

The city of Chieri in the nineteenth century

In the nineteenth century the aristocracy was in decline and sold their properties to the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. The presence of numerous workers in local factories favoured the birth of the "*Societies of Mutual Aid*" (*Società di Mutuo Soccorso*). In 1861 the Kingdom of Italy was born. The "*Technical Institute*" and the "*Liceo-Ginnasio*" (Grammar School) were opened. Among the most important manufacturers were the following: the Ramella ,Tabasso, Fasano and the Gallina families. Many workers attended the school of the "*Società di Previdenza e Istruzione*"; (the Society for Welfare and Instruction). In 1888 Nicolò Francone opened the library and founded the weekly newspaper "L'Arco". The town saw notable economic development. It had many taverns, workshops and a flourishing marketplace. The churches of "*San Domenico*", "*San Giorgio*" and the "*Duomo*" were restored. The Salesian priests of Don Bosco, the Benedictine nuns and the priests of the Mission made their homes in Chieri. From 1820 to 1949 the seminary also took residency in the town. In 1848 the Jewish ghetto was abolished. The scholars Cibrario, Montù and Bosio narrate the history of Chieri.

The Urban transformation of the nineteenth century

The Napoleonic occupation in Piedmont brings many changes to the administration including the abolition of convents which were bought and sold by the government. They became hospitals

and barracks and some of the churches were demolished (Sant'Agostino, San Francesco and Sant'Andrea). In the monastery of Santa Clara the textile factory of the Levi family was installed.

With the advent of the Restoration, industrial development continued and the town modernized thanks to the "*Regolamento d'Ornato*" (ornamentation regulations) in 1838.

Following the demolition of the city gates, the expansion of inhabited areas occurred: avenues around the city walls were built and an expansion southward was planned.

In 1784 the railway to Trofarello was built. The (current) cemetery and the public slaughterhouse were established and gas lighting for illumination was installed. New theatres were opened: Capella theatre (nowadays the *Splendor cinema*) and the Garibaldi and Margherita theatres. Industrial building was still modest but production activities attracted many people from the countryside.

Architects of the eighteenth century

For the entire eighteenth century Chieri was a large building site where some of the most important architects of the century worked. In 1726 Giovanni Antonio Sevalle worked on the female orphanage. In 1730 Filippo Juvarra worked on the churches of Sant'Andrea (no longer standing) and Sant'Antonio Abate, later finished by Giuseppe Bays. From 1741 to 1762 Bernardo Vittone was in Chieri and designed the dome of San Bernardino, which became the female orphanage in 1744, the "*Villa il Cipresso*" (1750), the church of San Giorgio (1742),

the chapel of the Madonna delle Grazie and the church of Santa Lucia.

Ignazio Galletti designed the “Ospizio della Carità” (Charity Hospice) in 1756 and the expansion of the San Fillipo convent in 1762. His son Pietro Angelo designed the convent of San Francesco (now the Town Hall). Mario Ludovico Quarini designed the chapel of “Ospizio di Carità”, “Palazzo Biscaretti” in 1773 (no longer standing), the facades of “San Bernardino” in 1792, the old Town Hall, 1771, and probably those of “San Filippo Neri” in 1758.

Social unrest and French occupation

Towards the end of the century, there was social unrest, influenced by the French revolution. On the 23rd July 1797, the “bread uprising”, which had spread to all of Piedmont, involved also Chieri. The repression by those in power culminated in the shooting of 36 people in Piazza d’Armi (Piazza Cavour). On the 8th December 1798 the French Revolutionary Army marched through Chieri en route to Turin. The “Tree of Freedom “ is erected. Diplomas of nobility are burned. A Republican municipality is inaugurated.

Chieri society of the 1700's

In the eighteenth century, the Chieri economy, inherently connected to textiles, survived, even by ignoring the new technology that, starting in England, spread throughout Europe. The building industry and town planning however were very active enterprises and had new clients: there were fewer initiatives from the Royal Court but the religious orders, the confraternities and charitable institutions had increased. The aristocratic families that had moved to Turin to gain privilege from proximity to the Royal household, nonetheless maintained their contact with the city of Chieri and built prestigious palaces and country houses.

