

A. DI PACE

**UN ESEMPIO DI CONTRIBUTO DELLA LITOLOGIA
ALLA CULTURA AMBIENTALE: LA “VIA DEL COTTANELLO”
DAL SITO DI ESTRAZIONE A ROMA E I SUOI DINTORNI**

Area tematica: Cultura ambientale e sviluppo sostenibile

Tutor: M. D’Andrea; Cotutor: F. Capitanio

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During the Baroque period (XVII century), the Cottanello was one of the favorite decorative stones used in Rome, as witnessed by its extensive presence in the works of Gianlorenzo Bernini. At that time, it was customary to strip most of the decorative stones from the Roman remains to bring them in churches and other buildings under construction. Moreover, the wide use of the Cottanello stone required a considerable effort to quarry and carry this lithotype from the mountains of the Sabina (northern Latium) up to Rome. All these facts are evidence of a strong predilection for this ornamental stone by the baroque architects.

The aim of the present study was:

- i) to define the state of the knowledge about the Cottanello stone;
- ii) to give a further contribution to increase this knowledge;
- iii) to reconstruct the journey of this ornamental stone through the northern Latium to Rome.

The present study integrates the geological and lithological data with the historical notices about the Cottanello stone, so that the right value can be attributed to this lithotype. At first, the “Cottanello Track” is the journey made by this stone from the Sabine mountains to the city of Rome. This track has several significances, ranging from the geo-didactics to the industrial archeology up to the history of art. Above all, this track represents a part of the identity of the Sabine people, as well as a direct link between the Sabina and Rome. In this perspective, the Cottanello historical quarry is the starting point, the churches of Rome are the irradiation terminals, while the Geological and Historical Collections of APAT are the end point of this track.

The investigations carried out among the baroque churches of Rome lead to recognize the presence of the Cottanello lithotype in 75 % of the cases: this allows to the identification of a branch of the “Cottanello Track” inside the city of Rome. Moreover, the finding of this decorative stone also in a baroque church of Palestrina, a historical small town next to Rome, points to the possibility of the existence of another branch of the “Cottanello Track” in the surroundings of the Eternal city.

The presence of the Cottanello stone in three of the most important lithological collections of APAT, indicates the Geological and Historical Collections of APAT as the most appropriate place where the various values of the “Cottanello Track(s)” can be illustrated to the public in the best way.

It is important to bear in mind that the “Cottanello Track” is not a static element belonging to the historical wealth of the Latium region: on the contrary, it can be a dynamical factor for development of this country. In fact, this track possesses numerous attraction grounds for tourism:

- 1) naturalistic values;
- 2) archeological, historical, and cultural interest;
- 3) religious significance.

Also, the necessity of stone supplying for restoration works calls for a partial re-activation of the Cottanello historical quarry. A partial and wise exploitation of the cave could allow to achieve several goals:

- i) the availability of the “original” Cottanello stone for restoration instead of other “imitative” materials;
- ii) the recovery of an ancient handicraft activity;
- iii) the revitalization of the “Cottanello Track” and, as a consequence, the reinforcement of the link between the Sabina and Rome.