

Introduction

by *Giuseppe Cirillo - Anna Grimaldi*

The intention of the essays presented here is to open new lines of research into the political historiography of the eighteenth century, particularly with regard to Europe during the Bourbon period. It is the first scientific product of a group of European researchers, who comparatively examine the functions of the eighteenth century royal sites in relation to the nature of the Bourbon estates and the new rituals developing around the Royal Sites.

Of the various lines pursued, the first inspires the title of the review and initial essay by Cirillo and Quirós Rosado (*The Europe of “decentralised courts”. Palaces and Royal Sites: the construction of the political image of the Bourbons of Italy and Spain through new rituals and ceremonials*): namely, the existence of two phenomena in Europe related to the royal courts and palaces. On one hand, we have the phenomenon of the “centralised courts”, such as those of Paris and Vienna. In this experience, rituals, ceremonials and the year of the king, queen and court were conducted in well-defined and limited spaces. On the other, in Mediterranean Europe we have the experience of the “decentralised court”, beginning with the Spain of Philip V: the year of the king and the court being split between a series of royal sites, hence the metaphor of the “decentralised court”. What was the primary function of the “decentralised court”? What are often seen as the pleasures and pastimes around which the new rituals developed, in reality take on a precise role in monarchic policy. These private spaces, above all in the period of Philip V and Elisabetta Farnese in Spain, and Charles of Bourbon in Naples, were instrumental in establishing a policy of independence of the royal family from the devices of the capitals, from the influences of the ancient nobility (the Grandi of Spain in Madrid, the great feudality of the Kingdom and the nobility of Neapolitan ilk), from the principal palaces and the weight of their political ceremonials. There was a desire

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to escape the far too strict label imposed by public ceremonials in favour of private spaces, increasingly sought among the Royal Sites.

A second line pursued in the essays (above all in the initial essay) is that of offering an initial census of the Royal Sites in Bourbon Europe: around ten in Spain, no less than 68 in the Kingdom of Naples and other built in the Kingdom of Sicily.

In Castille, before Philip V, there was no lack of such estates, but they had no precise function. In the vicinity of Segovia and Madrid there were the famous hunting lodges of Valsaín and El Pardo. Some came from the acquisition of assets of ancient military orders or were purchased privately; others, with Philip V, were created around the permanent court of Madrid to construct the suburban Palace of Buen Retiro, or new structures of a dynastic-propagandist nature (in particular, the royal Pantheon at the monastery of San Lorenzo de Escorial).

San Ildefonso, on the other hand, was an idealised model for the spiritual retreat of the monarchs outside the court of Madrid, away from the influence of old aristocracy on ceremonials. In a more occult sense, the new Palace became a tribunal in miniature, chosen with marked intention by the queen consort to establish a centre of control over the person of the monarch. According to Spanish historiography, San Ildefonso inaugurated a period of aggregation for the sites of the royal estate, such as the Royal Site of El Pardo, or the foundation of Riofrío, in the vicinity of San Ildefonso, into *cazadero* of Elisabetta Farnese during her exile in the times of Ferdinand VI.

Even in Naples, Charles of Bourbon and later Ferdinand IV established a system founded on a dense network of Palaces and Royal Sites. From the mid-1730s and for the ensuing 70 years, no fewer than 68 Royal Sites were constructed in the region of Naples. In addition to the Royal Palace of Naples there were 6 principal Palaces (Capodimonte, Caserta, Portici, Carditello, Persano and Quisisana), a series of villas, residences and hunting lodges. There followed a series of hunting reserves, many of which with architectural structures. The system was founded on a series of concentric circles centred on the royal palace, the other principal palaces and a number of the hunting lodges, reaching out to the minor sites. It was in effect a system of “decentralised courts”, in that there was a periodic movement of kings and queens with their “households”, a hoard of courtiers, the Councils and Secretaries of State with their archives, guards and so on, from one Palace to the other.

Hence, the functions of the Royal Palaces and Royal Sites began to change with the introduction of crossed military, administrative and economic functions.

To this regard, Maria Anna Noto's essay examines Charles of Bourbon's policy in terms of the representation of sovereignty and the construction of the Caserta Palace (*Charles of Bourbon, King of Naples: the Royal Sites and the Representation of Sovereignty*). On the other hand, Angelo Di Falco investigates the administration of the Neapolitan Royal Sites (*The experimentation of "military governments" in Royal Bourbon Sites. The "State" of Caserta between iurisdictio and administration*). In Naples, the Royal Sites were under the jurisdiction of the new Secretary to the Royal Household created by Charles of Bourbon. For the most important (the State of Caserta, which also included jurisdiction over the Palace and the States of Carditello, Valle and Durazzano, and Colonia di S. Leucio) a separate administration was established under an Intendent, usually a functionary from the detachments of the royal army. The Royal Sites became part of a logic of military control of the territory and, more generally, militarisation of the "territory of the king", which from Naples extended outward into no fewer than three of the Kingdom's provinces. The capital, the royal palace and the adjacent territories came under the military control of a "royal army", already established in Spain by Philip V and later, in a more capillary manner, by Charles III.

