



Fig. 1. Piazza VI Gennaio, Roccagorga, Italy.

This spatial organisation demonstrated a radical re-dimensioning of aristocratic power. The new church, the centre of secular strength for the Catholic Church, rising in a position facing the baronial palace, is wilfully situated at the juncture of the two hills delimiting the surrounding territory. Over the course of the 18th century, various members of the Ginetti family would be called to fill important roles within this very structure. The political-communicative message expressed in this new symbolic arrangement was redoubled by another element: the reflection of the church in the waters of the massive public water reservoir and fountain known as the *Rifolta*, situated immediately in front.

The element of water is further signal of symbolic importance, utilised by the Ginetti to enter in communication with the sphere of popular thought.

They began the redevelopment of the piazza in 1642, with the construction of an aqueduct fed by mountain springs near the Hermitage of *Sant'Erasmus*. This effort was doubtless planned primarily to secure the community's water supply, however in the popular image of the works, this aspect seems to recede in importance.

In fact, in the traditional, popular representation, it was Saint Erasmus that controlled the water: the same element that, in the mythical time, the saint made to gush out from the Monte Nero, and now led by Ginetti to the town centre, just in the square. As with the mirroring of the church, we see another replication at Roccagorga, this time of the saintly miracle. On the same theme, prior to 1700 there had never been a liturgical celebration of *Sant'Erasmus*: it was the Ginetti family that, for their own self-celebration, raised him to the stature of the city patron,

Thus, a relation is developed between the two levels of social stratification of the era, but it is an unequal exchange, based firstly on differences in political power, and only secondly on cultural and economic differences. The presence of the official cult of *Sant'Erasmus* at Roccagorga cannot be traced to the subordinate class, at least not only, and their role in this aspect was certainly not autonomous. Instead, the development results from the political elite exploiting an element of popular tradition, in service of their own strength.

We see that the anthropological analysis of the piazza reveals the symbolic function of the component urban elements in their role as communicative signs for the *visualization* of the strength of the power as well as in terms of the underlying ideological paradigm that gives them a sense. As Camillo Sitte (1980) wrote, we observe a "closed urban square, of beautiful unity"; but the unity of the redesigned piazza is not only of "dimension and form": it is also structural, in the specific linguistic and anthropological sense of this term.