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Domesticity and Sacredness in Synagogue Architecture. The Oratory and Temple in Carpi (1722- 1921)

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Domesticity and Sacredness in Synagogue Architecture.

#### The Oratory and Temple in Carpi (1722-1921)

Matteo Cassani Simonetti

#### **[INSERT FIGURE 1: COLOR]**

##### **Abstract**

The essay analyses the synagogues in Carpi through the lens of their architectural transformations in time and their position in the city. The architectural features of these places represent the shifting of the meaning of Jewish interpretation of the urban space during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Writing his *Appunti sull'architettura della Sinagoga* in 1933, Augusto Bachi successfully described how the progressive integration of the Jewish population into Italian society, which began in the second half of the nineteenth century, radically altered – the author argues – synagogue architecture. The effects of such phenomenon are clearly visible in the synagogues in Carpi, proving the adequacy of Bachi's analysis and its geographic transversality.<sup>1</sup> He wrote:

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<sup>1</sup> Amongst the endless works written about Italian synagogues and their architecture in relation to the integration of the Jewish community into society throughout the 19th century, for brevity, see: Jacob Pinkerfeld, *The Synagogues of Italy. Their Architectural Development since the Renaissance* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1954); Alberto Maria Racheli, 'Architettura e architetti delle sinagoghe italiane nel periodo eclettico', in *Italia Judaica* (Roma: Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, 1983), 483–497; Donatella Calabi, 'L'emancipazione degli ebrei e l'architettura della sinagoga. Qualche esempio in Europa', in Paola Gennaro, ed., *Architettura e spazio sacro nella modernità* (Milano: Editrice Abitare Segesta, 1992), 73–81; David Cassuto, 'La sinagoga in Italia', in Corrado Vivanti, ed., *Storia d'Italia, Annali 11. Gli ebrei in Italia*

The change happening today, in the purpose and form of the synagogue, is a radical one, designating the space as a 'Jewish Temple' rather than a 'scola' as in the past. The small, rectangular rooms of bygone days, in which the faithful gathered daily to listen to the master, the 'morenu', speak about something more than just the repetition of daily prayers, were the true heart of Jewish life in the ghetto, and often the heart of spiritual life for every person; these have been replaced, with the emancipation of the Jews, by a true church that is at times grandiose and majestic. The master's pulpit and lectern were replaced by an altar. The new synagogue, consecrated only for 'religious' rituals, seem to seek greater solemnity, whether with more attention towards chants, in the sound of the organ, in the greater beauty of the setting, almost a final strategy to retain through some theatrical gesture the faithful who find themselves drawn away by the workings of modern life.<sup>2</sup>

This different interpretation of the sacred space, whose character is primarily anthropological, was sharply analysed by Abraham Joshua Heschel, who rediscovered the crux of the matter in prayer. To the great philosopher, prayer and liturgy – although not

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(Torino: Einaudi 1996), I, 319–338; Andrea Morpurgo, *Il cimitero ebraico in Italia. Storia e architettura di uno spazio identitario* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), 31–62.

<sup>2</sup> [È un radicale cambiamento, nello scopo e nella forma della sinagoga, quello che fa sì che oggi la si designi «Tempio Israelitico» piuttosto che «scola» come in passato. Alle piccole sale rettangolari di una volta, dove tutti i fedeli si riunivano giornalmente per ascoltare dal maestro, dal «morenu» qualche cosa di più che la sola ripetizione delle preghiere quotidiane e che erano il vero centro della vita ebraica nel ghetto, e spesso della vita spirituale di ognuno, si è sostituita, colla emancipazione degli Ebrei, una vera chiesa a volte grandiosa e di aspetto maestoso; al pulpito ed al leggio del maestro si è sostituito l'altare del sacerdote; la nuova sinagoga consacrata soltanto alle funzioni «religiose», sembra cercare in una loro maggiore solennità, nella maggior cura del canto, nel suono dell'organo, nella maggior venustà dell'ambiente quasi un ultimo stratagemma per trattenere con qualche cosa di teatrale l'ebreo che, preso dall'ingranaggio della vita moderna, si va allontanando]. Augusto Bachi, 'Appunti sull'architettura della sinagoga', *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 8/1–2 (1933), 36.

opposing terms – mirror the desertion of the intimacy of the soul in favour of an essentially public aspect of rite, which becomes, unlike traditional rite, a primarily exterior act. 'It tends in our days', Heschel wrote in 1970, but the same analyses can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century, 'to become a spectacle, in which the congregation remains passive, inert spectators';<sup>3</sup> the transformation of the liturgy into an act that is 'timeless, transpersonal: liturgy for the sake of liturgy'<sup>4</sup> was mirrored over a century before in the architectural transformation of the sacred space, from *Bet hakeneset*, a community space – a hub for more than just religious life, where dialogue took place, prayer was expressed and study was conducted – to a temple, an exclusively ceremonial place. From an 'essentially functional and not symbolical'<sup>5</sup> space – as the synagogue was – where the flow of life carried on seamlessly between ritual and daily life, making a division between the two aspects impossible, the temple began to be considered a space that was 'symbolic but unrelated to real life and therefore superficial – a mere phantom'.<sup>6</sup>

Although these final words, written by Eliezer Berkovits, cannot be separated from his criticisms of American Jewish communities in the post-war period, the distinction he made between the 'functional' space for prayer and the 'symbolic' space for rituals dictated the terms for interpreting the architectural changes seen throughout the nineteenth century in Jewish sacred spaces: while before, there was an important likeness

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<sup>3</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, 'On Prayer', *Conservative Judaism* 25/1 (1970), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Heschel, 'On Prayer', 1.

<sup>5</sup> Eliezer Berkovits, 'From Temple to Synagogue and Back', quoted in Jacob J. Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer* (New York: Ktav publishing house, 1972), 142. Originally, the text was published on *Judaism* in 1959.

<sup>6</sup> Berkovits, 'From Temple to Synagogue and Back', 148–149.

between the home and the synagogue, a distance later manifested between the home and the temple.<sup>7</sup>

Originally focused on the act of gathering for study or prayer and not on the building in and of itself - which vaunted few features, if any -, 'forming a synagogue' soon gave way to bestowing greater importance on the representation – Bachi defined it 'theatrical', Heschel 'spectacular' – of rituals, focusing more on the space and symbol rather than on the person and time: Heschel, hoping for a return to prayer as an act of the soul, ascertained how this new direction, established simultaneously to the Industrial Revolution, produced an inversion in the strong rapport between time and space: 'Personal presence is replaced by mere attendance; instead of erecting a sanctuary of time in the realm of the soul, liturgy attracts masses of peoples to the sanctuary in the realm of space'.<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising that the 'workings of modern life'<sup>9</sup> in the mid-nineteenth century soon altered civic life in Carpi as well, a community where oratories were recorded as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup> As Giuseppe Saltini wrote, throughout those years, 'Carpi changed immensely: the Jewish synagogue, work on the cathedral, the

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<sup>7</sup> Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Il giudaismo in preghiera: la liturgia della Sinagoga* (Cinisello Balsamo (MI): Edizioni Paoline, 1988; first edition Tübingen: Mohr, 1980), 31–46.

<sup>8</sup> Heschel, 'On Prayer', 1. The rapport between time and space was fundamental in Heschel's interpretation of Judaism, as can be seen in the well-known *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951).

<sup>9</sup> [ingranaggio della vita moderna].

