

A project for the digitisation of testimonies regarding the cult of St Berardo of Teramo

Filippo Lanci

The purpose of this project, developed during the Summer School “Digital Humanities for Art History”, is to recompose digitally a dispersed corpus of sacred images and texts concerning the cult of St Berardo, the saintly patron of the diocese and town of Teramo. This corpus was produced under the bishops Vincenzo Bugiatti da Montesanto (1592–1609) and Giambattista Maria Visconti (1609–1638), for liturgical and devotional use mainly in the cathedral. What has been found is enough to organise and publish an open-access database to be used by scholars.

The present dispersion of the corpus makes it difficult to understand its original interconnection, rendering it necessary to recompose its original unity. At the same time, its dispersal and the circulation of this material is itself a document, because it records such important phenomena as, for example, the circulation of texts among ecclesiastical scholars. Because material recomposition is impossible, a digital version would permit an adequate study of the original context of its production and use.

The material corpus was produced following the Council of Trent, and a key point of catholic reformation in Teramo was the restoration of the pastoral and political role of the bishop-prince of the town. During this reform work, bishops there affirmed their privileged relationship with St Berardo, the holy thaumaturge patron of Teramo, of whom they considered themselves successors: this connection legitimised their authority not only institutionally, but also charismatically.

The promotion of the cult of St Berardo took place through the re-writing of his ‘life and miracles’ and the promotion of an iconographic project, both derived from the medieval hagiographical tradition. The tales of the life and the miracles of St Berardo were written in three medieval *Legenda* kept in the cathedral archive: from these Vincenzo Bugiatti wrote his *Sancti Berardi Confessoris et Episcopi Aprutini Vita et Miracula*. The original medieval texts are lost, except for six brief citations preserved in Mutio Muzii’s *Dialoghi* (written in 1596; printed in Teramo in 1893). The *Vita* of Berardo by Montesanto was printed in Venice in 1601 (2ed Ascoli 1637). None of these texts are now available in Teramo, but they are elsewhere: a transcription, probably sent to Cesare Baronio for the compilation of his *Annales*, is preserved at the Vallicelliana Library in Rome (Ms. H 48, ff. 18–23r); two of the printed biographies are now available at the KBR (Koninklijke Bibliotheek and Bibliothèque royale) in Brussels, where they went sent to the Bollandist fathers’ library.

The open-access database will digitally reunite scenes painted in 1620 by the Polish painter Sebastian Majewski, who was commissioned to represent the miracles of St Berardo for an altar in the sacristy of the cathedral where they are still

preserved: the scenes were taken from the catalogue of miracles inserted in the medieval lives re-written by Montesanto. To these works can be added two silver reliquaries, a bust and arm, from the fourteenth century, preserved and venerated in the cathedral of Teramo, and a liturgical text, *In festo Sancti Berardi episcopi et confessoris et Ecclesiae Aprutinae patronus Officium*, probably by Vincenzo Bugiatti, printed in Venice at the beginning of the seventeenth century (also in this case, the only known copy is kept in KBR in Brussels). The census of these texts and artworks is still in progress and it is thus possible to suppose that the reorganisation and the study of the Diocesan and Capitular archives may furnish other material in the future.

The home page for the project will show a map localizing the places where each document or artwork has been created or originally preserved and the places where they are currently housed. In the centre of the map, the plan of the cathedral with its sacristy and archive will act as the starting point, from which the user can open the corresponding page of each document or work of art. In the map the current location of the document or artwork would also be identified.

Depending on concessions and agreements with the owner Institution, the page of each text may contain its photographic reproduction and its transcription, or only the transcription. The main words in a text can be linked to a pop up that links to another page containing further information. For example, the titles would refer to a page containing the description of the document, bibliography and other useful data. The pages for artworks will contain photographic reproductions of the images or sculptures; clicking on the picture the user could be linked to pages containing information about the artist, the description of the work, the history of its commission, bibliography and other useful data; clicking on the characters or on the details the user could be linked to pages containing the description of the same character and hagiographic tales connected to the scene.

Filippo Lanci has a degree in *Theologia et Scientiis patristicis* at the Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum in Rome and specialised in the study of hagiographic literature and the history of cults. He has taught patristics at the Institute of Religious Sciences in L'Aquila and directed the Capitular Museum and Archive in Atri (Teramo). He is currently attending the master's degree course in Cultural Heritage at the University of L'Aquila.

ilteoremadipitagora@gmail.com



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)