



**Sicily protagonist of the fall season initiatives of study of
the Italian Institute of Castles**

**A dynasty that wrote the fate of modern Sicily
(the Ventimiglias of Geraci)**

**A conference and guided tours to the most secret fortified
architecture**

**A graduation award for young architects and engineers,
now in its 22nd edition: 2 scholarship winners, 3 awards
and 5 special mentions**

**Palermo and Castelbuono
October, 25-26 2019**

The **Istituto Italiano Castelli (Italian Institute of Castles, IIC)**, a **non-profit** scientific organization founded in 1964 in Milan by Piero Gazzola, thanks to the commitment of the volunteers of its Sicilian regional headquarters, inaugurates the Fall activities with two days of studies, visits and awards ceremony involving Palermo and Castelbuono with a tight program of activities open to its members and the public, free of charge.

On October 25 and 26, Sicily and the **Istituto Italiano Castelli** celebrate the history of the Italian fortified heritage - second only to the religious in quality and importance in Italy - by studying a territory, the Sicilian one, and a dynasty (the Ventimiglias), having as a core moment of the two intense cultural days a group of young

awarded Italian graduates authors of master graduation dissertations on restoration of architectures that are often not valued, distributed from the north to the south of the country and with great potential to be explored.

On **Friday 25th October from 3.30 pm**, the Palermo **Palazzo Ajutamicristo** - home of the Regional body for Cultural and Environmental Heritage - hosts the first part of a symposium of studies on the Ventimiglia family and their contemporary commitment to enhance the castle heritage in which - among others - the President of the Sicily Region On. **Nello Musumeci**, the Mayor of Palermo Hon. **Leoluca Orlando**, the Superintendent **Lina Bellanca** and the president of the Italian Castles Institute, **Fabio Pignatelli della Leonessa**, together with the national vice-president, the Sicilian **Michaela Stagno D'Alcontres Marullo** and the president of the Sicilian section of the Onlus, **Francesco Cultrera di Montesano** will take part.

This study day focuses on rediscovering and telling exciting stories of members of the Sicilian dynasty: the figure of **Francesco Ventimiglia**, scientist and technician in the century of Newton; the women of the Ventimiglias and in particular **Margherita**, duchess of Terranova and finally the distinguished and noble figure of the late engineer **Giovanni Ventimiglia di Monteforte**, who guided and presided over the Institute with all-encompassing passion, commitment, dedication.

The family of the Ventimiglias crossed the history of Sicily from the Federician age, when the new feudal class asserted itself, until the reform of 1812 and beyond.

It will play a pivotal role in the historical evolution of the island starting from the middle of the thirteenth century when, after moving from Genoa to Sicily, Enrico Ventimiglia married Isabella of the counts of Craon, gentlemen, among other things, of the Madonie, and where he settled thus becoming Count of Geraci. From this settlement the expansion of the dynasty begins.

In 1316 Francesco I founded the village of Castelbuono, where in the following century Giovanni I moved the marquis court there and built his own mausoleum annexed to the San Francesco convent. **The importance of the Ventimiglia family in the history of Sicily is still evidenced by the promotion of very high level historical and artistic productions and by the presence of castles built in their numerous possessions.**

The attention towards the Ventimiglias by the Sicily Section of the Italian Castles Institute is today in continuity with the study conference held in Catania on November 17 and 18 2016 on the figure of Giuseppe Ventimiglia, Prince of

Belmonte, on the 250th anniversary of his birth and **one of the main drafters of the Sicilian Constitution of 1812.**

On **Saturday 26 October from 10 to 18**, the symposium curated by **Fulvia Caffo**, former Superintendent of Catania and President of the Scientific Council of the Italian Castles Institute (Sicily Section) and by Prof. **Giuseppe Ingaglio** (member of the Institute's Governing Council) will move to **Castelbuono**, at the Castello dei Ventimiglia where, with the participation of **Maria Enza Puccia** (President of the Civic Museum of Castelbuono), **Laura Barreca** (Director of the Civic Museum of Castelbuono), **Mario Cicero** (Mayor of Castelbuono) and **Don Alduino Ventimiglia of Monteforte Lascaris**, the sessions focus on the work of the Ventimiglias in the state-owned city of Cefalù and in the county of Geraci between urban strategies, architectural and artistic commissions without forgetting the matrimonial ties between the Chiaromonte and Ventimiglia. Speakers include: **Giuseppe Antista** (Academy of Fine Arts), **Angelo Pettineo** (Palekastro); **Salvatore Farinella** (Municipality of Nicosia); **Maria Concetta Di Natale** and **Patrizia Sardino** (University of Palermo).