<sup>10</sup> In addition to those referenced by Alfonso Garuti in his studies, I must thank Gianfranco Guaitoli for pointing out the construction in 1546 of a synagogue in the 'Jewish tenement and house in Carpi, abutting the streets night and day, above M. Maurizio Lelli, below Ser Gio. Francesco Sacchelli, inhabited by Emanuele and his brother-in-law Jacobo, and among the other activities, the Pawn Room' [casamento e casa di detto Ebreo posta in Carpi, confinante le strade a mattina e sera, di sopra M. Maurizio Lelli, di sotto Ser Gio. Francesco Sacchelli, abitata da detto Emanuele e da Jacobo suo cognato, e fra gli altri lavori la Camera dei Pegni]. Alfonso Garuti, 'Le sinagoghe di Carpi: notizie storico artistiche', in Franco Bonilauri, Vincenza Maugeri, eds., *Le Comunità ebraiche a Modena e a Carpi. Dal medioevo all'età contemporanea* (Firenze: Giuntina, 1999), 185–200; ASCC, Archivio Guaitoli, env. 231.3, folder 8 *Rogiti di Ludovico Parmesani*, c. 200, deed 10 February 1546.

destruction of the Santa Chiara walls, the San Nicolò portico, which is said to be finished within the year, essentially all highly important and costly projects',<sup>11</sup> greatly altered the otherwise rather strong urban city center. The synagogue he referenced, the second one built after the founding of the ghetto in 1719, fulfilled the desire of Carpi's Jewish community to keep in stride with the times by constructing a modern temple, one quite different from the simple – and at the time run-down – space that was obtained more than a century before by converting the attic of a house. At first glance, the two sites seem so different from one another that many questions naturally arise about the reasons for so many immense changes, and as such, it would be useful to discuss these events, touching upon known facts and establishing links with others that are consistent with, or at times even opposing, what has been written in the scientific literature on the issue, in an attempt to understand the reasons for this transformation, as well as the ways in which these spaces related to the life of the community (Figures 2-3). **[INSERT FIGURES 2**

**AND 3: BW]**

Local historiography has long attempted to define the aspects of the ideation and development of Carpi's two synagogues. While the first of them, as Alfonso Garuti recalled in his studies, was backed by Isacco Beneroi (1671 – 1754) in 1722 following the foundation of the ghetto, and was established in an attic adjacent to the Portico del Grano based on a design by the Reggio Emilia-based craftsman Giacomo Lucenti (1661 – 1747), who was working in Carpi at the time, the second was located on the first floor of the building that today houses the Fondazione Fossoli and was designed by the Carpi-

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<sup>11</sup> [Carpi si lavora a gran passi: la Sinagoga degli Ebrei, il lavoro del Duomo, il macello presso le mura da S. Chiara, il portico di S. Nicolò che si dice da terminarsi entro quest'anno, insomma lavori tutti di entità e di spesa non indifferente]. Alfonso Garuti, Anna Maria Ori, Gilberto Zacchè, eds., *Memorie (o cronaca) di Carpi tenute in regola da me Giuseppe Saltini della stessa città (1796-1863)* (Modena: Mucchi, 2005).

born engineer Achille Sammarini (1827 – 1899) in the mid-1850s by request of the local Jewish community.<sup>12</sup> The earlier synagogue, accessed via a long staircase located almost at the centre of the building (also attributed to Lucenti), was composed of a small atrium that divided the matroneum – to the right, separated from the synagogue by a *jalousie* – and the hall itself; the later building, the 'small masterpiece'<sup>13</sup> by Sammarini, comprised two floors: the first floor – access to which was via a monumental staircase connected directly to the street – hosted the temple, while the second floor, on the western side, likewise contained the matroneum, which was also divided from the main hall by a *jalousie*.

While the first synagogue is mainly decorated with simple paintings, in the second synagogue we find a division in Corinthian style, stuccowork and paintings attributed to Gaetano Venturi, Antonio Bernasconi and Ferdinando Manzini, including a monumental frame with the *Aròn* at the centre.<sup>14</sup> These decorations can be considered as two different examples of the interpretation of the themes of monumentality and recognisability of the sacred space, the result of the previously-mentioned change of purpose which would lead to nineteenth-century synagogues being architecturally defined buildings, wherein the architecture is employed just like traditionally done in Christian churches.

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<sup>12</sup> For brevity, see Garuti, 'Le sinagoghe di Carpi: notizie storico artistiche', 185–200; Anna Maria Ori, Mariagiulia Sandonà, eds., *Ebrei a Carpi sec. XV-XX. Vita quotidiana, religiosità e cultura* (Carpi: Comune di Carpi, 2000); Franco Bonilauri, Vincenza Maugeri, eds., *Le Sinagoghe in Emilia-Romagna. Immagini per un percorso storico di conservazione e valorizzazione* (Roma: De Luca, 2003), 55–58; Franco Bonilauri, Vincenza Maugeri, *Sinagoghe in Italia. Guida ai luoghi del culto e della tradizione ebraica* (Fidenza: Mattioli 1885, 2014), 110–114; for Lucenti, see: Medardo Pellicciari, 'Qualche notizia per il capomastro Giacomo Lucenti', in *Aspetti e problemi del Settecento modenese* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1982), II, 111–122; for Sammarini see: Alfonso Garuti, *L'ingegner Achille Sammarini (1827-1899) architetto a Carpi* (Carpi: Libreria editrice Il Portico, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> [piccolo capolavoro]. Vittorio Savi, 'Prefazione', in Alfonso Garuti, *L'ingegner Achille Sammarini (1827-1899) architetto a Carpi* (Carpi: Libreria editrice Il Portico, 1995), 6.

<sup>14</sup> The *Aròn* is the sacred receptacle where the Torah scrolls are conserved. It is located on the eastern wall of the synagogue, which faces Jerusalem.

The very arrangement of the rooms and their rapport with the urban space and the residence, of which up until that point they had been an added feature, later becoming an autonomous space, demonstrated the change in the desire and the ability of Carpi's Jewish community – similarly to what was happening in other parts of Italy – to publicly represent their identity through architecture. Because of this difference, which impacted the field of architecture as much as Jewish identity, it is therefore necessary to consider the earlier synagogue as a private oratory, whose history blends with the private affairs of the family in whose home it was located, while the later synagogue should be seen as the result of choices supported by the entire community to define its identity through architecture, even if the synagogue was still located inside a building and vaunted an outward appearance that was characteristic but not too showy, similar to the new temples being constructed at the time, like the synagogues in Reggio Emilia and Soragna.<sup>15</sup> The comparison of these two synagogues could represent a good occasion to reflect on the meaning of architectural shapes and their possibility to represent the Sacredness and domesticity: the configuration of these rooms not show the importance they had for Carpi Community and, probably, their image not testify this immaterial character.

