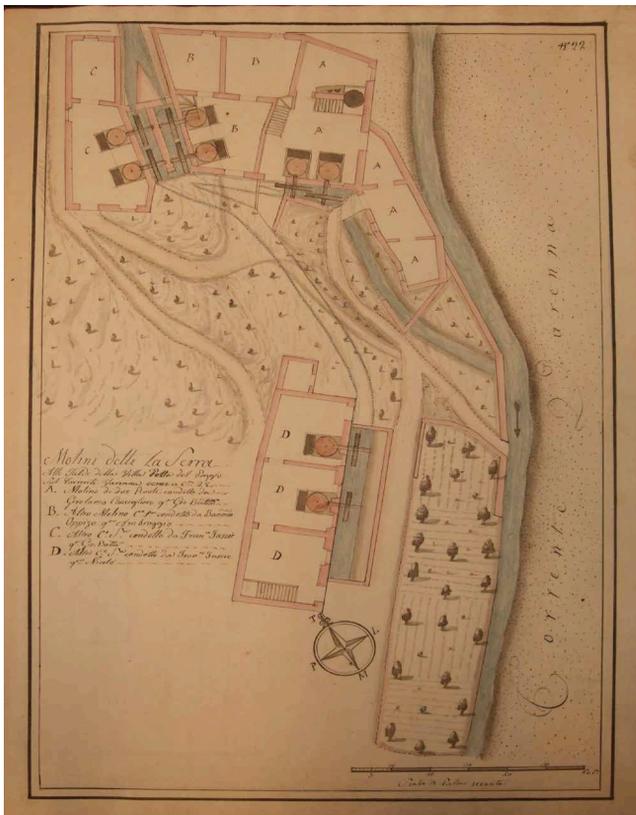


# Illustrated *Cabrei*, a Private Form of Cadastral Maps: The Case of the Republic of Genoa

Italian dictionaries and encyclopedias translate the word *cabreo* as «map of a private property», «inventory» or «secular or religious administrations' systematic list of assets and income». These definitions are generic and sometimes conflicting and include documents with either drawings or only text. We shall consider in this context only the *cabrei* with maps: these documents became very popular between



1. GIUSEPPE FERRETTO, Lomellino's *cabreo* (1790) «Molini detti la serra». Val Varenna, Genova (courtesy of the owner).

the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The maps include especially land surveys, but also drawings of rural buildings, palaces, villas and gardens, which are mostly on a topographic scale (fig. 1).

The *cabrei* are different from the cadastral maps: while both are drawn up on a topographic scale, the *cabrei* were requested to be drawn up by clients who were private citizens, whereby the cadastral maps were drawn up by state agencies for tax purposes; furthermore, they don't survey the whole land but only those portions of the land that the owners wanted to be surveyed.

The *cabrei* were part of the administrative papers, and they were usually kept in private archives where, in some cases, they have remained until today. Sometimes they were merged into bigger or different archives due to marriages or to the unification of different religious administrations. In other cases, they ended up in State Archives, in libraries or, through the antiques market, in private collections. Furthermore, if the owner of the property decided to sell it altogether, it could include in the sale the *cabreo* in which such property was recorded<sup>1</sup>. It is important to be able to study the *cabrei* in their original context, if possible, because in the complete archives it is possible to find related documents, such as records of measurements and correspondence between cartographers and clients, and to understand the entire planning phase of the *cabreo*, from the decision of drawing it up to the delivery of the finished book.

The Order of Malta has been the most important client for the *cabrei*, and it still keeps the largest number of *cabrei* pertaining to the Italian, and probably to the European, territories. The properties of the Order were divided in districts called *Priorati* that were managed by people called *commendatari* who had, among others, the task to draw up the *cabrei*, for the purpose of recording all the existing assets of the *commenda*. The *cabrei* were revised and updated every twenty-five years, in order to allow the *Priorati* to monitor their assets and to prevent possible frauds or abuses on the part of either the *commendatari* or of any other person involved with the management of said assets. The drawing up of the *cabrei* was codified in the charter of the Order issued in 1588 and the Fra Giovanni Caravita's pamphlet, written in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, examines in detail this aspect, in

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ADGe = *Archivio Durazzo Giustiniani*, *archivio Durazzo*, Genova.

<sup>1</sup> M. ANTOLA, *L'archivio e la carta. I cabrei figurati in Liguria*, tesi di dottorato, Università degli Studi di Genova, a.a. 2010-11.

particular specifying that each *cabreo* has to conform to the law of the country to which it pertains<sup>2</sup>.

In the Republic of Genoa the geometrical-nit cadastre was introduced under Napoleon's ruling: until then, there were only few surveys of the land and the drawing up of the *cabrei* was much freer and more flexible than in the Duchy of Milan and in the Savoy state, to the point that the owners were able to decide independently what, and how, would be included.

