

## 45 Italy, 1000–1400

Ektoras Arkomanis

### History and Geography

Political, economic and military influence was exercised on the Italian Peninsula, at one time or other, by the Holy Roman Empire and the House of Hohenstaufen, the Normans, the Lombard and Tuscan city-states, the Papal States, the Kingdom of Sicily, the ever-weakening Byzantine Empire and the gradually retreating Saracens. Alliances were formed and broken continually, and boundaries shifted, so the zones of influence present a rich and complex history with plenty of geographical and temporal overlaps. Civilizations flourished not only during intervals of peace, but also amidst the harshest of conflicts. Perhaps the most telling evidence of determination is that so many public works were continued or completed even after the bubonic plague, or 'Black Death', which reached Italy in 1347 and purportedly eliminated between a third and half of the peninsula's population.

In the centuries that followed the Carolingian Renaissance (late eighth to late ninth centuries; see Chapter 32) the city of Rome itself faced harsh economic and political realities. These were hard to reconcile to the collective consciousness of its past grandeur. In the twelfth century the city underwent a renewal, reflected in its form and monuments. Its capabilities were improved and so in the 1300s reality began to correspond again with the perpetual aspirations to greatness. The most significant development was the growth of the Borgo, the settlement east of the Tiber, which became the Leonine City and remained separate from Rome until late in the sixteenth century. Placed within the city's walls, the Basilica of St Peter (begun c. 330 CE) would eventually surpass in prestige the Lateran Basilica (consecrated 324 CE, restored and reconstructed many times subsequently). The Borgo's commercial significance increased because of its river port and the accommodation of pilgrimages. The Leonine wall and the presence of the Castel Sant'Angelo (originally built the Mausoleum of Hadrian in 139 CE), by then converted into a fortress, provided safety from raids or invasions when needed. Rome did not achieve any prominence in

the late medieval period, but its endurance and growth during those anarchic times would prove crucial in restoring its civic glory over the subsequent centuries.

By the early twelfth century, and in a contrasting pattern, the medieval communes of central and northern Italy had developed into city-states that were commonly republican, governed by elected office holders with the assistance of councils. Although they were often at war with each other, at least their independence from the Holy Roman Empire was secured with the Lombard League's defeat of Emperor Frederick I in 1176. The growing cumulative wealth of these city-states, as epitomized by Siena and Florence, with a shift in power from their aristocracy to merchant families, and the increased complexity of organization and administration, were reflected in civic works that enriched their urban fabric. Municipal projects – public palaces and town halls, papal and episcopal palaces, mansions, piazzas and their monuments – were carried out with the same vigour and intensity as religious architecture and fortifications (see *IDENTITY AND URBAN FORM: SIENA AND FLORENCE*, p. 912). Ground-floor loggias, such as those of the Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo in Orvieto (probably 1280s; *Key Buildings*, p. 924, fig. 45.1) or the Palazzo Comunale in Piacenza (begun 1280), affirmed the increased accessibility of governmental institutions. Some of these loggias were originally open and provided visual links between piazzas; in this sense, they anticipated the fourteenth-century endeavour to impose visual order on urban centres. A stark contrast is provided by the formidable Bargello (begun c. 1255) in Florence: its form and defensive disposition underline the necessity to protect the *podestà* (chief magistrate) from factions and popular dissent. Its three-storey arrangement influenced the appearance of the later, nearby Palazzo Vecchio (begun 1299), which in turn became the progenitor of Renaissance palaces in Florence such as the Palazzo Medici (begun 1444, by Michelozzo Michelozzi; Vol. 2, Chapter 58, *Key Buildings*, p. 95, fig. 58.31) the Palazzo Strozzi (begun 1489, by Benedetto da Maiano) and the Palazzo Pitti (begun 1458, architect unknown).



Map 45.1 Europe in 1350

## Culture and Society

The artistic achievements of this period can hardly be gauged by the mention of even such pre-eminent figures as the painter and mosaic designer Cimabue (1240–1302), the sculptor-mason Arnolfo di Cambio (1240–c. 1310), and the painter-architect Giotto di Bondone (c. 1266–1337). Their activities, however, illustrate that arts, crafts and architecture were not thought of as separate endeavours. They also signal the emergence of the individual artistic personality, a notion that would culminate during the Italian Renaissance (see Chapter 58). The emphasis on posterity denotes an acute awareness of history and the desire of artists to be part of it. Indeed, legends concerning people's actions and backgrounds, or the origins of place and city names,

were fervently contested, distorted or reinvented with the purpose of glorifying or demeaning particular biographies and histories. The constant rewriting of the past shows that artistic and everyday expression was permeated by temporal concerns as much as by spiritual ones, perhaps for the first time since antiquity. In literature this is illustrated by the transition from Dante (1265–1321) to Boccaccio (1313–75): in the *Divine Comedy* (1320) Dante mapped the spiritual ascension of the medieval mind and its perception of the afterlife, whereas all of the stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1348–53) have earthly themes. As well as Boccaccio, the vivid vernacular prose of Petrarch (1304–74) also provided the model for modern Italian language.

Boccaccio famously met with Petrarch in Padua, in 1351, in order to officially invite him to take up a chair



**Fig 45.1 Palazzo del Capitano, Orvieto (after 1250, probably 1280s).** The urban scale, the elegance of the composition, the originally open loggia and the wide, inviting staircase reflect the rising importance and accessibility of civic institutions in cities like Orvieto from the mid-13th century onwards, as well as the role they aspired to play in society.

at the University of Florence. Universities had already existed in Western Europe for almost three centuries (possibly since 1088, when the University of Bologna first emerged) and had by this point evolved into small communities of students and tutors, sanctioned by the city and the church. Subjects taught included Theology, Law, Medicine and the Arts. Rivalries between the central and northern Italian city-states thus naturally extended to education; recruiting pre-eminent thinkers often meant depriving another city of their services, by means of generous financial rewards. In return, universities could demand exclusivity in the taught material. The ambition to achieve international reputation was manifest in the constant, and at times superficial, pursuit of change; a frequent rotation of staff and short-term university contracts often made academic life nomadic.

## IDENTITY AND URBAN FORM: SIENA AND FLORENCE

In Siena, urban form developed less organically than historians had assumed for most of the twentieth century. In fact, it can be understood as the outcome of a series of decrees and radical transformations, beginning with the unification of the three villages that gave the medieval town its 'Y' shape. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, cityscapes of Siena appear on coins and in paintings, often next to religious figures such as the Virgin Mary or San Bernardino. These correlations between the civic and the otherworldly demonstrate that socio-political and religious ideals were seen as mutually beneficent. The actual physical juxtaposition of the celebrated Piazza del Campo and the Palazzo Pubblico (begun 1297; Key Buildings, p. 925; fig. 45.2) to Siena Cathedral (before 1226–63; Key Buildings, p. 924; fig. 45.2) embodies the dual consciousness of the city. The spatial articulations of the two centres – spiritual and civic – are symbolic of how these aspire to operate socially: the cathedral rests on the summit and seemingly draws its adjacent buildings to its conglomeration, while the Piazza del Campo is essentially a clearing which imposes a new order on its surroundings.

In Florence – only 51 kilometres (32 miles) north of Siena – the piazza of its cathedral is similarly juxtaposed by the L-shaped Piazza della Signoria, which acts as an introduction to the Palazzo Vecchio as well as the new civic centre. It was carved into the urban fabric from 1299 onwards, evidently as a response to Siena's Piazza del Campo and Palazzo Pubblico. The clearing continued with sustained administrative efforts throughout the fourteenth century, causing continual urban and financial disruptions. The pre-existing Platea Ubertorum was extended west and southwest, and developed into a subtle composition incorporating old axes as well as new monuments and buildings, notably the Loggia dei Lanzi (c. 1376–1381, by Benci di Cione and Simone di Francesco Talenti), yet emphasizing the void; pride in the glory of the city is manifest as a large opening at the heart of it.

