transform the collection into an institution of European repute, a "public" museum open to all scholars and travellers, and above all to preserve it from being dispersed - the fate of so many private collections. The breadth of Maffei's interests assured that the museum now bearing his name was endowed with objects from diverse cultures and epochs. Mostly they are inscriptions, which he considered "speaking" antiquity, historical documents that communicate directly. They come not only from Verona but from all over Italy and abroad. For a long time the presence of Greek originals acquired by other collectors as well as through the Venetian antiquarian trade attracted visitors from northern Europe passing through Verona on the Grand Tour. After the publication of the *Museum Veronense* of 1749 (which illustrated the collection with drawings by artists of fame like Giambettino Cignaroli; Fig. 10) and after the death of Maffei, antique epigraphs found in Veronese territory continued to arrive in the lapidary museum (those not pertinent to the original collection were then transferred to the Museo Civico, founded in 1854). The last installation of the Museo Maffeiiano reimposed its original contents (with inevitable modifications) from the time of Maffei. Generally executed on slabs of local ammonitic limestone, the antiquities from the area of Verona are displayed in the courtyard and pronaos. The subdivision of the Museo Civico into several sites gave rise to the Museo Archeologico, inaugurated in 1924 in the convent above the Roman theatre. Artifacts from the city and surrounding areas as well as those from the theatre itself and from private collections acquired by the city are installed there. Notable among the latter are the 18th century collections of Jacopo Muselli and Jacopo Verità.