

Prospero Camuncoli

Prospero was the son of Giovan Francesco Camuncoli. He was born in Reggio Emilia and baptized on 25 April 1517. Few details are available about his education, but given what we know about cartography and engineering in the 16th century, we might suppose that he was trained in the workshops of tradesmen such as land surveyors, engineers and architects.

In 1542, the land surveyor Prospero Camuncoli was appointed as one of the experts in charge of organizing and embanking the Crostolo and Canalazzo watercourses. In 1551, Duke Ercole II gave Camuncoli the biggest job of his career: he was asked to carry out measurement and bookkeeping work for the alterations to the Reggio Emilia city walls. Requirements of a purely military nature were behind the modifications, which significantly changed the appearance of the city. The paperwork shows that Camuncoli produced a map of the Reggio Emilia area between 1551 and 1552, before all of the buildings outside the city walls had been knocked down. It is thought that the depiction which has come into our possession was based on this map.

This is what makes Camuncoli's map significant: it allows us to see what the city and its suburbs were like before the destruction that wiped away a rich, ancient artistic heritage. It is not known whether the work was commissioned or if Camuncoli produced it on his own initiative. It was created in 1591, against the troubled backdrop of a dark, tragic period of famine and powerful earthquakes. As he neared the end of his years, Camuncoli – who was clearly using previous surveys – depicted a city that was no longer there.

The last mention of Prospero Camuncoli in the records dates back to 1594, but his name would live on thanks to the success of his picture. In 1615 it was in the possession of the Este family's governor and it seems that the Elders of the Commune asked for it so that it could be stored in the archives. However, when the Council saw its fine workmanship they decided to display it in the main room of the city hall, where it remained for a long time. According to the historian Andrea Balletti, use of the picture as a fireboard led to severe damage and made it completely illegible. It was not until 1995 that sophisticated technological systems and the painstaking artistic work of Lorenzo Confortini made it possible to see an accurate reconstruction of the original drawing.



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- Camuncoli veduta Reggio:



- Camuncoli Reggio abitato entro le mura:



- Camuncoli Reggio quadrante superiore sinistro:



- Camuncoli Reggio quadrante inferiore sinistro:



- Camuncoli Reggio quadrante superiore destro:



- Camuncoli Reggio quadrante inferiore destro:

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Collegamenti

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