## Architecture

Architectural elements introduced to the Italian Peninsula during the ninth and tenth centuries continued to be incorporated from the eleventh century onwards: the campanile (bell-tower) next to the church; the loggia or narthex



**Fig 45.2 Aerial photo of Piazza del Campo and surroundings, Siena.** The juxtaposition of the Palazzo Pubblico (rear of the Piazza del Campo) and Siena Cathedral (top right corner) is an urban manifestation of the increasing competition between temporal and spiritual authorities. A case in point, the Tower of Mangia rises to exactly the same altitude as the cathedral campanile.



**Fig 45.3 Santa Maria and San Donato, Murano, Venice (c. 1040).** Paired-up columns, a frieze with finely cut triangular stone infills, arches of varying width and an arcade on the upper storey animate this church's two-tier east façade. The Byzantine influence on many buildings in the Venetian lagoon is testament to La Serenissima's special relationship with Byzantium throughout the Middle Ages.

(porch) in front of it; the cloisters (covered walkways) along its side; and the enlarged crypt underneath it, with steps leading to the apse. However, the many artistic languages on the peninsula – Roman, Norman, Lombard, Byzantine, Islamic and even Etruscan in some sculptural works and stucco reliefs – make the historical layers of architectural expression difficult to disentangle. The Byzantine Empire (see Chapter 30) continued to exert influence, even in decline, and especially in Venetia (the broad territory of Venice), as is evident through the golden opulence inside



**Fig 45.4 Cloister, Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily (1174–82).** Pairs of slender colonnettes, plain or adorned by zigzag marble bands, carry the pointed arches imported from the Middle East by the Muslim Saracens. The now harmonious coexistence of Norman and Islamic architectural styles shown here belies the violent political struggle for control over medieval Sicily.

### STRUCTURAL CONTINUITIES AND INNOVATIONS

The eleventh century in the Italian Peninsula saw significant advances in construction techniques, especially of vaults and support systems. Tracing the history of vaults – or that of the pointed arch – in Italy is, however, far from straightforward. The earliest extant groin vaults, which are formed by two crossing barrel (or tunnel) vaults, and in this case made of bricks, can be seen in the ruined western aisles of Santa Maria Maggiore in Lomello, Lombardy (First Romanesque Period; exact date unknown). Some scholars believe that the groin vault was invented independently and almost simultaneously in Lombardy and at the magnificent Durham Cathedral (1093–1133; Chapter 34, Key Buildings, p. 713, figs 34.4, 34.21) in the north of England. Others propose that it was in fact brought into Lombardy by the Anglo-Normans, because of the segmental ribs in San Michele Maggiore in Pavia (rebuilt c. 1155 with later restorations) and San Savino in Piacenza (c. 1107), and also that its initial adoption might have been for utilitarian reasons, owing to an earthquake in 1117. This would explain its falling out of use during the next few decades and until its later Gothic reincarnation.

The stones of the Roman Empire and its Early Christian basilicas, still present everywhere around the medieval mason in the Italian Peninsula, became one of the main sources of the Italian Romanesque. The latter's Classical origins did not make it entirely averse to foreign influences, but rather resistant. For example, the Romanesque

tendency in Northern Europe to underline or accentuate structural divisions with piers was not compatible with the inherently Classical colonnades in basilican churches such as San Frediano, in Lucca (1112–47) or Santa Maria in Trastevere, in Rome (rebuilt 1120–43; Key Buildings, p. 922, fig. 45.12). In the latter, the nave continues virtually undifferentiated, leading to the originally level altar. Later additions aside, variations in such Romanesque structures were subtle, often occurring between the Ionic columns that were derived from those in different ancient buildings. In Roman churches, development during the Middle Ages was often limited to a renewal of ornamental features: glass mosaics replaced polychromatic marble, the amount of detail increased in *opus sectile* decoration (a pavement or wall covering made of flat pieces of marble and other coloured stone fitted together in patterns), and the designs of friezes became more elaborate. Not far from Rome, in Civita Castellana, the portico of the Cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore, built in 1210 by Laurentius Romanus, antedates the Renaissance arcades in Florence and Rome with its Ionic columns, its well-proportioned entablature and the wide arch-gate. The boldness of the forms is softened by the effect of coloured marble inlays derived from ancient ruins. These were executed by the Cosmati family in what came to be known as the Cosmatesque style, which was developed in the twelfth century, although it had probably begun as imitations of Byzantine floor mosaics.

the Basilica of St Mark (begun 1063; Key Buildings, p. 921) and the original pierced domes; or from the obscurely allegorical cosmos of Byzantine floor mosaics in Santa Maria and San Donato at Murano (rebuilt, present church c. 1040) and the two-tier, arcaded apse on the church's east façade (fig. 45.3). Elsewhere, and far to the south, the most vivid coexistence of Islamic elements with Norman occurs in the churches of Sicily. The pointed arches raised on paired-up columns of marble, plain or alternately decorated with mosaics in bands, in the cloister at the Cathedral of Monreale (1174–82; fig. 45.4); the stilted arches of the Capella Palatina, in Palermo (c. 1140–47; Chapter 29, Key Buildings, p. 619, fig. 29.19): the elegant Arabo-Gothic organization of patterns on the portal of San Francesco, in Palermo (c. 1260; portal 1302 or later) – all these examples speak of controlled adaptations of foreign traditions, but not necessarily of coalescence.

### RESURFACING CLASSICISM

Elsewhere too, the rigorous pursuits in new construction techniques that took place in Lombardy (see

STRUCTURAL CONTINUITIES AND INNOVATIONS, p. 914) were delayed or ignored, usually in favour of refinement. At the Piazza dei Miracoli, in Pisa, the persistence of Classicism is evident in the proportions of the cathedral itself (begun 1064; Key Buildings, p. 922, fig. 45.5), and in the calculated positions of its satellite structures of the Baptistry (1152–c. 1260; Key Buildings, p. 923, fig. 45.5) and the Campanile (begun 1173; Key Buildings, p. 923, figs 45.5, 45.6), as well as in the apparent ambivalence – in a similar way to that of ancient temples – of these three monuments towards the ground that they stand upon. There are, indeed, ancient notions at work in Pisa; namely, the isolation of the monuments into a separate area – an 'acropolis' removed from 'base' context of the city – so that they can gleam into their urban openness. Pisa's decline in the fourteenth century was to prove rapid and irrevocable, yet its earlier radiance is still evident in the wall passages and blind arcades found in many churches far afield: the Basilica of San Gavino in Porto Torres (1080), the Basilica of Saccargia



**Fig 45.5 Cathedral Complex, Pisa: Cathedral (begun 1064), Baptistery of San Giovanni (1152–c. 1260), Campo Santo (begun 1278) and Campanile ('Leaning Tower'; 1173–1392).** The stark demarcation of the site of the monuments from the rest of the city – unusual to its degree in Italian cities – alludes to a more ancient pedigree of a separate 'acropolis' of idealized structures.