### ***Scola, Oratory, Place of congregation. The eighteenth-century synagogue***

In 1719, immediately after the ghetto was established in the Roma neighbourhood on the orders of Marquis Taddeo Bolognini, governor of Carpi and Novi, stretching over the two blocks that delineated Via di Mezzo, opposite the main piazza, Via Maestra and the back

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<sup>15</sup> On the events concerning the synagogue in Carpi's Jewish community, see: Fulvio Diego Papouchado, 'L'istruzione nella Comunità Ebraica di Carpi', in Giorgio Montecchi, Anna Maria Ori, Angelo Varni, *Storia di Carpi. Volume III, La città e il territorio nel lungo Ottocento (1796-1914)* (Modena: Mc Offset, 2011), II, 225–237.



of the Portico del Grano – the central part of the city and largely inhabited by Jews at the time – a decision needed to be made about where to situate the new synagogue for the small Carpi community, made up of only 80 people in 1713<sup>16</sup> (Figure 4) **INSERT**

**FIGURE 4: BW].** The creation of the ghetto, and consequently, the construction of a synagogue, was certainly not well-received by the city and is a testament to how the Jewish nation was seen at that time. The nuns in the nearby convent of San Sebastiano, for example, 'afraid of being contaminated by the Ghetto, which progressed in front of the wall encircling their vegetable garden',<sup>17</sup> sought reassurance from the governor of the city to protect two of their 'bodily sentiments: sight and smell'.<sup>18</sup> Their 'terrible' worries were based not so much on the construction of the ghetto near their convent, but rather on the general question of safety: 'due to their great density, which will continue to expand, as is innate to their nation'<sup>19</sup> the nuns, in addition to being continuously agitated in their seclusion, were also bothered by the smell. This does not appear to be an isolated episode, if we recall that Beneroi himself – owner of the synagogue that would soon be built – together with his brother Israel, was accused of the kidnapping and killing of a

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<sup>16</sup> On the demographics of Carpi's Jewish community, see: Tiziana Foroni, *Gli ebrei a Carpi nell'età moderna*, Master's thesis, Facoltà di Magistero, Università di Bologna, 1966-1967; Serena Labia, *La comunità ebraica di Carpi (1713-1873): analisi di fonti anagrafiche e ruoli di popolazione conservati nell'Archivio storico del comune di Carpi*, Master's thesis, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia, Università di Bologna, 2002-2003. For the ghetto, see: Simonetta M. Bondoni, Giulio Busi, eds., *Cultura ebraica in Emilia-Romagna* (Rimini: Luisè editore, 1987), 30; ASCC, Archivio notarile mandamentale (Notarile), filza 14 110 XI. *Beneroj*, Copies of public and private documents, (*Carteggio Beneroj*) [in Italian], cc. not numbered, *Notificazione di Taddeo Bolognini sulla sinagoga*, 17 November 1720, copy from 1754.

<sup>17</sup> [sul timore di restare contaminati dal Ghetto, che si va perfezionando dirimpetto al muraglione che contorna l'orto delle med[esime]me]. ASMO, Archivio Segreto Estense, Cancelleria, Sezione Interno - Carteggi dei Rettori dello Stato, Carpi, env. 37 *Cancelleria Ducale, Carpi, Governatori 1702-1790*, folder *Carpi. Bolognini March.se Taddeo governatore. 1719 novembre – 1722 dicembre e s.d.*, Letter from Governor of Carpi to Duke of Modena, 7 November 1719.

<sup>18</sup> [sentimenti del corpo, della vista cioè e dell'odorato]. Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> [a causa del gran fitto, che da quello continuamente esalerà, come connaturale a tal nazione]. ASMO, Archivio Segreto Estense, Cancelleria, Sezione Interno - Carteggi dei Rettori dello Stato, Carpi, env. 37 *Cancelleria Ducale, Carpi, Governatori 1702-1790*, folder *Carpi. Bolognini March.se Taddeo governatore. 1719 novembre – 1722 dicembre e s.d.*, Letter from nuns of San Sebastiano to Duke of Modena, [1719].

young girl; four years after the synagogue was inaugurated, in 1726, Angelo Basola was called to testify, saying 'the purpose of this loss was to consecrate the new synagogue [...They] put her blood in a pot to consecrate the synagogue: the blood was smeared on the walls of the synagogue, which Rabbi Emanuel Orbini, since deceased, and Isac Modena, another Rabbi, later did [...and] that this was the custom that [Jews] practised when building new synagogues'<sup>20</sup> (Figure 5). **INSERT FIGURE 5: BW**

Regardless of the difficult situation Carpi's Jewish community faced, from an architectural perspective, the new synagogue promoted by the governor was, nonetheless, a public space inside a private home, and one of the city's richest Jews, Isacco Beneroi, was required to complete it, partly because his house – labelled M641 – was located in a 'remote place far from the streets',<sup>21</sup> so as to keep the place of worship out of sight and avoid being recognisable in the overall urban fabric of the city. The previous synagogue – which we must imagine was even more domestic than the new one – was located inside the home of Lazzaro Iona Finzi, probably located at Borghetto di Sant'Agostino, 94.<sup>22</sup> On May 24, 1721, Bolognini gave his instructions regarding the location of the new place of worship:

considering that a house is the most opportune for this purpose, we find that  
of Isacco Beneroj the best suited, as it is located in a remote place far from

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<sup>20</sup> [La causa di questa perdita fu per consacrare la nuova Sinagoga [... Essi] posero il sangue di quella in pignatta per far la consacrazione sud[ett]a: co' spruzzi de sangue sud[ett]o per li muragli di detta Sinagoga, funzione che fecero poi il Rabino Emanuel Orbini morto, e Isac Modena altro Rabino [... e] che questo era si costume, che [gli ebrei] sogliono praticare nell'erezione delle nuove Sinagoghe]. ASMO, Tribunale dell'inquisizione di Modena, Processi, 1726, env. 201, folder 10–11, *Interrogatorio di Angelo Basola*, 4 June 1726.

<sup>21</sup> [luogo remoto e lontano dalle strade]. ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, *Notification by Taddeo Bolognini about the Synagogue* [in Italian], 17 November 1720, copy from 1754.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Note that the Jewish cemetery was located in the San Nicolò neighbourhood in 1717 and marked as number 233. ASMO, Estimo e catasto, Carpi, reg. 33 *Carpi. Stime delle Case*, April-May 1717, c. 15, 34.

the streets. We therefore grant Isacco Beneroj and his heirs and universal and particular, direct and indirect successors, licence and broad power and authority to establish and maintain in his home the aforementioned Scola for the customary prayers, through which, however, may he permit every Jew, be it man or woman, to go at the appropriate hour to the Scola to practice their rituals without impediment, declaring, however, that no one from the community nor anyone else can presume to hold possession of it.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, Beneroi was also made responsible for all the expenses of the Scola, 'and therewith his home will be used for the aforementioned purpose, and as such, he must be the sole, independent, and legitimate owner of the house'.<sup>24</sup> In addition to 'building the forenamed Scola',<sup>25</sup> for which he benefited from the 'prudent advice of the Jew Benjamin Coen Vitale'<sup>26</sup> (1651-1730), former head rabbi of the Jewish community in Reggio Emilia, he had to cover the expenses for running the synagogue as well as pay the staff, in this case a *Cantarino*, or singer, and a custodian.<sup>27</sup> A few days after Bolognini's

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<sup>23</sup> [considerato qual casa sia più opportuna a d[ett]o effetto, trovassimo quella d'Isacco Beneroj la più a proposito, per esser situata in luogo remoto e lontano alle strade. Quindi concediamo allo stesso Isacco Beneroj e suoi eredi e successori universali e particolari immediati e mediati, licenza ed ampla facoltà ed autorità di fare e mantenere in detta sua casa la d[ett]a Scola per le solite Orazioni con che però permetta ad ogni Ebreo, sì uomini come donne l'andare alle ore debite alla medesima Scola ad esercitare li loro uffizii senza che egli possa loro impedirlo, dichiarando però che nessuno dell'Uni[versit]à, ne chichesia possa avere ne pretendere alcun possesso]. ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, Letter from Governor of Carpi Taddeo Bolognini to Isacco Beneroi, 24 May 1721, copy from 1754. A document conserved in the Guaitoli archive says, 'The synagogue was moved on 20 May 20 1721'. It was probably moved to a temporary site while Beneroi finished work on his home. ASCC, Archivio Guaitoli, filza 30, folder 1, c. 22.