Guglielmo Caccia (known as Moncalvo) and his school

Guglielmo Caccia, called Moncalvo, was the most important painter of the seventeenth-century in Piedmont. He was greatly influenced by the artists of the XVI century. Moncalvo lived in Chieri from 1600 to 1610 where he produced some altar pieces and two wall paintings while at the same time he was also in Turin involved in decorating the Carlo Emanuele I Great Gallery. Around 1615 he was commissioned by the Prior Giacinto Broglia to decorate the church of San Domenico. He painted the apse of the church and two large canvases, the altar pieces in the Cathedral, in the churches of San Michele Arcangelo and Santa Margherita, and the chapel of the monastery of the Clarisse nuns. Other altar pieces were painted by his daughter Orsola Maddalena and his two main disciples Francesco Fea and Giovanni Crosio.

Painters of the seventeenth century

The first decades of the century in Chieri are dominated by the so called late-Manierism period of the painter Moncalvo and other painters of his school, such as Orsola Caccia, Giovanni Crosio, Francesco Fea and Cerutti-Fea brothers.

Beginning in the 1930's, the paintings that can be seen in the churches of Chieri emphasize all the artistic tendencies evident in Turin and in Piedmont: the Roman Classicism in the Cathedral (Jan Miel, Bartolomeo Caravoglia, Giovanni Francesco Sacchetti); the Lombard style in the Cathedral and in the church of Santa Margherita (Nuvolone, Recchi); the Genoa school in the Cathedral (Domenico Fiasella); French baroque style in the Cathedral (Charles Dauphin); the Roman baroque and Rubens style in the Cathedral and in the San Filippo church (Giovanni Andrea Casella, Giovanni Antonio Mari, Sebastiano Taricco); the baroque Neapolitan influence in the Charity Hospice building (perhaps by Mattia Preti) and the Caravaggio style in the Sanctuary of the Annunciation (Giovanni Claret).

From the Renaissance to the Baroque

In the second half of the century the economy in Chieri did not improve, partly as a consequence of the demographic

collapse following the plague and also due to foreign competition. It resisted thanks to the protectionist measures confirmed by the ducal Government. In spite of these factors, Chieri experienced a surprising period of artistic vitality, supported by the Savoy Court (*"The Annunziata Church"* and the convents of *"La Pace"* and *"Sant'Antonio"*). The religious orders the churches of *"Santa Margherita"* *"San Filippo"* and the convent of *"Santa Chiara"* were also supported to a lesser degree. Most of the aristocratic families limited themselves to restoring their houses, transforming the facades, the stairs and the entrances in the baroque style.

Only a few families built new palaces (*"Robbio palace"*, *"Robbio di San Raffaele"* and *"Villa Moglia"*).

The Plague in 1630

Due to the protagonism of Duke Carlo Emanuele I, the first half of the XVII century was a period of continuous military mobilizations and serious economic crises. Furthermore there was famine and plague. The latter arrived in Chieri at the end of June and it reached its maximum virulence between July and September of 1630, causing thousands of victims. The impotent Town Council and the Health Authorities called upon God for help and in 1634 a chapel to honour the Virgin Mary of Grace was erected inside the Cathedral. In 1757 the chapel was enlarged and transformed by Bernardo Antonio Vittone.

The restoration of the Savoy dominion

Chieri returned to Piedmont in 1562.

Emanuele Filiberto reduced the medieval privileges and the jurisdiction of the town. In compensation however, his protectionist measures boosted textile manufacturing and the entire economy of Chieri. With a view to Emanuele Filiberto's visit to Chieri in 1580. "*L'Arco di Piazza*" (the Arch of the Square) was erected in his honour. The political and social atmosphere of the XVI century didn't encourage the development of the arts. Besides the "*Arco di Piazza*" there are few relevant works belonging to that period and those that remain are all concentrated in "*La Collegiata*" (or the Cathedral).