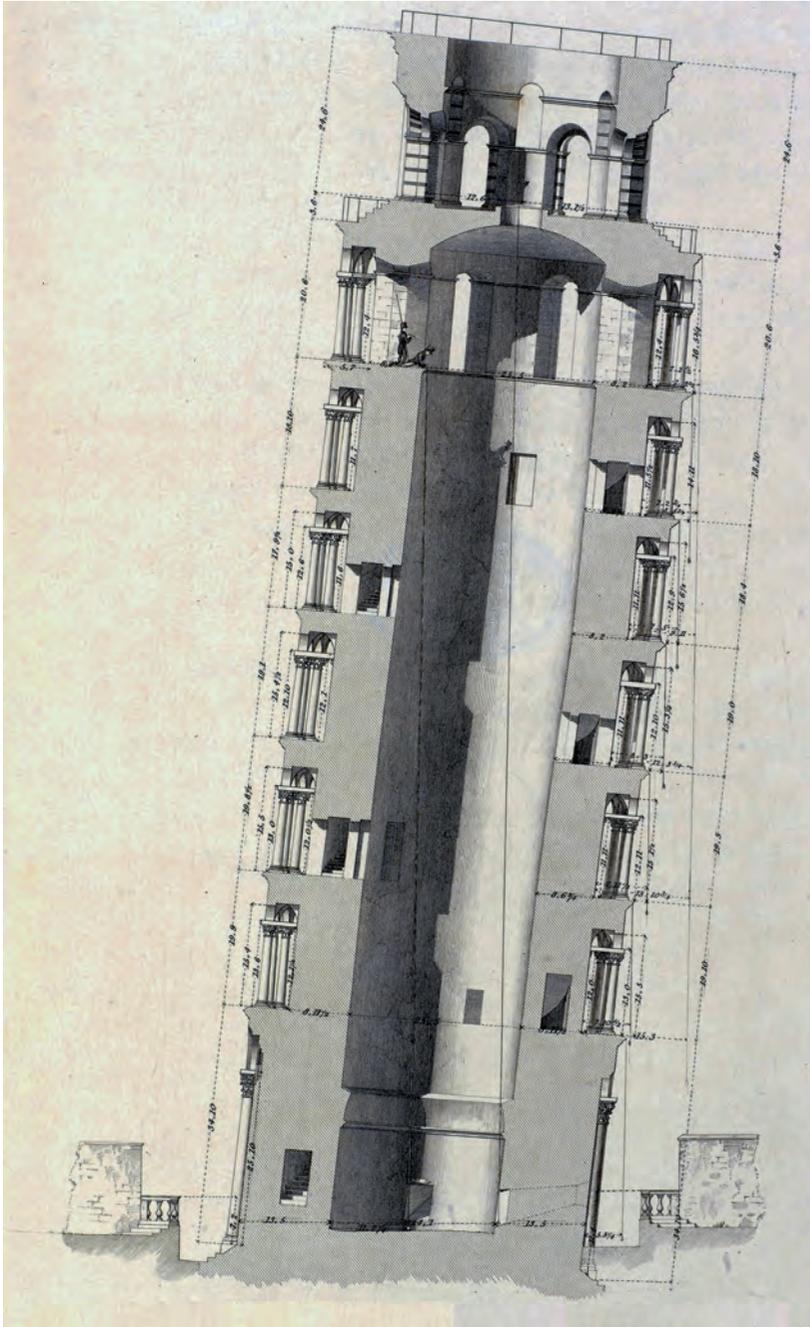
in Condrogiannos (1116) and San Pietro di Sorres in Sassari (begun 1171), all in Sardinia; Troia Cathedral (begun possibly around 1073) and the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Siponto, in Manfredonia (c. 1117; fig. 45.7), both in Puglia, in the south of the peninsula; and the Zadar Cathedral (reconstructed in the thirteenth century) on the Dalmatian coast.

Florence projected its reuse of Classicism towards the future rather than outwards. The slender columns in Santi Apostoli (eleventh century) and the blind arches of the Baptistery of San Giovanni (consecrated 1059; Key Buildings, p. 920, fig. 45.11), for instance, predated the bright Renaissance arcades designed later by Brunelleschi and Michelozzo. Lucca, the other great architectural centre of Tuscany, obtained its own elegance in its numerous white churches. Its formal experiments – modulations between Lombard and Pisan styles – were, however, too particular to play a part elsewhere. The white marble of Lucca's Church of San Michele in Foro (rebuilt 1070 or later) and of its Cathedral of San Martino (begun 1060; façade begun 1204; Key Buildings, p. 921) is entirely local, even if the ebullient blind arcades, which project even from the gable, are Pisan. The use of coloured stone inlays is generally Tuscan, and the integration of the sculptural programme into the architecture is a universal

Romanesque trait, expressive of the desire to exhibit divisions rather than disguise or convolute them.

#### ROMANESQUE INTO GOTHIC

Imposing churches adorned most thirteenth-century cities on the Italian Peninsula, but the prodigious individual and communal wealth that was financing the civic projects of the period was not spared when it came to erecting stunning new cathedrals, especially in Siena and Florence (1296–1380, dome 1436; Key Buildings, p. 925, fig. 45.8). Some of these cathedrals – most notably in Siena and Orvieto – saw the transition from a style firmly rooted in the local traditions and at its pinnacle, to one that was imported, decidedly non-Classical, and still in its infancy; that is, a transition from Late Romanesque to Gothic. The latter bore the authority of the Catholic Church and its stamp of approval, so its efficacy went unquestioned, at least in theory. It is typical for church façades in Italy to belie with their proportions and grandiosity the size of the rest of the edifice, but in the cathedral in Orvieto (begun 1290; Key Buildings, p. 925) the discontinuity between façade and interior is stylistic, too: the façade becomes in this sense a mere screen which carries most of the Gothic detail to be found in the building. It seems that in practice the introduction of Gothic elements in the Italian Peninsula was often met



**Fig 45.6** Section through the Campanile ('Leaning Tower') of Pisa (1173–78; 1272–1319; 1372). Revealing the defects caused by ground subsidence and the corrective method employed, both measured and drawn accurately, this section was created in 1817 by Edward Cressy and George Ledwell Taylor, the first Englishmen to visit Pisa's monuments in order to study them in detail.

with a disinclination actually to break from the Roman and local Romanesque traditions, and so in Orvieto, Siena and elsewhere the wall openings remain small. The typical exterior wall in these Italian Gothic-inflected churches is not denied its integrity; instead its solid presence is stressed by bands of marble or painted stripes,

both preferred to encrustations. It does feel very different to Northern European Gothic.

This being noted, however, the relatively brief timespan of the Gothic in Italy, and the later enmity of pre-eminent Renaissance architects against it, have often led architectural historians to understate its



**Fig 45.7 Santa Maria Maggiore, Siponto, Manfredonia, Puglia (c. 1117).** The Classical detailing in the carvings and the Corinthian capitals in this Siponto church is one of the many examples of Pisan craftsmanship that spread all around Italy – from the western island of Sardinia to Puglia in the south – and beyond, to Zadar on the other side of the Adriatic.