<sup>24</sup> [essere fatta la d[etta] Scola a tutte sue spese, e con ciò verrà posta in suggezione la propria casa all'effetto sud[det]to onde perciò dovrà essere padrone assoluto e indipendente, come vero e legittimo proprietario di d[ett]a casa]. ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, Letter from Governor of Carpi Taddeo Bolognini to Isacco Beneroi, 24 May 1721, copy from 1754.

<sup>25</sup> [fabbrica[re] di proprio la d[ett]a Scola]. ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, *Memoriale relativo alla costruzione della Sinagoga*, 31 January 1755.

<sup>26</sup> [prudente consiglio dall'Ebreo Benjamin Coen Vitale]. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

letter, an agreement was signed between the Jewish community and Beneroi for the construction of a 'place of congregation available to the entire community',<sup>28</sup> of which he would remain the 'sole owner'<sup>29</sup> and which would become the principal community space for all members of Carpi's Jewish community. The sacred objects in Lazzaro Iona Finzi's home were transferred to the new synagogue, including 'sacred vessels and the *Pentateuch*',<sup>30</sup> as well as the Aròn and some furnishings: in that period, *transferring the synagogue* meant transferring its furnishings; not one word was dedicated to the appraisal and transfer regarding the building, attesting to the rather secondary importance that was given to architecture.<sup>31</sup> The few sacred objects or simple furnishings that distinguished what was likely a fairly neutral space could be moved to a new location: 'Forming a synagogue'<sup>32</sup> was thus an act that was largely independent from the architectural aspects of the place in which rites were carried out.<sup>33</sup> A little over a year after the furnishings were purchased, according to an entry in the diary of Carpi resident Alfonso Piccoli dated 22 August 1722, 'the Jews have begun building their synagogue'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> [Casa di Congregazione capace per tutta l'Uni[versi]tà]. ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, *Convenzione tra Isacco Beneroi e l'Università ebraica*, 27 May 1721, copy from 1754.

<sup>29</sup> [assoluto P[ad]rone]. Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> [vasi sacri e li Pentateuchi]. Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Amongst the many records, see: ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, Letter from Abram Finzi to Duke of Modena, 31 October 1754.

<sup>32</sup> [fare sinagoga].

<sup>33</sup> The many typologies and the heterogeneity that distinguished synagogue architecture prior to emancipation may reflect, in addition to the problems tied to the limited spaces segregation imposed upon the community, this indifference to the definition of a common model. From a historiographical perspective, the many attempts to define Jewish art primarily concerned furnishings and objects; this is addressed in seminal studies by Cecil Roth and Bezalel Narkiss. It is important to note that even prior to these, the scholar Franz Landsberger, in describing the characteristics of synagogues and Jewish homes, did not address the architectural dimension of these spaces, focusing instead on single objects. Cecil Roth, *Jewish Art. An Illustrated History*, revised edition by Bezalel Narkiss (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1971); Bezalel Narkiss, 'Introduction', *Journal of Jewish Art* 1 (1974), 1; Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1946), 15–41.

<sup>34</sup> [li hebrei hanno dato principio alla loro fabrica della Sinagoga]. *Diario delle cose avvenute in Carpi dal giorno 14 ottobre dell'anno 1658 fino al giorno 6 maggio 1724 di Alfonso Piccoli carpigiano, continuato fino all'anno 1737 dal dottor fisico Giulio Cesare Benetti, pure carpigiano*, copy from 19th Century, page 39, ASCC, Archivio Guaitoli, env. 181.

It is possible that in the period between the start of construction and Beneroi's acquisition – which took place following an exchange with the former owners Basilio and Lellio Lelli – renovations were carried out on the entire structure;<sup>35</sup> however, it is difficult to imagine such an intense renovation to the building, not so much in terms of the creation of the synagogue itself, which involved little more than raising a ceiling, but rather the complex and costly construction of a new and elegant staircase was realized in so few time (Figure 6). **[INSERT FIGURE 6: BW]** With regards to the stairs, recent surveys of the building have revealed that the floors and the landings are misaligned, which could indicate that they were built at two different times, perhaps even prior to Beneroi's acquisition and not necessarily attributable to Lucenti. In examining the staircase, two different features are clear: up until the first floor, or *piano nobile* – used by Beneroi to hold his extensive painting collection and vaunting decorated ceilings and depictions of holy scenes – the staircase is primarily monumental in appearance and displays detailed architectural decoration;<sup>36</sup> further up, the stairs become simpler, more suited to a staircase leading to an attic rather than a place of such importance, access to which was via a precarious wooden stepladder bridging the near metre-wide gap separating the room from the final landing. While that the attribution to Lucenti has not necessarily been disproven – though it is based solely on *Notizie degli artisti carpigiani*,

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<sup>35</sup> ASCC, Notarile, env. 897 *Pasi Niccolò 1719-1721*, Exchange Isacco Beneroi–Basilio Lelli, 29 October 1720; ASMO, Estimo e catasto, Carpi, reg. 646, A. *Giornale di Carpi*, 1720, pages 120–121. The house that Beneroi would come to own, marked as number 359 and valued at 5,000 lire, was located 'in the area known as Ortolane, next to the piazza, and which abuts public streets, to the east, west, and north and Sig. Francesco Papotti and his nephews to the south ... together with three workshops belonging to this house and beneath it, two of which directly border the home of Messer Papotti and the third being beneath the public Monte della Farina (grain stores for the poor)' [in luogo detto alle Ortolane contiguo alla Piza, et alla quale confina dà mattina, dà sera e settentrione le pub[blich]e strade, e dà mezzo giorno il Sig[no]r Fran[cesc]o e nipoti Papotti, ... assieme con le tre Botteghe di rag[ion]e di essa casa, e sotto quella esistenti due delle quali sono poste immadiatam[ent]e in confine della casa de M[esser]i Papotti e l'altra di sotto alla Bottega del pub[blic]o Monte della Farina].

<sup>36</sup> ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, Inventory of objects in Beneroi's house by Luigi Barzelli, 12 June 1755.

notes written by Eustachio Cabassi (Carpi, 1730-1796) between 1770 and 1786, so nearly 50 years after the fact and prior to his birth; there are no other documents among the many related to the synagogue mentioning Lucenti or any other master or architect<sup>37</sup> – it is nonetheless probable that they were built at two different times: one prior to the stairwell being connected to the main rooms of the house and the other during the construction of the synagogue.

Despite these uncertainties in attribution and chronology, the arrangement of the rooms established an unbreakable bond between the living spaces and the synagogue via, as it would happen, the staircase, whose nature was both public and private. The stairwell, which has since been altered, was connected – according to a survey of the entire residence carried out by Bartolomeo Artioli in 1827 that likely listed the same layout as a century before – directly to the street through a door that no longer exists;<sup>38</sup> until the construction of the new temple, going to the synagogue meant entering the Beneroi home through a narrow entrance and climbing two floors via a staircase shared with the house before arriving in the atrium (Figure 7) **[INSERT FIGURE 7: BW]**. The close tie between Beneroi's home and the synagogue was highlighted – according to a document dating to 1795, the year in which his heirs sold the oratory – by the direct access from the living quarters to the synagogue, as well as the family's ownership of one of the three jalousie windows in the temple, the one in the east wall, allowing the family

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<sup>37</sup> On the discrepancies between what Cabassi had written and related documents, see Pellicciari, *Qualche notizia per il capomastro Giacomo Lucenti*, 111–122. On Cabassi's writings, see: Alfonso Garuti, 'Contributo alla conoscenza delle fonti della letteratura artistica settecentesca modenese: *Le pitture di Carpi* di Giuseppe Maria Barbieri e gli *Artisti* di Eustachio Cabassi', in *Aspetti e problemi del Settecento modenese* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1982), II, 89–109.