This study considers the illustrated *cabrei* produced in the Republic of Genoa, for which a census has been prepared, identifying 27 documents, almost all of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some requested by religious organizations, but most of them by private families.

The study develops the theory that the aristocratic families have found these documents to be an useful and convenient managerial tool, and that they have adopted the then consolidated procedure of the Order for the administration of their properties, after adapting it to their own needs. However, the big differences between the documents – particularly between those related to the fiefs of the *Oltregiogo* (Piedmont) and those related to the properties of the Riviera – has made it necessary to analyze the specific types of documents.

The comparison has shown that the *cabrei* cannot be confined within rigid schemes and that what connects them is the reason of their drawing up, i.e. the need to have a model of the real world for practical and managerial uses.

As to the form, the *cabrei* are a single archive piece, usually a book, with only maps or with some text. They have a frontispiece with the essential information regarding the document: the title (*cabreo*, type, contents), the object (land, buildings, palaces), the name of the owner, the place where the property is located, the name of the cartographer who has drawn up the *cabreo* and the year. To follow is the index of the tables, some initial notices and the legend with the symbols of the agricultural landscape. There could also be some general maps (i.e. maps which pertain to the whole property) which would allow a global view of the property: these maps could be inserted within the book or be kept separate so that they could be hung to the wall.

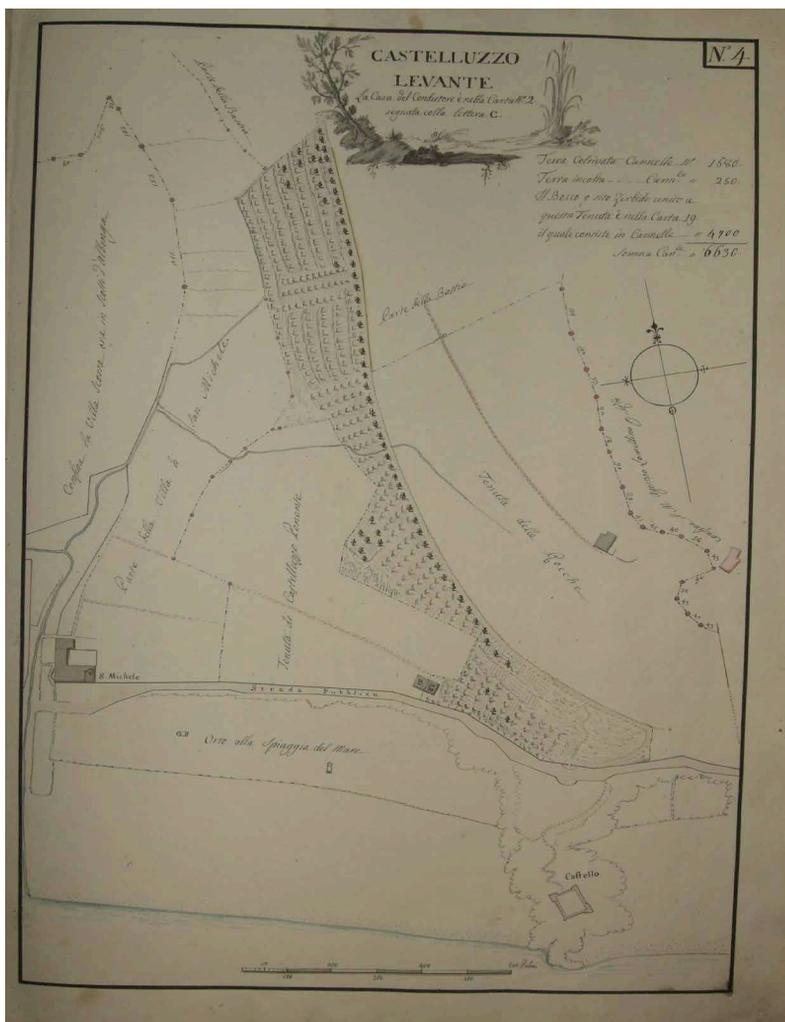
Finally, the *cabrei* could have the meaning of a proof or only of a re-

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. J.E. CRITIEN, *Cabrevatio bonorum. Priorati, Baliaggi e Commende dell'Ordine di Malta*, Perugia 1997.

minder and sometimes, in the Genoa territory, the lack of any attached documentation does not allow the distinction.

The meaning of legal proof of a *cabreo* can be verified by either: in the text section, a reference to the notary deeds. In the drawings section, the presence along the boundaries of: rocks, trees, rivers and some other sort of milestones, with the indication of the distance existing among all of them; provided, however, that all these elements be confirmed through notary deeds existing outside of the *cabreo*. In the *cabrei* with the meaning only of a reminder these elements are



2. GIACOMO BRUSCO, Cambiaso's *cabreo* (1787) «Castelluzzo levante». Pegli, Genova (courtesy of the owner).

missing; however there could be a mention of the notary references of the purchase in the text section purely as a remainder note.