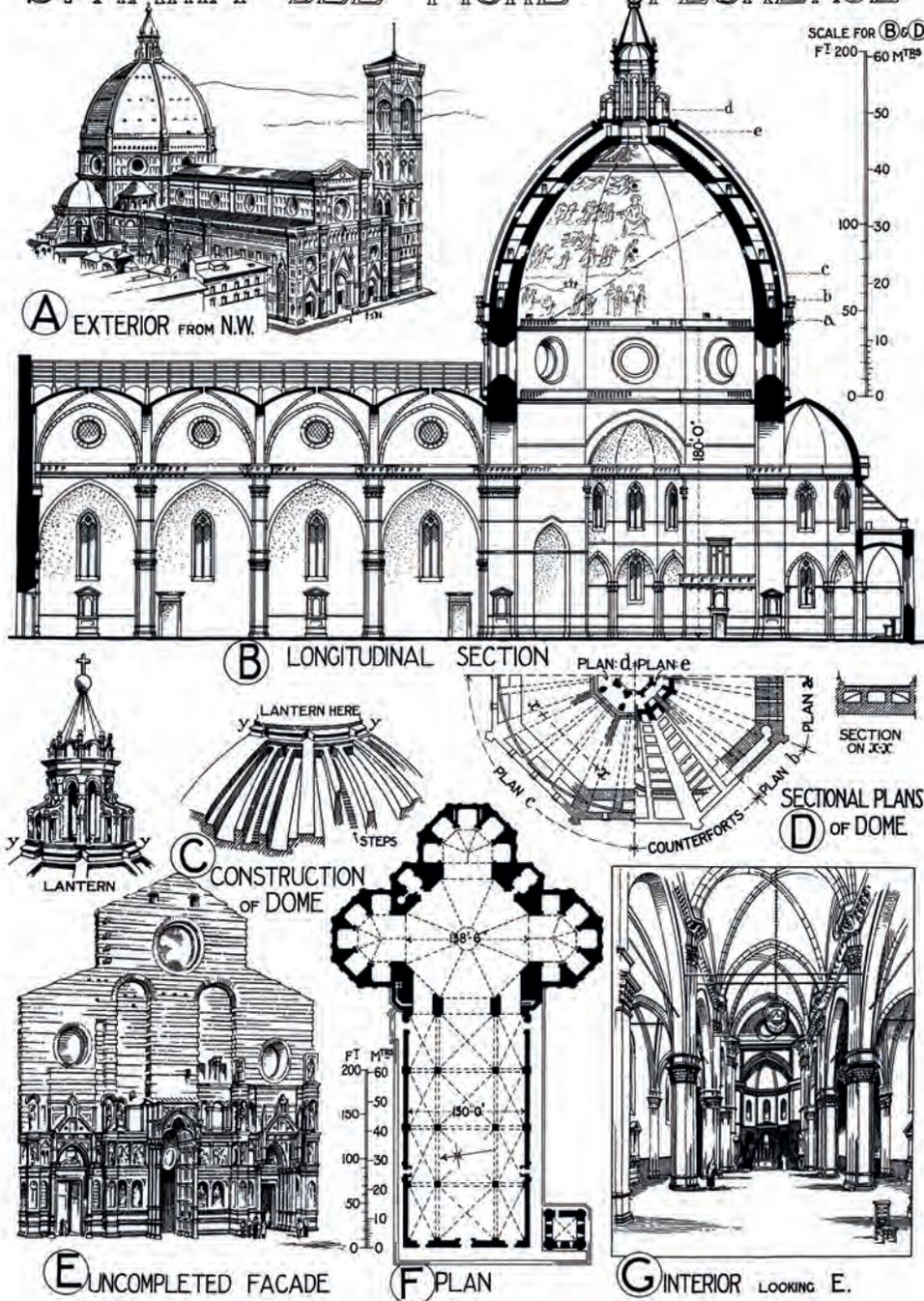
predominance during the later Middle Ages in the Italian Peninsula. Indeed, its spread across the peninsula was underpinned by the expansion of the Franciscan and Dominican religious orders during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In mendicant churches like Santa Maria Novella (begun after 1246) and Santa Croce (begun 1294, probably by Arnolfo di Cambio) in Florence, or in San Francesco in Assisi (1228–53; probably designed by a religious brother, Elia Bombardone), the Northern Gothic style was experimented with and stretched or remodelled to suit Italian needs and tastes. Generally, in the fourteenth century buttresses proliferated on exterior elevations, and fine massing conveyed the use of ambulatories (processional passages) or polygonal apses. The prevalence of the pointed arch resulted in elongated vaulting sections, while piers could be positioned more freely in order to increase the width of the nave. Overall, verticality was emphasized. The impressively tall aisles of Milan Cathedral (fig. 45.9) (begun possibly around 1386; by Simone da Orsenigo, Nicolas de Bonaventure, Antonio di Vincenzo, Giovanni dei Grassi, Gabriele Stornaloco, Giacomo Cova and others) and its vast, hall-like nave, dimly lit at the top, make an immediate impression upon the visitor. This cathedral signals the zenith of Gothic architecture in Italy and is especially interesting for two more reasons: firstly, because its lengthy construction covers the period from the late fourteenth century to the nineteenth almost without interruption; secondly, because of the number

of surviving records – far greater than for any other building of the time – which document this building process in exhaustive detail. The exterior crust, the spire, the countless pinnacles and finials, may have altered the original contours of Milan Cathedral, but, like its written history, they thereby reflect many of the changing attitudes of the intervening centuries, towards form, styles, construction, ornament and symbolism.

Venice, the leading nexus of international trade, and often mythologised as ‘La Serenissima’ (‘Most Serene’), followed its own distinctive stylistic path through the late medieval period, effectively skipping Romanesque and arriving at its own versions of Gothic, through what can be described as a procedure of ‘de-Byzantinization’. The omnipresence of the Dominicans and the Franciscans is embodied in the two most important examples of Gothic churches in Venice: SS Giovanni e Paolo (begun c. 1333; fig. 45.10) and Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (c. 1330–38; fig. 45.10). The transepts in both churches are open along their entire span on the altar side, into flanking chapels, so that one’s encounter with the final walls is postponed and the interior space extended. These broad arrangements of chapels counterbalance the long naves of the two churches, and inconspicuously enrich the spatial experience at their respective centres.

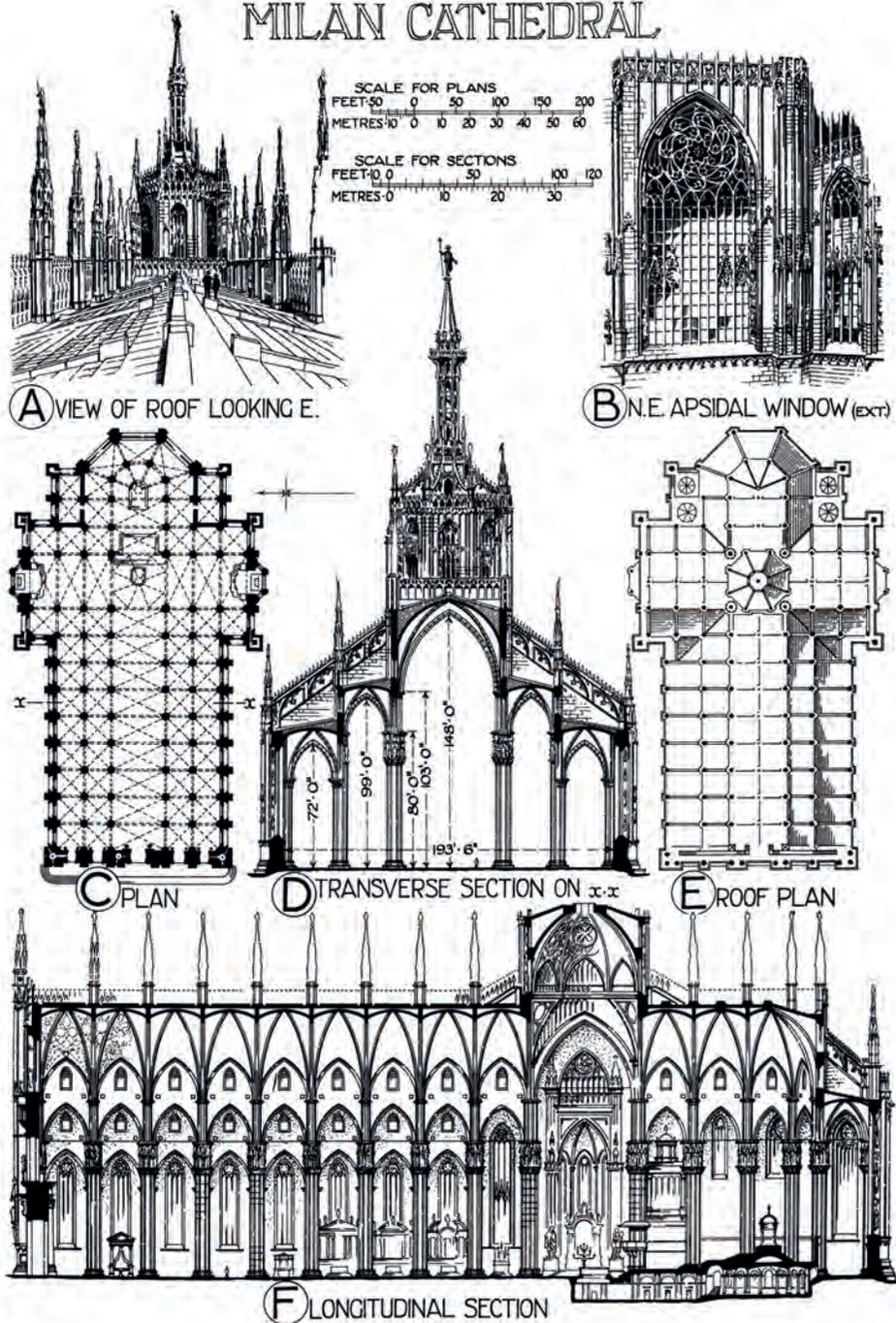
Concerning the city’s secular architecture, the Doge’s Palace (begun c. 1340, extended after 1424; Key Buildings, p. 926, fig. 45.13) is the most