<sup>38</sup> ASCC, Notarile, env. 2289 *Misure, perizie, mappe dell'ing. Capitano Bartolomeo Artioli 1821-1846*, folder LXXXI, c. 22, *Perizia della casa in Carpi M n. 654 di rag[ion]e delli Sig[no]ri Isacco, Anselmo e Giacobe fra[te]llli Finzi. Misura, Rilievi e Stima*, 20 June 1827.

to participate in the religious service.<sup>39</sup> The architectural layout of the room included a space that was oriented along the north-south axis, while the Aròn and Tevà<sup>40</sup> were placed along the east-west axis as was traditional. The former set in a space below the only (slightly) decorated architectural element in the room, an arch that has since been closed, emphasised by a simple lintel in stucco and placed in the attic of the Portico del Grano; the latter was probably placed at the centre of the building – following what is known as a 'transverse' typology:<sup>41</sup> the space, located on the top floor of the house, offering direct contact with the heavens, was illuminated by two windows installed high up on either side of the Aròn.

Isacco Beneroi was 50 years old when he began to look after the synagogue.<sup>42</sup> He was originally from Correggio but he had been living in Carpi for several years when he married Bella Basola in 1697.<sup>43</sup> Well-known in the city, Isacco was one of the richest Jews in the community, a 'merchant of silk and other goods, overseer of the stores of paper and rags':<sup>44</sup> at the time of his death in 1754, he left his heirs with 65,000 lire as well

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<sup>39</sup> ASCC, Notarile, env. 1001 *Cabassi Floriano. Protocollo e inserti 1794 (mar. 22) 1795 (mag. 7)*, cc. 148v–150r, *Compravendita della sinagoga tra Moisè Finzi e l'Università degli ebrei*, 13 March 1795, n. 106. The document refers to 'three jalousie windows in the aforementioned synagogue, the first of which is on the southern wall, owned by the aforementioned Sig. Israele Prospero Milla; the second window is on the eastern wall, owned by Sig. Milla; and the third, also on the eastern wall, is fowned by the aforementioned Sig. Moisè Finzi; they must always remain here for the ease and use of Sig. Milla and Finzi and their respective heirs and successors, as well as anyone to whom they may give the right to, claim to, or use of them' [tre finestre con gelosie esistenti nella suddetta Sinagoga, la prima cioè nel muro del mezzogiorno, la quale è di ragione del suddetto Sig. Israele Prospero Milla, la seconda in quello verso il levante, che è di ragione dello stesso Sig. Milla e la terza, ed ultima, nello stesso muro verso il levante, che è di ragione del suddetto sig. Moisè Finzi, dovranno ivi rimanere per sempre a comodo, ed uso de medesimi Sig Milla e Finzi, de rispettivi loro eredi e successori e di chiunque avrà diritto, causa, ed azione da essi].

<sup>40</sup> The Tevà is a sort of pulpit from which the Torah is read.

<sup>41</sup> Cassuto, 'La sinagoga in Italia', 319–338.

<sup>42</sup> ASCC, *Carteggio amministrativo*, filza P *Amministrazione pubblica dal 1711 a tutto il 1718*, folder CLXXVI.

<sup>43</sup> ASCC, Notarile, env. 808 *Marchi Francesco 1697*, c. 66, *Dote di Bella Basola*, 4 June 1697.

<sup>44</sup> [mercante di seta et altre merci, conduttore dell'appalto della carta e strazzi]. ASCC, Notarile, *Carteggio Beneroj*, cc. not numbered, Letter from Leone Beneroi to Duke of Modena, Reggio e Mirandola, [1755].

as another 81,000 lire in real estate.<sup>45</sup> He had two daughters with his wife Bella: Benedetta Ester, who married Bonaiuto Vita Finzi in 1733 and went to live in Mantua, and Livia, who stayed in Carpi and married Benedetto Beneroi in 1722, with whom she had Eugenia, and later Moisè Finzi di Correggio following the death of her first husband.<sup>46</sup> Livia and her daughter Eugenia – the latter, having converted to Christianity and been re-baptized Maria Teresa Alderani, married Antoine Colomb De Vanel, a French painter and mercenary living in Carpi – remained the only heirs (along with their respective husbands) of the substantial fortune that would later lead to several 'petty disputes'<sup>47</sup> and 'ploys',<sup>48</sup> as well as disagreements that were not without 'prevarication'<sup>49</sup> between the parties.<sup>50</sup> Thanks to these very legal issues, it is possible to understand the importance given to the synagogue: notwithstanding the considerable value of 4,000 lire estimated by Carlo Sorelli and Pietro Tonelli in 1755 – the residence and six workshops below were estimated to be worth around 25,000 lire, the synagogue included – the consultants did not concern themselves with the architecture or its state.<sup>51</sup> The simple

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<sup>45</sup> Ignazio Pittori was appointed trustee of the inheritance. ASCC, Notarile, env. 924 *Ignazio Pittori 1754-1756, Causa sull'eredità Beneroi*, 18 April 1755. Some other documents about Isacco Beneroi are in ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj. Among them, I report *Inventario, descrizione, e stima de mobili e robbe ritrovate nella casa di ragione dello stato del fu Isacco Beneroi ebreo di Carpi posta in confine del ghetto di questa città verso piazza...*, 18 October 1754. See also: ASCC, Notarile, env. 894 *Pasi Niccolò*, c. 52, Will by Isacco Beneroi, 20 June 1754. Informations about Isacco Beneroi are in ASMO, Archivio Segreto Estense, Cancelleria, Raccolte e Miscellanee - Carteggi e documenti di particolari, env. 119, folder *Beneroi*.

<sup>46</sup> ASCC, Notarile, env. 898 'Pasi Niccolò 1722-1724', c. 80, *Dote di Leona e Benedetta Ester Beneroi*, 22 May 1733.

<sup>47</sup> [cavillazioni] ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, Letter from Livia Beneroi to Duke of Modena, 8 February 1757.

<sup>48</sup> [suterfuggi]. Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> [prepotenza]. Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> On the matter, see: Giuseppe Orlandi, 'Antoine Colomb de Vanel, pittore, soldato, massone e rivoluzionario', *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia di Scienze Lettere ed Arti di Modena* 7/4 (1986-87), 197–233; ASMO, Tribunale dell'inquisizione di Modena, Processi, 1763, env. 237, folder 21; ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, c. 67 ff., Endowment from Maria Teresa Alderani, not dated, notary Giovanni Carandini, copy.

<sup>51</sup> ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, *Perizia di Carlo Sorelli e Pietro Tonelli sugli immobili*, 22 January 1755. In addition to this house, Beneroi also owned a 'house used as a spinning mill',



space, its features similar to any other room, was given meaning only through its furnishings and objects, which Beneroi probably purchased, adding them to those that were originally owned by Lazzaro Iona Finzi.<sup>52</sup> Walking into the synagogue, devoid of all the furnishings that characterized it during services, the simple decorations that were painted on the walls over the years did not attest to the purpose of the space, nor, in accordance with the precepts of the Jewish faith, did they depict holy scenes: only the Hebrew texts painted in eleven scrolls in the upper part of the walls indicate the nature of the place and reference the importance that these simple walls had for Carpi's Jewish community<sup>53</sup> (Figure 8). **INSERT FIGURE 8: BW**

Following the division of this inheritance, the synagogue and a portion of the house it was located in were given to Livia, who 'oversaw it'<sup>54</sup> alongside the estate managers in the Jewish community, Abram Ventura Finzi and Cervo Ravà, who served in the role in 1759;<sup>55</sup> according to her servant Antonia Berselli, interrogated in 1758, in the period immediately following his death, Livia moved to Correggio with her new husband Moisè, where she remained until 1756; upon returning to Carpi, she worked in her shoe and

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two houses – one known as 'del Forno' or of the communal oven – with two workshops each located near the ghetto, a house in the San Rocco neighbourhood, and a house known as 'dell'Ortazzo' or of the unkempt garden. See also the appraisal by Giuseppe Socci dated 6 June 1755 in Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, *Stima della camera della Scola*, 27 May 1721.