At 3 pm, the young Italian graduates will be awarded with various prizes as winners of the **XXII Degree Prize on fortified Architecture**, issued with a call for bids in Italian universities to which they have been nominated 23 degree theses in the disciplines admitted to the competition.

The jury assessed the numerous entries, awarding two ex-aequo prizes and giving two other merit awards and five special mentions. The winners receive a **scholarship in cash** offered by the Italian Institute of Castles and a non-profit membership card to immediately try their hand at studying and safeguarding Italian fortified architecture.

‘L’Istituto Italiano Castelli ha fondato - e finanzia - il Premio di Laurea oltre 25 anni fa e la missione è avvicinare le giovani generazioni a questi studi scientifici sostenendo prima di tutto le loro tesi con un premio importante e poi avvicinandoli allo scopo della nostra Onlus. Nella lunga storia delle **presentazioni del Premio di Laurea**, le giornate sono state di volta in volta ospitate in castelli o presso istituzioni culturali o in sedi universitarie che meglio simboleggiano un percorso virtuoso di riuso e di restauro. Tra le recenti: **Temple University (Roma)**, **Università Federico II di Napoli**, **Castel Sismondo (Rimini)**, **Alma Mater (Bologna)**’ dichiara **Fabio Pignatelli della Leonessa** (Presidente Istituto Italiano Castelli).

'The Italian Institute of Castles founded - and finances - the Degree Award over 25 years ago and the mission is to bring the younger generations closer to these scientific studies by supporting first of all their dissertations with an important prize and then bringing them closer to the purpose of our non-pro-

fit. In the long history of the presentation of the Degree Prize, the awarding days were from time to time hosted in castles or in cultural institutions or in universities that best symbolize a virtuous path of reuse and restoration. Among the recent ones: Temple University (Rome), Federico II University of Naples, Castel Sismondo (Rimini), Alma Mater (Bologna) ‘ declares **Fabio Pignatelli della Leonessa** (President of the Italian Institute of Castles).

"Sicily is an extraordinarily rich land of stories of women and men who have changed the face of the economy and politics far beyond the island's borders in past centuries. The architectures and villages built by these **pioneers of welfare** today await a new impetus to continue to produce wealth and culture in this outstanding land, among the richest in castles and fortified villages in the whole country," says **Michaela Stagno D'Alcontres Marullo** (Vice President of the Italian Institute of Castles).

After a careful evaluation of the brilliant graduation dissertations that have competed for the year 2019, the IIC scientific commission established for the jury has awarded equal merit to **Silvia Pallaoro** (*Forte Busa Verle in Passo Vezzena (TN): conservation of the fortified system of the highlands*) and **Musa Irene** (*The castle of Monreale di Sardara: Italian and European influences in the judgment of arborea of the XIII*).

The 2nd Prize 2019 goes to **Barzanti Marco, Masi Margherita, Ronzoni Marta** (*The monumental complex of Canossa: studies and proposals for the consolidation of the ruins of the castle and the enhancement of its context*).

The 3rd Prize goes to **Macca Valentina** (*The Eurialo Castle in Syracuse: studies for a history of archaeological excavations and reflections for a new use*).

A Special Mention also to the work of **Taglianetti Martin** (*The third city wall of Prato. Investigations, re-readings, contributions for a new level of knowledge and design*), of **Pegoraro Alberto** (*A project for Forte Tombion in the Brenta canal: preservation of historical memory and enhancement tourism - cultural*), of **Giurizzato Daniele** (*The ruin awaiting - a conservation and enhancement project for the Fort of Col Vidal*), of **Caleca Simona** (*The Upper Scrivia valley between documentary sources and archaeological sources: population and habitat between the 12th and 16th centuries*), of **Fazio Caterina** (*Project for the recovery of the Fortified Village of Castello in Fagnano Alto (Aq) "On the traces of memory"*).

All the dissertations were awarded for their methodological value, for the completeness and for the problems characterizing the scientific and cultural activities of the Italian Institute of Castles.

Sia la due giorni di studi, sia le presentazioni delle tesi premiate ad opera dei giovani laureati autori ed il conferimento del Premio di Laurea 2019 sono aperte al pubblico e gratuite e vedono la collaborazione del locale **Ordine degli Architetti** della Provincia di Palermo.

Both the two-day study and the presentation of the awarded dissertations signed by young graduate authors and the awarding ceremony of the 2019 Degree Prize are **open to the public** and **free of charge** and involve the collaboration of the local **Order of Architects of the Province of Palermo**.