Another line of research followed concerns the new rituals that involved the Bourbon royal sites.

The entire construction of the symbolic apparatus of monarchic ritual effectively took on vivacious tones. At the Royal Sites rituality distanced itself from the ceremonials of State based on the history of the Kingdom and its precedents. There was a rethinking of the spaces of the Palaces and Royal Sites marking the day and the year of the king and queen, as well as the rituals and ceremonials of the ambassadors, the nobility and the people. This is the subject tackled in the essay by Giovanni Brancaccio (*Royal and archaeological sites: towards an integrated system?*). And more: the court and the royal sites communicated the themes and routes of the Grand Tour. It was a grand propaganda machine that saw the expansion of the court to include dozens of foreign travellers of the times, artists and intellectuals. The cyclic movement of the Bourbon monarchs through the royal sites was based on the seasons, with the religious calendar establishing the programme of the passage

from one site to the next. During the reigns of Ferdinand VI and Charles III, in Spain the sovereigns spent most of the spring at Aranjuez, transferring to San Ildefonso to escape the rigours of the Spanish summer and then to El Pardo to enjoy the abundant autumn season. Only in winter did they return to Madrid.

The spaces in the Kingdom of Naples are also discussed in the essay by Nicola Cusumano, in which the author analyses the State policy carried on by Ferdinando and Maria Carolina in Sicily. In *The Bourbons in Sicily: Reflections on the Tutelage of Monuments and Hunting Reserves*, Cusumano investigates the relevance and the meaning of the *Ficuzza* estate and the *Casina Cinese*, within the tutelage plan represented by the *Regia Custodia*.

As well as for monarchic rituals such as the hunt and horse breeding, and their use for the culture of antiquity and the new interest in science, the Royal Sites were also used as residences of the king and as barracks to accommodate the detachments of the royal army.

The symbolic aspects of the architecture of the Bourbons of Europe, is examined in the essay by Robin L. Thomas (*The pacte de famille and a famille des palais: Architecture and the Bourbons in the Eighteenth Century*), with interesting observations regarding contaminations of style between the French, Spanish and Neapolitan palaces. The Bourbon palaces all share a common ancestry. With the exception of the Palace of the Normans in Palermo, all of them have their roots in the tradition of the *reales alcázares*, namely the palaces of the Spanish Habsburgs. This term was also used even for palaces in which the Spanish monarch never resided, as in the case of the 17th century Royal Palace of Naples. In the early years, with the arrival of the Bourbons in Spain and Italy there were few changes either to the appearance or the administration of the palaces. Many were in the austere style of the 16th century. However, the Bourbons gradually enriched this heritage; the courts shared architects, ideas and concepts. The essay examines the architectural similarities of the Bourbon palaces, with documented examples of how the courts communicated the various cultural concepts and shared architects. The essay effectively analyses the palaces of Spain and Italy as members of a single family of connected buildings.

Anna Grimaldi (*From hunting cottages to royal palaces. Mural decoration of the sites of Charles and Ferdinand of Bourbon, between celebration of power and damnatio memoriae*) focuses on the symbolic and

decorative aspects characterising the Neapolitan royal sites. With the arrival of Charles of Bourbon in Naples and the reconstruction of an independent Kingdom there was a favourable cultural and political climate for important works of urban, architectonic and decorative development, with the aim of raising the city of Naples to the role of a European capital. Over the eighteenth century, in the field of the figurative arts a veritable *équipe* of decorative painters developed around the court, constantly engaged in decorating the interiors of the new royal sites. The themes of the illustrations were linked essentially with a celebrative and symbolic iconography, with the clear function of expressing the power of the king and magnificence of the court through a decorative repertory rich for the range of themes covered and the multiplicity of formal solutions. With the outbreak of the Neapolitan Revolution in 1799, and later with the siege of Garibaldi, the frescoes decorating a number of royal sites, such as Carditello, were gravely altered and the figures of the sovereigns and hereditary princes erased out of contempt. An act of “political iconoclasm” aimed at definitively eliminating the image of the Royal Household, a sort of *damnatio memoriae* of the history of the Reign of the Bourbons.