<sup>53</sup> Recent translations of the still-legible texts, elaborated during renovation on the synagogue in 2014-18, show: 'How awesome is this place' (Genesis 28:17) / 'Consecrate to me every firstborn male' (Exodus 13:2) / 'The reward of humility is the fear of the Lord' (Proverbs 22:4) / 'Serve the Lord with fear' (Psalms 2:11).

<sup>54</sup> [direzione]. ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, *Riassegnazione della sinagoga a Livia Beneroi*, 22 June 1759.

<sup>55</sup> The synagogue's furnishings are amongst the many objects inventoried in the Beneroi home: 'No. 30 small benches / A small bench with a cupboard in the middle / Bible cupboard with two painted and gilded seats / Nine benches and two small high-backed chairs / A tripod ladder / A large brass chandelier / Twelve brass lamps / Two iron ewers / Brass ornaments [...] / A brass lamp / Another lamp, also brass / No. 27 iron objects / [...] and a small pot and a small bowl in bronze / Various hardware' ['Banchette n. 30 / Un banchetto con un armario in mezzo / Armario della bibbia con due sedili dipinti e dorati / Nove banche e due scranini / Una scala da tre piedi / Una lumiera grande d'ottone / Dodici lumi d'ottone / Due spocchi di ferro / Ornamenti [...] di ottone / Una lampada d'ottone / Altra lampada pure d'ottone / Ferri n. 27 / Un suolo e un caldarino e un scudelotto di bronzo / Varij ferramenti']. ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, n. 151, *Inventario, descrizione, e stima de mobili e robbe ritrovate nella casa di ragione dello stato del fu Isacco Beneroi ebreo di Carpi posta in confine del ghetto di questa città verso piazza...*, 18 October 1754.

stamped leather shop, while Moisè continued doing business in Carpi and Correggio.<sup>56</sup> After Livia's death, Moisè married Tamar Milla and became the official owner of the oratory provided that 'the new owner not make any essential changes';<sup>57</sup> from this moment onward, the large house was gradually divided into parts and later sold or transferred until 1795 – a year before the ghetto was suppressed – when the Jewish community bought the synagogue.<sup>58</sup> In 1855, the community received, initially in emphyteusis and later as an outright purchase, the remaining portion of the building – labelled M654 – from Giacobbe Finzi, thus owning the large building that allowed for a new place of worship to be built, which would later be constructed on the first floor.<sup>59</sup> However, before arriving at this decision, starting in 1851 talk was underway within the community about what to do with the existing oratory, which was in a state of neglect after more than a century of use.

### **The new *national temple*. The nineteenth-century synagogue**

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<sup>56</sup> ASCC, Notarile, Carteggio Beneroj, cc. not numbered, Interrogatory of Antonia Berselli, 17 November 1758.

<sup>57</sup> [il novello padrone non fac[esse] essenziali novità]. Quoted in Orlandi, 'Antoine Colomb de Vanel, pittore, soldato, massone e rivoluzionario', 208.

<sup>58</sup> Amongst the many documents that marked the transfer or emphyteusis of parts of the house, please note: ASCC, Notarile, env. 1000 *Cabassi Floriano. Protocolli e inserti 1792 (dic. 21) 1794 (mar. 22)*, cc. 110r–111v, *Compravendita tra Moisé Finzi e Abram Rimini*, 23 August 1793, n. 80; ASRE, Archivi notarili, Correggio, Copie di Testamenti, 1855, t. 19, Will of Giacobbe Finzi, 2 March 1854, notary Tomaso Cattania, n. 710/108; ASRE, Archivio notarile, Atti dei notai di Reggio Emilia e provincia, Cattania Tommaso, *Livello tra Finzi Pellegrino e l'Azienda ebraica*, 17 July 1872, n. 2094/1036. To reconstruct the history of transfers of ownership of the building, see: ASMO, Ufficio centrale del censo, Carpi, reg. 33, c. 895; reg. 34, c. 1029; reg. 35, c. 1533; reg. 36, c. 234; reg. 37, c. 356; ASMO, Estimo e catasto, Carpi, reg. 630, n. 43; reg. 631, n. 91; reg. 632, cc. 43, 308, 309; reg. 633, c. 150; reg. 646, cc. 120–121; reg. 650, cc. 78, 150; reg. blu 1646, 1803, not inventoried, c. 27; env. n. blu 170/ E.S., *Variazioni d'Estimo per Carpi e suo Distretto. Dal 21 giugno 1753 al 1 Agosto 1760. D 14*, not inventoried, c. 131.

<sup>59</sup> ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 35, folder *Comunità Israelitica di Carpi 1907-1923; 1925, Scrittura privata tra Giacobbe Finzi e l'Università israelitica di Carpi*, 30 September 1855. The house was leased to Moisè Cervo Finzi since 1831 and was later sublet to Abram Giuseppe Modena in 1850. Also see ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.11, c. 20, *Verbali di seduta*, 7 June 1855.

Even though, after a rather substantial decline, the Jewish community in Carpi comprised just around 120 people – a number that would continue to decline until the early twentieth century, leading the community to disband – work on the old synagogue could no longer be avoided.<sup>60</sup> In 1851, there was an urgent need to carry out required 'renovations and innovations'<sup>61</sup> on the oratory, which was in 'inherent indecorousness and in a state of disrepair'.<sup>62</sup> To solve the problem, the community did all they could to raise 'voluntary funds',<sup>63</sup> and the city's engineer, Luigi Giorgini, was entrusted with designing a project for an 'exterior solution for the sanctuary';<sup>64</sup> the location of the synagogue on the top floor made the building entirely exposed to the elements, and it is likely that the project was aimed principally at repairing the roof. The work to be carried out by Giorgini included the 'restoration of the oratory'<sup>65</sup> and identifying a place for a temporary synagogue; the entrance was also re-examined to 'procure the best entrance from the street, and, should it not be possible to attain it, to nevertheless remove the public urinal within, and thus build a new and decent door that can be easily closed'.<sup>66</sup> In addition to the more substantial renovations to the outside of the synagogue, conceived 'in the event

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<sup>60</sup> Fulvio Diego Papouchado, 'Il declino della comunità ebraica di Carpi. Riflessioni su un percorso storico-demografico', in Anna Maria Ori, Elio Tavilla, *Storia di Carpi. Volume III, La città e il territorio nel lungo Ottocento (1796-1914)* (Modena: Mc Offset, 2010), I, 285–313.

<sup>61</sup> [riparazioni ed innovazioni]. ACEMO, Comunità di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 2, *Relazione di Alessandro Namias e Giuseppe Modena all'Azienda Israelitica di Carpi*, 19 August 1851.

<sup>62</sup> [indecorosità intrinseca e [in] stato di abbandono]. Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> [offerte volontarie]. ACEMO, Comunità di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 3, *Verbali di seduta*, 28 September 1851.