An example of *cabreo* carrying a legal meaning is the *cabreo* of the Fief of Gabiano, drawn up in 1724 for the Genoese Giacomo Filippo II Durazzo: this is a legally binding document which follows a rigid procedure as it has been drawn up within the territory of the Duchy of Monferrato, then under the Savoia rule<sup>3</sup>. In the first part of the *cabreo* all the deeds are recorded, while in the second part the tables are included. The documentation of the archive, and especially the correspondence, has then permitted to reconstruct the whole relationship, from the moment of the initial idea until the delivery to Durazzo. Through the letters we have learned that Durazzo had requested to the judge in charge of the region a report on his properties. In 1723 the judge wrote that many parts of the property have been seized by the neighboring owners and proposed to draw up a *cabreo* and to set up new property boundaries in order to define and make well visible the borders on the territory itself. The judge explained that the measurements are necessary but that the drawings are not, and Giacomo Filippo initially decided not to order them because they represent an added cost. At the beginning of the *cabreo* we find all the transcripts of the deeds: the proxys; the appointment of the land surveyor, of the notary and of the experts; the letters sent to all the neighboring owners requiring that they have to be present to the measurements with their own expert and with any possible documentation. Then we find the minutes of the measurements, the possible cross-examinations of the counterpart and finally the drawing up of the book with the drawings. The *cabreo* was then deposited with the *Podesta* and a notice was issued ordering all the neighboring owners to inspect it and, if warranted, oppose it. At the end of this long and expensive procedure, the *cabreo* was deemed to be authentic and legal in all respects<sup>4</sup>.

Within the territory of the Republic of Genoa, as already explained, there is more freedom, due to the lack of specific laws and the *cabrei* can even be modified later in time. In this context surfaces the cartographer Giacomo Brusco who, due to his seven *cabrei* found to date, leaves the most valuable contribution both for the ar-

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<sup>3</sup> «Tipo dei beni feudali dipendenti dal castello di Gabiano et appartenenti all'Illustrissimo Signor Marchese Giacomo Filippo Durazzo fatto l'anno 1724», ADGE, *Gabiano* 477, G365 bis.

<sup>4</sup> ANTOLA, *L'archivio e la carta*, pp. 117-31.

tistic quality and the technical expertise of his work<sup>5</sup> (fig. 2). He includes the «initial notices» where he explains that he uses different size scales and asks the reader to check the actual area shown in figures on each table, in order not to be misled by the larger or smaller size of the drawings<sup>6</sup>.

In the Genoa territory the relationship client-cartographer produces a document entirely personal and not so objective. The owners could require a greater attention to some buildings and the survey of only certain interiors' parts. These aspects show the *cabrei* from a different standpoint: they are not only a model of the real world for practical, managerial uses, but they can become a tool of self-celebration of the owner itself.

An example of self-celebratory *cabreo* is the *cabreo* commissioned by Francesco Maria della Rovere to the cartographer Giacomo Brusco, which was drawn up in several stages between 1762 and 1782<sup>7</sup>. In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Francesco Maria della Rovere starts the renovation of the palace in Albissola and soon thereafter the decorative renovation of the decaying Sistina chapel in Savona built by his ancestor Sisto IV as the funeral chapel for his own parents. At the same time, he expands his properties of Albissola and Savona, organizing them as efficient agricultural and manufacturing businesses. During the realization of this challenging project, he hires the cartographer Giacomo Brusco to «take drawings and measurements» of his whole property and to collect them in a «book» or *cabreo*<sup>8</sup>. The cartographer devotes many plates to the villa in Albissola and particularly to the Sistine chapel of which he presents, in addition to the plans, the internal and external sections that show the decorations, and the drawing of the mausoleum of Sisto IV parents<sup>9</sup> (fig. 3).

