

Pre-Paper of the seminar:

The astro-mathematical education of medieval architect

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The main objective of my project is **to increase the comprehension of the “architect” in the Middle Ages such as person responsible of project design and administration of medieval construction sites.**

In this case, as an architectural historian, my interest shifts from the **architectural object** to its **“creator;”** an intricate task because we can visit, photograph, and survey buildings, but our knowledge of architects is limited to their names (if we have them), without data regarding their training and skills.

The case study will focus on the **13th century southern Italy**, specifically on the **courts of Frederick II** (first half of the century) and the **Angevin court** (second half of the century), which served as centers of knowledge circulation. In the written source, architects, known as *prepositi* in the court of Frederick II and *protomagistri* in the Angevin court, were treated with the same respect («familiari, fideli nostri»— our family, our faithful) as poets, writers, and scientists, implying their potential integration into courtly life. In particular, the court of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1198-1250) emerges as a significant space for the exchange of knowledge between theory and practice. In this period, the mobility of scientists and architects, across the European context, offers the possibility of interpreting these two courts within a **broader Mediterranean framework.**

As a result, **the 13th-century architect becomes a court figure**, bridging **theoretical aspects** (architectural design, knowledge of the movements of the sun and geometry) and **practical ones** (site management, selection of workers and materials).

The project will utilize a few written sources related to construction, historical-cultural studies, and architectural analysis. I will propose a connection between the **history of science** and the **history of architecture.** By constructing a geo-temporal map that relates the locations and individuals involved (architects, astronomers, mathematicians, and philosophers), we might mitigate the absence of direct record (written sources) by positing a dialogue between the architects and scientists. The objective is to verify the exchange of ideas between applied and theoretical areas in 13th century courts.

The first questions that I tried to answer was:

- Who were the people responsible of the architectural design and building site during the Middle Ages?**
- Can we call these people “architects”?**
- What are their areas of expertise or skills?**

The choice of a case study, such as Southern Italy, allows for an illustration of the architect's role in the 13th century. Regarding the training of the “architects,” we have no concrete data. However, the fact that documents initially refer to them as *magistri* and later as *protomagistri* suggests that they were craftsmen who learned their skills on-site and distinguished themselves through specific

expertise. This is the case of Pierre d'Angicourt, who first appears in documents as a simple *magister*, later as *protomagister operum curie*, and finally as a *miles* (knight).

At a certain point in their careers, these men assumed the role of knights, joining the court, eventually achieving the status of *milites*, and obtaining a fief. For this reason, it is possible that during this phase, they met scholars—mathematicians, philosophers, and astronomers—active in the Frederician and Angevin courts.