

Jesuit Mathematics and Military Architecture

Professor Denis De Lucca, director of the International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta was recently invited to read a paper on the as yet unexplored contribution of the Collegium Melitense in Hospitaller Valletta to the dissemination of Jesuit knowledge on the fortification of Baroque cities, at an international conference recently held at the University of Palermo. The *Città Nuove fondate in Italia e in Europa dal medioevo al novecento* conference was organised by the Department of Urban Studies of the University of Palermo on 9-11 December when delegates from the universities of Palermo, Paris-Sorbonne, Coimbra, Lyon, Malta, Vienna, Dresden, Torino, Rome, Cagliari, Chieti-Pescara, Messina, Reggio Calabria, Valencia, Seville, Naples, Clermont-Ferrand and Munich were given the opportunity to present papers outlining their most recent research work on various subjects concerning the growth of fortified cities in history.

Professor De Lucca's paper provided new knowledge concerning the contents of a forgotten Jesuit manuscript on military architecture entitled *Trattato dell'Architettura Militare defensiva, et offensiva* - a manuscript which formed the basis of an extraordinary course of studies on military architecture and town planning run by a Sicilian Jesuit who was active at the Collegium Melitense in Valletta in the mid-seventeenth century. This military course was one of many other controversial initiatives taken by Jesuit mathematicians based in colleges spread all over Europe during the Baroque age, all intended to disseminate knowledge about the defence of cities using advanced techniques of fortification design so as to counteract the great peril posed by the Lutheran reformation and the Turks, this at a time of almost constant warfare appropriately described by the Italian military commander Fulvio Testi as "the century of the soldier". The full text of Professor De Lucca's paper, which also contains detailed biographical notes on the author of the indicated Jesuit manuscript will be published in the near future as part of the proceedings of the Palermo conference.