<sup>64</sup> [esterna sistemazione del santuario]. ACEMO, Comunità di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 2, *Relazione di Alessandro Namias e Giuseppe Modena all'Azienda Israelitica di Carpi*, 19 August 1851.

<sup>65</sup> [ristauro dell'oratorio]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 5, Letter from Augusto Namias to Chancellor of Azienda Israelitica, 11 October 1852.

<sup>66</sup> [procurare un miglior ingresso dalla strada, e non potendolo ottenere, di levare in ogni modo l'interno pisciatojo; e così costruire una nuova porta decente che possa facilmente chiudersi]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 13 ff., E. Namias, *Istruzioni per la Commissione incaricata alla fabbrica e ristauo dell'oratorio israelitico di Carpi*, 8 October 1852.

it was decided to keep the current building as it is, only making it more suitable',<sup>67</sup> the possibility of building a new synagogue in another space slowly began to be discussed.

The precarious and improper situation the old oratory found itself in continued, however, until 1856, when the proposals to repair the old hall were abandoned, and the Namias family and Giorgini undertook a project to 'rebuild the [...] Holy temple'<sup>68</sup> that would have entailed an outlay for the community that was nearly double compared to the repairs originally proposed. Not only was the project's change of direction significant, but so was the clear shift in terminology: the distinction between *oratory* and *temple* can be found in the largely private and domestic dimension of the sacred space according to the traditional definition of the former term and the more public representation of Judaism entailed in the latter, in line with an approach that was spreading throughout Italy in those years and which in the latter term suggested a partial distancing of everyday life from places of worship.<sup>69</sup> From an architectural point of view, this change in meaning led to a shift in focus with regards to symbolic features as well as, in a more practical dimension, the clear division between the new synagogue and adjacent residences:<sup>70</sup> the space went from being one in which the primary purpose was to host prayer and not to represent the divine glory through architecture – Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, though not talking about Jewish architecture, described this architectural arrangement in significant terms in his *Dictionnaire d'architecture* (1832): 'Les oratoire particuliers sont

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<sup>67</sup> [supposto caso che venisse adottato di mantenere identica l'attuale fabbrica, e soltanto renderla più decente]. Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> [riedificazione del [...] Santo tempio']. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 10, Letter form Giacomo Basola, Beniamino Namias, Isaia Namias to members of Azienda Israelitica, 28 April 1857.

<sup>69</sup> For the reasons that led to this change, see: Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992).

<sup>70</sup> ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 35, folder *Comunità di Carpi. Casa n. 25 via di Mezzo, Scrittura privata tra l'Università israelitica di Carpi e la famiglia Rovighi*, 8 March 1858.

de petites pièces situées le plus souvent dans un endroit retiré des grandes maisons, à l'abri des distractions et du bruit, pour pouvoir se livrer à la méditation et à la prière [...]. Aujourd'hui on n'y admet ordinairement d'autres objets qu'un prie-dieu, surmonté d'un crucifix ou de quelque tableau représentant un sujet pieux<sup>71</sup> – to a monumental space, a hall fitted out with symbolic and magniloquent decoration with which the faithful could contemplate divinity. This attention to the physical appearance of the space and the search for enduring forms for temples – once again, Quatremère de Quincy perceptively summarises the essential characteristics of a temple: 'De tous les genres d'ouvrages qui appartiennent à l'art de bâtir, aucun n'a obtenu plus de solidité, de grandeur et de magnificence, et aucun n'a été plus multiplié que celui dont un sentiment universel s'est plu de faire en tout temps et en tout pays hommage à la Divinité [...]. Toute idée a besoin de signes qui la fixent, qui la rendent sensible et qui la perpétuent'<sup>72</sup> – would lead, in late nineteenth century Italy, to the construction of Jewish temples, the models for which were sacred Christian buildings, with an architectural style inspired by eclectic Moorish designs or oriental style motifs.

In Carpi, architecture never became as straightforward and manifestly urban as happened in larger communities, but what would ultimately be built in a few years' time tended in that direction: with its monumental façade and fine decoration, the external appearance will clearly show the presence of the new temple. In addition to the crucial and purely economic and morphological reasons tied to the location of the community's properties, the reasons for this choice were probably also influenced by the early period

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<sup>71</sup> Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, *Dictionnaire d'architecture* (Paris : Librairie d'Adrien Le Clere et C.ie, 1832), I, 172.

<sup>72</sup> Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, *Dictionnaire d'architecture* (Paris : Librairie d'Adrien Le Clere et C.ie, 1832), II, 536.

in which the synagogue was built were we to compare it with the dates of construction of the most important temples in Italy that were built according to this new trend.<sup>73</sup>

To carry out this new building plan, about a year after Namias and Giorgini's project, in agreement with a designated committee within the community and comprised of Giacomo Basola, Beniamino Namias and Isaia Namias, who were working on the new temple, Alessandro Namias tasked the young engineer Achille Sammarini with designing what would later become his first work.<sup>74</sup>

Sammarini had finished his studies years before, earning his land surveyor's diploma in 1849, followed in 1852 with a degree in Physics and Mathematics from the Regia Università degli Studi di Modena, where in 1850 he earned an award in his architecture course at the Reale Accademia Atestina di Belle Arti. Having trained under Francesco Vandelli, Giovanni Lotti and Cesare Costa, Sammarini's knowledge was primarily engineering-focused than academic;<sup>75</sup> the first part of his work was dedicated to sacred architecture – in April of 1857 he was named episcopal appointee for the administration of church assets in the Carpi and Novi areas – and at the same time that the new temple was being built in Carpi, he also designed the façade of the Church of Conversione di San Paolo Apostolo in Budrione – which was never brought to fruition – depicting an accurate Ionic layout with a pediment above the portal similar to the one that would later be installed at the synagogue. When he presented the project for the new

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<sup>73</sup> For example, amongst the most important Jewish communities in Italy, around 1859, the decision was made to build new temples in Turin and Florence (which would be built over the following decades); a synagogue was also constructed in 1886 in Milan, and in Rome three years later. In 1903, a new temple was built in Trieste. See: Morpurgo, *Il cimitero ebraico in Italia. Storia e architettura di uno spazio identitario*, 31-62.

<sup>74</sup> ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 13, Letter from Alessandro Namias to President of Azienda Israelitica, 9 March 1858.

<sup>75</sup> For the training of architects and engineers in Modena, see: Anna Coccioli Mastroviti, 'L'Accademia Atesina e l'architettura a Modena nell'età della restaurazione', in Giuliana Ricci, Giovanna D'Amia, eds., *La cultura architettonica nell'età della restaurazione* (Milano: Mimesis 2002), 225–239.

Jewish temple in March of 1858, Sammarini determined 'a new location in which to build it',<sup>76</sup> seeking to imagine a place that could immediately have 'more comfortable access, something that can help the most reputable class in the community, that is, the elderly, who ordinarily frequent the house of God more than anyone else, thus are more than worthy of being respected',<sup>77</sup> and, at the same time, a space that was sufficiently large enough to host the hall. Although he was asked to present two projects, one for the vegetable garden at the home of Alessandro and Beniamino Namias and the other for the community building where the first synagogue was to be located, the community quickly decided to choose the latter.<sup>78</sup> He therefore identified in the community building a 'courtyard with porticoes above which is a marble terrace'<sup>79</sup> which, once covered, would have created the necessary space on the first floor: the walls of the room were regulated using a double wall, and as a result, the space appeared perfectly rectangular and, towards the street, an atrium and a monumental staircase could be arranged which would serve as a visual link between the Aròn – with the Ten Commandments situated above it – and the public street. The project included 'various works in the kitchen of the Master, the reduction of three small rooms, a new flight of stairs for the Master to use with a pantry below, a main staircase with three new walls, an elevated courtyard above, and a façade

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<sup>76</sup> [una nuova ubicazione in cui erigerlo]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 13, Letter from Alessandro Namias to President of Azienda Israelitica, 9 March 1858.