# S. MARIA DEL FIORE: FLORENCE

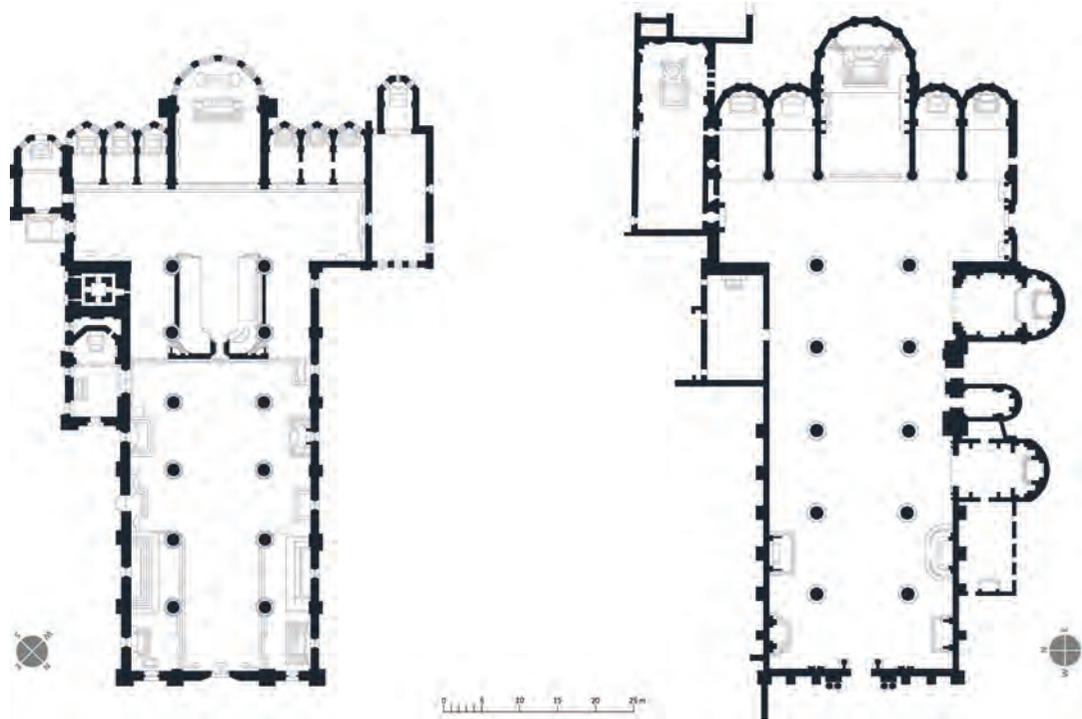


**Fig 45.8** Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence (1296–1380; dome 1436). Composite drawing comprising the plan, section, interior and exterior views, as well as detailed constructional elements of the world-renowned cathedral in central Florence – as later adorned in the mid-15th century by the dome, also shown here, designed by one of the Italian Renaissance’s founding architects, Filippo Brunelleschi.

# MILAN CATHEDRAL



**Fig 45.9 Milan Cathedral (possibly begun in 1386, construction continuing through to 19th century).** Composite drawing comprising the plan, sections and close-up views of Milan Cathedral. The drawing shows why the building represents the highpoint of Italian Gothic architecture, although this is often obscured in its finished state by the outer crust of ornamentations. Its history was extensively recorded over many centuries of construction.



**Fig 45.10** San Giovanni and Paolo (begun c. 1333) and Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (c. 1330–38), both in Venice. Comparative plans of two typical churches erected by the Franciscan and Dominican orders. The plans of their Venetian churches demonstrate their versatile adaptability to urban sites and an anticipation of gradual enlargement over time.

distinguished of Venetian achievements, due to its sheer scale and the ingenuity of its articulation. The palaces and aristocratic residences of Venice carry different pedigrees, from Byzantine during the thirteenth century (as at Ca' Loredan) to Gothic in the fifteenth century (as at Ca' d'Oro). The correspondence between orders and the time of creation is not always that strict, though, and overlaps occur, at times even

on the same façade. Venice remained indifferent to the Tuscan-driven Renaissance; its ornate fifteenth-century palaces ranging across the Grand Canal instead advertise their allegiance to Gothic. Yet, with their well-drawn arches, inviting loggias and subtle colourations, better suited to the glimmer of the Adriatic Sea than to Tuscany's hills, they attain their own softness of scale.

## Key Buildings

### **Baptistery of San Giovanni, Florence (consecrated 1059)**

Buildings that stand separate from cathedrals and are dedicated solely to the baptismal rite are unique to Italy. The earliest known is the Lateran baptistery, from 440 CE, next to the Papal Archbasilica of St John Lateran in Rome. Baptistery plans were usually centralized, being either round or octagonal.

The construction date of Florence's Baptistery of San Giovanni (fig. 44.11) remains uncertain: plausible theories date it back to the sixth century, and

the main features of the building to the eleventh, based on the known consecration date of 1059.

The only deviation from the plan's octagonal symmetry is the rectangular-base apse in the east. Early Christian characteristics – such as the homogeneous space, owing to the centralized plan, and Tuscan Romanesque articulations, like the arcade passages – are subordinated here to Classical geometry. This is expressed by the tripartite arrangements carried out in green-white marble on the exterior walls, as well as by the alternation of Ionic mullions and Corinthian



**Fig 45.11 Baptistery of San Giovanni, Florence (consecrated 1059).**

Classical geometry is employed as the main ordering principle and cohesive element of what is otherwise an ebullient mix of various influences (i.e. Early Christian, Byzantine, Tuscan Romanesque) in the arcade passages and the bright ceiling mosaics.

pilasters inside. The dome mosaics are a meld of Early Christian decoration, Tuscan painting, Byzantine manuscript illustration, and possibly Venetian-Greek mastery. More than any other building in Florence, the baptistery affirms that the late medieval artistic spirit in Italy did not regard buildings as subservient to style, but rather as opportunities to enlarge the canon.