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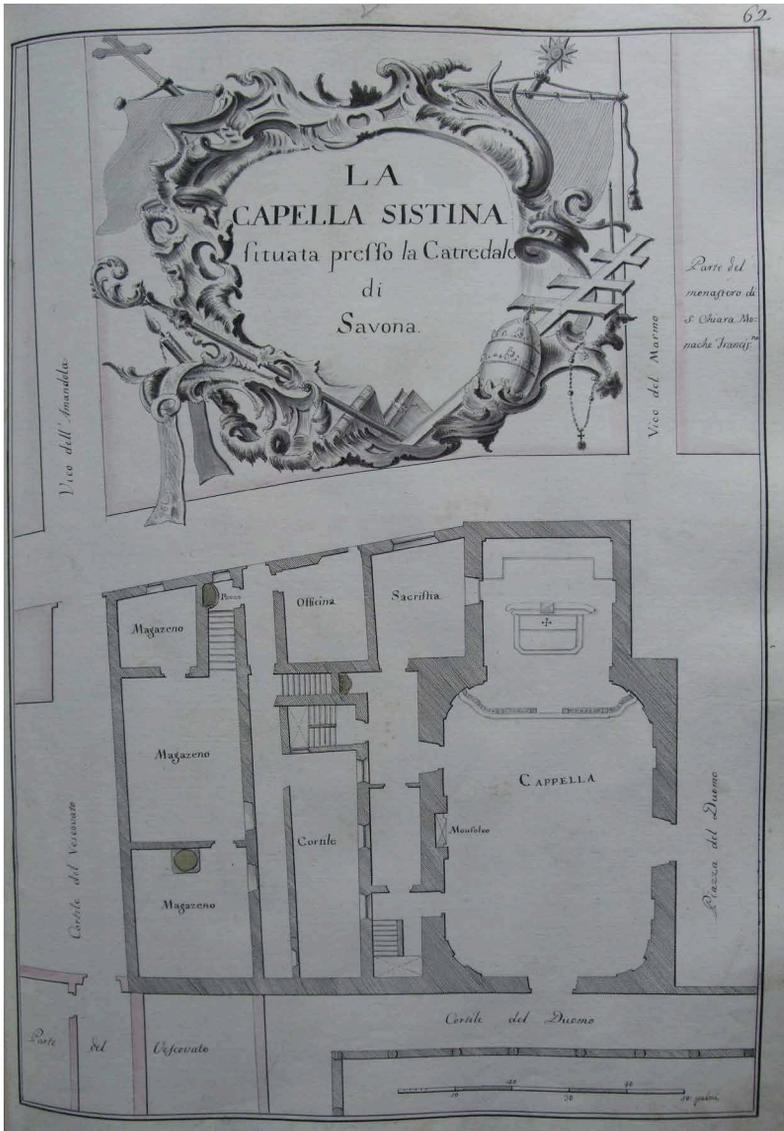
<sup>5</sup> Giacomo Brusco draws up, in addition to the della Rovere *cabreo*, the following *cabrei*: the jesuit boarding school in Genoa in 1773; the Marcello q. Gio. Luca Durazzo in 1775; the Cristoforo, Filippo and Bendinelli q. Domenico Spinola, in duplicate, in 1784; the Vincenzo Spinola in 1787; the Gio. Maria, Gio. Luigi and Gio. Michelangelo q. Nicolo' Cambiaso in 1787.

<sup>6</sup> ANTOLA, *L'archivio e la carta*, p. 223.

<sup>7</sup> Private archive.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> M. ANTOLA, *Lo spazio della carta come strumento di conoscenza della volontà collezionistica: inventari e cabrei figurati*, in L. MAGNANI (ed.), *Collezionismo e spazi del*



3. GIACOMO BRUSCO, della Rovere's *cabreo* (1762-82). The Sistina chapel in Savona, ground floor (courtesy of the owner).

*collezionismo, temi e sperimentazioni*, Roma 2014, pp. 144-8; all the drawings of the Sistine chapel have been presented together with the new discoveries regarding the chapel at the «Pomeriggio di Studio dedicato al 250° anniversario della decorazione della Cappella Sistina di Savona, 1764-2014», (Savona, September 19, 2014), which records will be published.

The *cabreo* Doria, ordered by Francesco Maria Doria to the cartographer Giuseppe Ferretto in 1775, is characterized instead by a rich symbolism and by a strict link with the papers of the private archive<sup>10</sup>. In the *cabreo* drawn up in 1775 all the assets are reported, together with the maps of the palace and of the garden at the time of the agreement. These maps allow a verification of the improvements realized over the thirty-eight years period. Each drawing is then diligently completed with references to a text, often placed next to the drawing, which reports the name or the toponym of the place represented, its description and the notarial references of the purchase. Finally, the references to the documents kept in the then existing family archive are reported in a column to the right<sup>11</sup>.

The illustrated *cabrei* as a type of documentation are therefore a topic almost unknown in Liguria, whereas as a source they provide many examples of the Ligurian landscape, from the urban to the agricultural to the residential villas, focusing the attention in particular on the details of the crops and of the gardens. Each table can be compared with the present situation: a landscape often mutilated, where the buildings are separated from their original context and survive amid the modern concrete, while the most fragile elements – the gardens, the vegetable gardens and the agricultural landscape – have disappeared and they can be rediscovered today through the particular magnifying glasses represented by the *cabrei*. The *cabrei* however, due to their private nature, cannot be studied separately from their context. To the extent the client recognizes their value as testimonials of its estate and decides to develop this role, the *cabrei* become a mirror which reflects its own prestige and an object to be displayed in its own mansion<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Private Archive.

<sup>11</sup> ANTOLA, *Lo spazio della carta*, pp. 149-53.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.