Guided tours are planned in buildings open for the occasion (only for members of the Institute) and in places already open to the public, therefore also accessible to non-members including: the **Palatine Chapel, Palazzo Butera** and the **Valsecchi Collection, Palazzo Gangi, the Church of Santa Maria dello Spasimo, Palazzo dei Filangeri, Palazzo Steri** where the exhibition *I Chiaramonte: lusso, prestigio, politica e guerra nella Sicilia del Trecento* is housed

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Degree Prize on Fortified Architecture

Established by the Italian Institute of Castles in the 1990s, the Degree Prize on Fortified Architecture arrived this year at the 23rd edition.

The Italian Institute of Castles Onlus (IIC) - founded in 1964 by Pietro Gazzola - Moral Body recognized by MIBAC, a non-profit scientific organization, within the initiatives promoted to encourage new generations to study the historical, archaeological and artistic heritage of fortified heritage Italian as well as its valorization, over the years has designed and promoted this national competition conceived by its scientific council and its board of directors thanks also to the experience of the editorial staff of the *Castellum* and *Cronache Castellane* magazines (which are published by the Ente).

The Award is addressed to graduates of the Italian faculties of Architecture, Engineering, Letters and Conservation of Cultural Heritage who are authors of magistral or five-year degree dissertations in the field of scientific research, history, manual and instrumental survey of monuments, architectural restoration, and reuse redevelopment of the town's fortified architectural heritage (towers, castles, forts, walled villages). Since its establishment, over 900 papers have been submitted for competition.

Promptly promoted in all the universities with posters and other forms of communication (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) the Prize consists of checks for a total of 5,000 euros, benefiting the first four degree theses considered most deserving of those received. The competition commission is composed of members of the IIC scientific council as well as well-known professors from Italian universities. The winning theses can also be published in the scientific journal *Castellum*.

The award ceremony is hosted in an event that takes place every year (in autumn) in a different Italian city in the presence not only of the jury but also of other professors and experts in the sector. Open to the public, it hosts in its final part the discussion of the winning dissertations (that can be also *ex aequo*) illustrated by the authors in public with the help of multimedia tools.

In the long history of the presentation of the Degree Prize, the ceremonies were from time to time hosted in castles or in cultural institutions or in universities that best symbolize a virtuous path of reuse and restoration. Among the recent ones: **Temple University** (Rome), **Federico II University** (Naples), **Castel Sismondo** (Rimini), **Alma Mater** (Bologna).

GIOVANNI VENTIMIGLIA DI MONTEFORTE

Giovanni was born on 26 July 1927 in Turin, the birthplace of his mother's family and died on 16 October 2017 in Catania. Together with his two brothers, he spent his childhood joyfully in Catania, where he attended the Mario Rapisardi school, the Leonardo da Vinci Christian Brothers Institute. During the war he moved to the family villa of Caltagirone and to the Camemi di Vizini estate; Caltagirone will be the place that transmits to him the most vivid memories of the war, the air raids, the military commands, the inappropriate use of the garden of their villa to house tanks and more; the town soon became the place chosen for the anti-aircraft defense, so the parents decided to move to Milan where the three brothers were welcomed in the schools of the Christian Brothers and then to the Gonzaga. The political situation was increasingly tense; Fascist autarchy had led to significant economic hardship: in Milan you suffered from hunger! Giovanni told, with sad remembrance, the kindness of their baker that, after the distribution of the bread with the famous tesserae, moved by the inexhaustible hunger of the three growing boys, he gave them the crumbs left in the cupboards.

The Sicilian political situation had stabilized, so the family decided to return to Catania, where Giovanni completed his high school studies. He will return to Turin as a university student of the Polytechnic to obtain a degree in hydraulic engineering.

The work begins with enthusiasm in Catania where he founded the Idrosud company, together with his brother Francesco and a Turin engineer. An underground drilling company for the main water research. The company soon became Mediterranea Supply Company and opened yards not only in Sicily and southern Italy, but also in Greece, Tunisia and Egypt.

Suddenly, due to the change in Italian political power, the banks close all relations with some companies, the company is forced to close.

A proposal by SOFIS (Sicilian regional finance company) led him to take over the management of the paper mill La Siace in Giarre with 1600 employees.

His work commitment later focused on projects for various Municipalities of Sicily, such as the paving of streets and squares of Militello Val di Catania, design of a barracks, of a heliport, of the lighting of the Castle of Mussomeli, and others.

In these years his passion for the study of Sicilian history and heraldic research is accentuated. The approach with the Italian Institute of Castles, which took place since 1966, excites him, stimulates him and becomes for him the main reason for cultural growth.

He was Councilor and Vice Mayor of San Gregorio di Catania, National President of the Italian Institute of Castles, President of the Garden Club of Catania.

He won, among others, the International Prize "Knight of Humanity" presented by the UCCI International Christian Cavalry Union, awarded together with Santa Teresa of Calcutta and the daughter of Marconi in memory.