#### **Cathedral of San Martino, Lucca (begun c. 1060)**

The aesthetic coherence of the west façade of Lucca Cathedral is achieved through consistently excellent craftsmanship, and belies the variety of derivations and influences contained in it: as an example, the Pisan-style blind arcades of the gable are enriched by the 'barbaric' energy of their sculpted, polychrome colonnettes. Underneath, the arches of the portico, seemingly Imperial Roman, are unsparingly decorated with human and animal figurines, as well as floral carvings in a style also met in the churches of Puglia, in southern Italy. Lombard craftsmen executed the relief sculptures inside the portico. Hence, one finds small compartments of Northern 'primitiveness' – like the sculptures of the months of the year with their Romanesque proportions – circumscribed by neat semi-circular arches, and juxtaposed with biblical scenes of Classical eloquence. On the cathedral's north façade, niches are carved onto the buttresses, while the wide bays defined by the blind arches remain relatively bare.

#### **St Mark's Basilica, Venice (begun 1063)**

This basilica's history reflects diverse attitudes of Venice towards the eastern Mediterranean. First came the 'adoption' of the Egyptian evangelist, St Mark, beginning with the theft by Venetian merchants of the disciple's relics from Alexandria in the late 820s. Little is known about the original structure of the church, built around that time. Older theories about an aisled basilica with a portico and crypt were contradicted by excavations, which confirmed that the plan had been centralized from the outset. The present church was begun in 1063, in brick masonry, later dressed in marble. Its hybrid character is owed firstly to the scale and ambition of the execution; the Greek-cross plan features three aisles on each arm, and the gargantuan arches are essentially rendered as barrel vaults. Secondly, fragments and techniques were imported from the Byzantine Empire throughout the construction, with the embellishment of the basilica after the Fourth Crusade containing treasures from the sack of Constantinople (now Istanbul) in 1204. The pendentive domes, the mosaic works executed by Byzantine artists, the unsparing gilding of the interior: these may all misleadingly speak of mere artistic exchange, yet the Byzantine *spolia* belie the intention to establish Venice and this, its main church, as pilgrimage destinations on a par with Constantinople. Moreover, as Venice's trade with the Islamic world developed, the west and north façades relied upon Saracen influence for their new portals, while the upper order of the west façade is

elaborated with Gothic outer arches of an ogee variety, possibly the earliest in Europe. During the building's early life, the west façade would have been bare, with a portico as a formal approach. This was then replaced by a narthex in the early thirteenth century. Immediately after, the outer domes were reworked and made pointier by adding cupolas at the top.

### **Pisa Cathedral, Pisa (1063 or 1064 onwards)**

Construction of this cathedral (fig. 45.5) began in 1063 or 1064 by Buscheto, following a Pisan victory over the Saracens at Palermo. The present building replaced the fourth-century church of Santa Maria, which had been constructed on the ruins of Hadrian's palace or baths. Large parts of the later cathedral were destroyed by fire in the late sixteenth century but were restored immediately after.

The doubling up of the aisles on either side was possible because of the lightness of the timber roof; a vault would have required either single aisles or a narrower nave. The plan is a Latin cross, one of the earliest extant in Italy, and the width measures around a third of the length. This is the proportion that Vitruvius prescribed for basilicas, the progenitors of Latin-cross churches; although in this case the proportion may have been not intended, but instead the incidental outcome of the extension during the second stage of construction, after 1110. The façade was designed by Rainaldo – who also introduced alterations to the plan – after Buscheto had died at a date unknown.

The interior is characterized by the persistent symmetry of the plan and its precise intercolumniation, and animated by the variation in materials and textures. The large Corinthian and composite columns are made of granite – from Elba, Giglio, Sardinia, oriental and bronze Egyptian; and of marble – African, Numidian, serravezza, bardiglio, cipolina and brescia. The walls are Pisan marble and Verucan limestone with fillings from Livornian tufa. The exterior offers less diversity: the black Vecchiano stone has faded to grey, its contrast with the white stones softened with time. The mosaics in the Cathedral are for the most part Byzantine in derivation, although it should be noted that mosaic techniques were adopted wholeheartedly and evolved significantly in Italy during the late Middle Ages.

The Cathedral's setting on the Piazza dei Miracoli is completed by the accompanying Baptistery (Key Buildings, p. 923, fig. 45.5) and Campanile (Key Buildings, p. 923, figs 45.5, 45.6), which echo it in considerable style.

### **San Miniato al Monte, Florence (late eleventh to twelfth centuries)**

An abbey had existed on the site of San Miniato, on a hillside overlooking Florence, ever since some point

during Carolingian times in the eighth to ninth centuries. Very few traces also survive from the building that was consecrated in 1018. Instead, the present church was built in the second half of the eleventh century. The broad façade announces a spacious interior modelled on Early Christian basilicas, with the nave separated from the aisles by antique columns. These alternate with composite piers that carry the transverse arches – a Northern, probably Lombard feature, uncommon at this latitude. There is a sophisticated attempt at achieving visual coherence after the termination of the aisles, with the height of the columns carried over to the blind arcades of the apse.

The Church of San Miniato is the most important source on the early Florentine style along with the Baptistery of San Giovanni (Key Buildings, p. 920, fig. 45.11). It is possible that the penchant for bi-chromatic marbling reached Florence from Pisa, where it was used for Pisa Cathedral (Key Buildings, p. 922, fig. 45.5), but in any case the Florentine treatment is an applied one, with marble facing in the so-called Incrustation style, distinctly different to the Pisan method of laying marble slabs of alternating colour atop one another. The articulation of the façade in geometrical patterns corresponding to architectural elements displays a Classical affiliation. Indeed, both San Miniato and the Florentine Baptistery allude to Late Roman antiquity, as demonstrated by the Classically proportioned blind arcades on their exteriors, the architraves and mouldings, all of which establish a link, however broken, to ancient interiors.

### **Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome (rebuilt from possibly 1120–43)**

This is one of Rome's oldest churches, standing on a site occupied by a church ever since the third decade of the third century, and with some parts remaining from a previous rebuilding begun in the 340s. The apse was detached from the nave and pushed further back, so a transept was added to bridge the distance (fig. 45.12). The apse's tesserae mosaics, dating from the thirteenth century, are among the earliest depictions of the Virgin Mary enthroned at Christ's side. They are framed by the arch at the end of the nave, which is raised up on a pair of columns derived from the third-century Roman Baths of Caracalla. Such incorporations of antique fragments were common in Early Christian churches – the narthex shelters a plethora of monuments and ancient remnants, such as gravestones and sculptural fragments with animal scenes, acanthus leaves and vines. The bell-tower is Romanesque, with blind arches, and cornices that separate the storeys. Other elements, like the extravagant nave ceiling and



**Fig 45.12 Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome (rebuilt from possibly 1120–43).**

Antique Classical columns frame this basilican nave. The added transept is the only interruption in the otherwise continuous interior, while the scintillating mosaics spilling out from the apse even onto the transept arch serve to reconfirm the sense of internal spatial continuity.

frescoes, were added at later times. The later arched portico (1702), with its Classical balustrade and the four figures of popes, replaced the original trabeated (post-and-lintel) narthex and its Corinthian colonnade.

#### **Pisa Baptistery, Pisa (1152–c. 1260)**

The Baptistery of San Giovanni that stands alongside Pisa Cathedral (fig. 45.5) and its Campanile is the largest one of its type in the Italian Peninsula (figs 45.5, 45.6). Dedicated to St John, it was begun in 1052 by Diotisalvi. The blind arcades provide a visual link to the cathedral's west façade. The portal of the baptistery's east entrance is an elaborate display of sculptural detail, with hardly a surface left unadorned. The arranging elements, such as friezes, archivolt and panelling, are Classical, and so are the Corinthian capitals, but the execution of the foliage and other detail is a match for the vigour of Romanesque north of the Alps. And yet, in appearance the portal is doubtlessly oriental, with no precedent or successor to be found anywhere in the vicinity of Pisa. In the sixteenth century, Giorgio Vasari mentioned 'Greek' sculptors having worked on the portal, without elaborating further: he was probably referring to itinerant Byzantine artists. Nicola Pisano remodelled the upper storeys roughly a century after Diotisalvi's work and completed them with the assistance of his son, Giovanni Pisano. The visual ascent from the plainer lower level to the sculptural elaboration of the upper storeys manifests the transition from Pisan Romanesque to High Gothic.

#### **Cathedral of Cefalù, Palermo, Sicily (1131–48 and later; consecrated 1267)**

Archaeological evidence brought to light during a restoration in the 1970s suggests that the interior of Cefalù Cathedral was conceived as a homogeneous space and that the wooden roof of the nave is a subsequent replacement of an earlier one made of stone, hence the inconsistent heights. The numerous twentieth-century interpretations about possible intentions, initial developments and later adjustments have not always superseded one another. Rather, they have added theoretical layers which reflect the actual nuances in the cathedral's interior: the aisles are interrupted by the high transept, but then unexpectedly resume as barrel-vaulted side-apses; a pointed arch provides the transition between the basilican nave (with pitched wooden roof) and a two-bay-deep sanctuary with rib vaults; the latter terminates at a semi-dome generated by another pointed arch. This kind of variance, rather than the spatial continuity typical in Norman interiors, offers the most rewarding experience in Cefalù. The fragments incorporated in the building's fabric furnish it with further narratives: the antique granite and cipolin (light-coloured Roman marble) columns may have belonged to a Roman basilica or to a medieval church which reused them, while the large blocks at the base of the façade could be part of earlier fortifications.

#### **Campanile ('Leaning Tower'), Pisa (begun 1173)**

The third and, indeed, the most famous structure on the Piazza dei Miracoli, accompanying Pisa Cathedral and its

Baptistery, is the renowned Campanile (figs 45.5, 45.6). Popularly known as the 'Leaning Tower', it was begun in 1173 by Bonanus of Pisa, on a round plan. The granite and marble columns at the lower level are engaged (embedded) and protruded to form a series of blind arches. Vaulting was intended for the interior of the lower and the uppermost storeys. The precariousness of the building is owed to the insubstantial foundations and the unreliable soil it rests on. The conception of the edifice as one mass exacerbated its initially uneven settling. It is not clear whether its construction was halted due to the slant or because of the military campaigns Pisa was involved in at the time. Nearly a century later, with the soil having settled considerably, construction was resumed, with Giovanni di Simone in charge. The upper storeys were built to be shorter on the leaning side: this corrective reduced the sloping but also resulted in a curvature, which is still perceptible from the fifth storey upwards.

#### **Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Siena (before 1226–63)**

This cathedral's nave is typically Tuscan Romanesque, with marble bands and sturdy piers. The latter appear skeletal enough to evoke later Gothic articulations, but nevertheless do not carry on up into the clerestory. The dark Romanesque nave, once probably barrel-vaulted, provides a formal approach to the central feature, the hexagonal crossing, which is the most important spatial generator and an interesting nuance on the horizontal and vertical axes – it rises into a dodecagon and finally evolves into a circular dome. The cathedral's wealth of architecture, sculpture and painting make it a crucial site in Tuscan art and architecture, yet some of the most enticing information exists as written documents and drawings, such as insights into the controversy concerning the construction of its Baptistery of San Giovanni (begun 1316) under the east end. Early in the process, an expert committee deemed there were structural flaws that would compromise the cathedral's foundations. It was common practice for governments to disregard such verdicts even when stakes were high; the works continued with some deviations from the original plan to ensure stability, such as cautious strengthening of members and reductions of openings. The successful vaulting of the baptistery proved in this case the committee's trepidation was rightly ignored. Even greater collective ambition and adversity came with an attempted new nave. The aim was to enlarge the plan significantly by reorienting it and turning the old nave into choir and transepts. The north aisle and the entrance wall hint at the envisaged height of this nave, roughly double that of the old. The piers look far thinner than necessary to take

the thrust of any additional arches. Nevertheless, work on the revised layout dragged on for two decades until halting, not only because of insurmountable engineering challenges, but also financial difficulties and the plague outbreak.

#### **Church of Santa Maria della Pieve, Arezzo (mainly thirteenth century; campanile 1330)**

Originally built in the eleventh century and rebuilt in the following one, Santa Maria della Pieve was then further remodelled in the thirteenth century. The west façade, dating from the latter alterations, is vigorously articulated with individually carved mullions and countless piercings. The ground floor features a barrel-vaulted entrance, flanked by two arches on either side. In the *loggiettas* (small loggias) above, the openings multiply and decrease in size with the building's elevation. On the east end there is a more measured, and more Classical, variation in the wall openings. A curved loggia rests on the tall blind arches of the apse, while at the top a smaller loggia with minute openings recalls the articulation of the west façade. There is no formal approach from that side, and the apse projecting into the sloping Piazza Grande retains its distance from the civic buildings. The bell-tower was completed in 1330, still in the Romanesque style.

#### **Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo, Orvieto (after 1250, probably 1280s)**

The Capitano del Popolo ('Captain of the People') was the title of a communal administrator, traditionally elected by the populace. This kind of position had been established in many Italian cities from the early thirteenth century onwards, as an addition – and a counter-balancing role – to the *podestà* who represented the nobility. The Palazzo del Capitano (fig. 45.1) in Orvieto is one of the most exquisite examples of civic architecture anywhere in Italy. The interior consists of a hall and a smaller chamber, both resting on a barrel-vaulted ground-floor loggia. The architectural image of the palazzo is one of understated beauty arrived at through ingenious moderation: the additions of the bell-tower on one side and of the external staircase and balcony on the other ensure a pleasant break of symmetry; the plain, wide arches of the ground floor are repeated in stepped form – a rippling effect which eases the visual transition to the more ornate windows of the upper storey; the originally open loggia connecting the two squares would have once reflected the building's social function and welcoming character, also emphasized by the local warm-coloured limestone.

### Papal Palace, Viterbo (1257–66)

Built on an impressively sloping site, the Papal Palace of Viterbo presents two distinctly different faces to the surrounding city. On the north side, heavy buttresses jut out onto the hillside and a tall, octagonal well acts as shaft, locking the massive barrel vault in place. These tall walls and buttresses give the general impression of a castle or fortified palace. On the south, however, the façade opens up to the piazza with a loggia and a protruding staircase that has carved balustrades and a wide landing. A long, continuous cornice buoyantly integrates all openings on the façade. The elegant tracery of the windows and the relief sculpture lighten the visual impact of the otherwise heavy supports. Pigments of red and blue colours that have been found on the grey volcanic tuff (sedimentary stone) would have created an even jauntier overall impression, that of a vigorous experimentation using strong individual elements, colours and spatial arrangements.

### Orvieto Cathedral (begun 1290)

The structure of Orvieto Cathedral – among whose architects were Fra Bagnone di Perugia, Lorenzo Maitani and Andrea Pisano – is not as skeletal as in Siena Cathedral (before 1226–63; Key Buildings, p. 924, fig. 45.2). Instead, sturdy cylindrical columns and round arches support the walls of the upper storey and the pitched wooden roof. Inside, irregularities abound as a result of the columns being offset in relation to the apses and windows of the aisles. The rhythm becomes even more perplexing by the asymmetries between the bays of the two aisles. The transepts, which were added later and turned the plan from a basilican one into a cruciform, presumably had to obey the axis created by the columns, and so in plan they do not meet the nave at a right angle. All these deviations from rectilinearity enliven the interior, which is otherwise dominated by the uninterrupted stripes on the walls. These are painted on basalt to give the impression of alternating bands of basalt and travertine.

### Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence (begun 1296, remodelled after 1357; dome completed 1436)

The exact extent to which Florence Cathedral (fig. 45.8), which replaced the older Santa Reparata, was based on Arnolfo di Cambio's initial scheme remains unclear despite the extensive documentation on its construction. Much doubt revolves around the scale of the edifice and the roof design, which may have been initially conceived as wooden, save for the cupola. The exterior marble scheme may have been inspired from San Miniato al Monte (eleventh to early thirteenth centuries; Key Buildings, p. 922) on a hillside overlooking Florence or, more directly, from

the adjacent, plainer Florence Baptistery (consecrated 1059; Key Buildings, p. 920, fig. 45.11) standing in front of the cathedral's main entrance. The octagonal drum was probably modelled on the baptistery and intended by Arnolfo from the start, as was presumably the dome. The latter, however, began only in the late fourteenth century after decade-long discussions. This was the time when many other features were agreed on, such as the nave length (four bays), the octagonal piers of the tribunes, and the design of the oculi of the clerestory. The desired width of the dome, equal to the nave and aisles, presented the most complex engineering problems. The famous solution by Filippo Brunelleschi (begun in 1420) was a dome of essentially Gothic shape (Vol. 2, Chapter 58, Key Buildings, p. 95, fig. 58.2), but marking the transition to the Renaissance because of construction techniques derived from Roman antiquity, and the eloquent articulation of buttresses as *exedrae* (apsidal structures).

Over its construction, work on the cathedral halted a few times, but was resumed again despite the 1348 plague and Florence's wars against Pisa, the Papal State and the Visconti. In fact, more threatening to the project were artistic controversies. Expert committees and, as a last resort, the citizenry were often called forth to make decisions, and to ensure these were adhered to following written agreements. Such processes undoubtedly tempered the original vision, yet Florentine society continued to demonstrate a remarkable capacity for harnessing the imagination and talents of individuals involved, as well as collective pragmatism in resolving problems.

### Palazzo Pubblico, Siena (begun 1297)

The volume of the Palazzo Pubblico and its commanding position on the Piazza del Campo (fig. 45.2) reflect the actual and symbolic significance of the republican government in Siena. The ground-floor loggia was built out of stone while the upper storeys are made of brick. Another loggia, which faces in the opposite direction of the piazza, is placed at the top of the central section of the palace. Until the late seventeenth century the wings were only two storeys high, thus creating a more dramatic contrast to the verticality of the adjacent tower, the Torre del Mangia (1338–48). The palazzo's concave exterior elevation is absorbed into the interior layout; placed asymmetrically, the openings between rooms provide interesting rejections of axial planning. The scheme of elaborate frescoes by a number of prominent painters disguises the scale and sturdiness of the edifice. The *cortile* (interior courtyard) is a sombre space encouraging introspection. The vaulted arcades are raised on octagonal brick columns with stone capitals, thus continuing with the brick-stone scheme that commences

on the exterior. This variation is also found on the Torre del Mangia, where the stone crown loggia was added in 1352, and in later palaces elsewhere in Siena. The influence of Palazzo Pubblico on the rest of the city was, in fact, deliberate and immediate: according to a decree issued just before the works began, any new building overlooking the Piazza del Campo had to be without balcony and its windows were to have columns.

### **Orsanmichele, Florence (begun after 1336)**

The site has possibly the richest history of any in its competing civic and ecclesiastical functions: at times it was a convent garden (the name Orsanmichele originated from St Michael and 'Orto', which means vegetable garden), wool shop, grain market and storage, pilgrimage destination, government meeting site. The present sandstone building is a mid-fourteenth-century reconstruction of an older loggia from around 1280. Subsequently, the wide arches – still visible today – were turned to windows and then filled in to create an enclosed religious space, while grain continued to be stored in the upper storeys. Most alterations and embellishments were entrusted to the guilds of Florence, including the elaborate tabernacle that sits somewhat awkwardly in the double nave, and the sculptural programme of the façades. Works by many notable Florentine sculptors of the early fifteenth century adorn the niches, and so the Gothic exterior of Orsanmichele can be read as a great sculpture rehearsal for the Italian Renaissance.

### **Campanile, Florence (1334–59)**

Giotto designed the famous campanile but lived long enough only to execute its ground floor, which was later reinforced. After his death, Andrea Pisano took over as works supervisor (1343–47), followed in turn by Francesco Talenti (1348–59). The campanile tower rises directly from the pavement of the piazza alongside Florence Cathedral (Key Buildings, p. 925, fig. 45.8), up to a height of 85 metres (278 feet). Its coloured marbles from Siena, Prato and Carrara mirror the palette of the cathedral, while the geometrical patterns are more elaborate, as one would expect from the building's designer, Giotto, a painter-turned-architect. Contemporary chroniclers expressed admiration for the mass of the foundations, possibly consisting of a block of 20 metres (65 feet) wide and long, and running 7 metres (23 feet) deep. This is also probably why the tower is detached from Florence Cathedral, and placed on the side that faces the city. Stripped plaster and excavations have revealed multiple layers at ground floor and

confirmed that Giotto's design was flawed – being too thin and without setback – and hence had to be later reinforced.

### **Castello Visconteo, Pavia (c. 1365)**

Fortifications are deliberately built to resist human-inflicted damage and therefore tend to outlast civic buildings, and so it is not surprising to find many extant fortifications and keeps in Italy, such as at Montagnana (1242–59) and Gradara (keep built c. 1150, outer wall c. 1307–25 and later). In Pavia, the Castello Visconteo was designed by a military architect, Bartolino da Novara, and yet it looks civic rather than defensive because it borrows its form and characteristics from palaces as much as it does from castles. Its ambition towards aesthetic coherence is evident in the internal court arcades, with the slightly pointed stone arches, and the upper-storey windows arranged symmetrically over them. The modern-like, horizontal effect is continued outside, on the south façade, where the towers are pushed out to the corners. The aesthetic ambition is also illustrated by the fact that some windows are false, intended to disguise interior staircases.

### **Doge's Palace, Venice (begun 1340, extended after 1424)**

A double loggia at the lower level was common enough in Venetian palaces of this period, and those of earlier times, but nowhere was it as wide as at the Doge's Palace (fig. 45.13). The volume of the superstructure ought to create an unpleasant contrast to the openness of the loggia, but the visual effect is instead one of lightness, owing to the pastel colour scheme of the solid surface and the repetition of Arabic patterns throughout. The large windows on the upper storeys do not correspond rhythmically to the loggias, although their size and shape is roughly that of the openings of the lower loggia. Over time, such ambiguous poetics attract praise and criticism, depending on whether one views them as sensitive play or as a failure to subordinate every element in a design of great scale and complexity. Generally, the Doge's Palace encourages vacillations of this kind: the continuous, cubical exterior envelops a heavily compartmented interior; the freedom from axial movement in the Gran Cortile (Great Courtyard) belies the strict processional articulation inside, and the adjacent Basilica of St Mark (begun 1063; Key Buildings, p. 921) can be perceived as an unsolved problem of hierarchy or as an opportunity for a visual link to the Gran Cortile.



**Fig 45.13 Doge's Palace, Venice (begun 1340, extended after 1424).** The lagoon-front façade continues uniformly around the building, leading one away from the water and towards the Piazza San Marco. The palace's loggias give a false impression of porosity, while the upper levels clothe the internal arrangements with masonry made to look lighter by using pastel colours and Arabic patterns.

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**EKTORAS ARKOMANIS** is Senior Lecturer in Architectural History and Theory at the Sir John Cass School of Art, Architecture and Design at London Metropolitan University, UK.