<sup>77</sup> [più comodo l'accesso, circostanza questa, che giovando alla classe più rispettabile del Consorzio, vuol dirsi ai vecchi, che più degli altri ordinariamente frequentano la casa di Dio, ben merita di essere apprezzata]. Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 18 ff., *Relazione*, 28 April 1858. A description of the unrealised project for the vegetable garden at the home of Alessandro and Beniamino Namias can be found in ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 14 ff., *Letter from Achille Sammarini to Alessandro Namias*, 26 March 1858.

<sup>79</sup> [cortile con portici sopra de' quali terrazzo de' marmo]. ASCC, Notarile, *Misure, perizie, mappe dell'ing. Capitano Bartolomeo Artioli 1821-1846*, env. 2289, folder LXXXI, c. 22, Bartolomeo Artioli, *Perizia della casa in Carpi M n. 654 di rag[ion]e delli Sig[no]ri Isacco, Anselmo e Giacobe fra[te]llli Finzi. Misura, Rilievi e Stima*, 20 June 1827.

with the main entrance, shutters, etc.’<sup>80</sup> Following the involvement of then-Rabbi Angelo Elia Sabbadini, an agreement was stipulated between Angela Rovighi and Leone Caleffi – owners of parts of the building needed to carry out the project – and the Jewish community, and the considerable expenses were supported via fundraising and the sale of the synagogue’s daises.<sup>81</sup>

In just one month, the project for the 'new National Temple'<sup>82</sup> was approved by the community’s committee, though not without some uncertainty about its site, considered 'very exposed to the public'<sup>83</sup> and from the windows of which, situated under the Portico del Grano, passers-by could hear 'the voices of the worshippers'.<sup>84</sup> To this end, without concern for this aspect, which implied the residents' acceptance of a greater public role for the Jewish community, Sammarini responded with a fundamentally technical and practical solution: 'the two aforementioned windows will be closed, which will remove most of the inconvenience, and every opportune method will be explored to change the air, a problem that does not appear to be without a solution'.<sup>85</sup>

This and other positions, which do not consider matters of worship nor the doubts for the project expressed by the community itself, show how Sammarini did not fully

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<sup>80</sup> [vari lavori nella cucina del S[igno]r Maestro, alla riduzione di tre piccole stanze, alla nuova scaletta inserviente al S[igno]r Maestro sudd[ett]o con sotto dispensa, alla scala principale con tre nuovi muri, ed al cortiletto pensile sovrastante, alla facciata con porta principale, serrande etc.]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, Letter from Achille Sammarini to Alessandro Namias, 26 May 1856, quoted also in Garuti, 'Le sinagoghe di Carpi: notizie storico artistiche', 199–200.

<sup>81</sup> ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 23 ff., *Capitoli d'aste per la vendita dei palchi da uomo e da donna...*, 22 April 1859.

<sup>82</sup> [nuovo Tempio Nazionale]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 18 ff., *Relazione sul nuovo tempio*, 28 April 1858.

<sup>83</sup> [tanto esposto al pubblico]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 14 ff., Letter from Achille Sammarini to Alessandro Namias, 1 April 1858.

<sup>84</sup> [le voci dei devoti]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 17, Letter from Benedetto Norsa to Alessandro Namias, 10 May 1858.

<sup>85</sup> [si otterranno le predette due finestre, con che verrà tolto in massima parte il voluto inconveniente; e si cercherà in tal caso ogni mezzo opportuno alla rinnovazione dell'aria, quale problema poi, mi pare non abbia a essere d'impossibile soluzione]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 14 ff., Letter from Achille Sammarini to Alessandro Namias, 1 April 1858.



understand the architectural characteristics of a synagogue and Jewish customs – his only observation on the matter being the following: 'I kept in mind that the Echal or the Ark must be on the eastern side'.<sup>86</sup> This was a recurring theme in the approach to designing Italian synagogues, entrusted to engineers and architects who were not fully knowledgeable of Judaism and were thus most likely guided by members of the community with regards to liturgical aspects.<sup>87</sup> From an architectural perspective, this situation led to, if not a 'non-style',<sup>88</sup> at least the absence of an in-depth reflection on the architectural identity of Jewish culture, importing a conventionalised, eclectic style not only to Carpi but to other cities as well.

While the technical problem of the location was skilfully resolved by young Sammarini, evidence of the architectural characterisation and decoration of this project – no drawings having survived – can only be found in the brief notes written on an estimate for expenses, listing 'glossy white and golden plaster, to be applied to the surrounding walls; decorations for the aforementioned walls and the altar',<sup>89</sup> without reference to anything else (Figure 9) **[INSERT FIGURE 9: BW]**. There is no reason to doubt, however, that what we see today does not correspond to Sammarini's project; a model for Carpi's synagogue was perhaps the temple in Soragna, unveiled in 1855, and definitely the synagogue in Reggio Emilia built by Pietro Marchelli (Reggio Emilia, 1806 – Quattro Castella, Reggio Emilia, 1874) starting in 1851; the synagogue was unveiled on 15 January 1858, with documentation attesting to it being a model for the opening

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<sup>86</sup> [Io ho avuto in vista che l'Echal od Arca dev'essere dalla parte di Levante]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 14 ff., Letter from Achille Sammarini to Alessandro Namias, 26 March 1858.

<sup>87</sup> Cassuto, 'La sinagoga in Italia', 319–338.

<sup>88</sup> Bonilauri, Maugeri, *Sinagoghe in Italia. Guida ai luoghi del culto e della tradizione ebraica*, 27.

<sup>89</sup> ['intonaco a lucido bianco e dorato, da applicarsi ai muri circostanti; gli ornamenti ai medesimi ed all'Altare]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 13 ff., *Relazione di Alessandro Namias*, 9 April 1858, quoted also in Garuti, 'Le sinagoghe di Carpi: notizie storico artistiche', 197–199.

celebrations of its Carpi counterpart.<sup>90</sup> The similarities between the two buildings – evident in some of the interior decoration, the arrangement of the spaces, and the rapport between them and the ceiling, despite the design for the Carpi synagogue being considerably superior compared to the one planned by Marchelli – lead us to consider the direct influence the Reggio synagogue had on Sammarini's project: it is even possible that the engineer was personally acquainted not only with the work but with Marchelli himself, as they both studied mathematics at the University of Modena, though at different times.

Work on the new temple began on 7 June 1858 and continued until the end of 1860; documents dating to October of 1858 attest to the construction of the façade facing what is today Via Rovighi<sup>91</sup> (Figure 10) **[INSERT FIGURE 10: BW]**. A few months later, on Saturday 8 February 1861, the new 'house of God'<sup>92</sup> was consecrated in the Italian rite and opened with a solemn public ceremony, bringing the sacred furnishings from the eighteenth-century synagogue – which was never used again – to the new space.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 46, *Relazione di Alessandro Namias*, 15 December 1860.

<sup>91</sup> ASSC, Commissione d'ornato, '1956-57-58', n. 40, 1 October 1858.

<sup>92</sup> [casa del signore]. Saltini described the two Hebrew texts written in the spaces opposite the synagogue: 'This is the consecrated house of the Lord. All those enter here filled with respectful reverence' [Ecco la casa del signore consacrata. Ognuno nel qui entrare da ossequiosa riverenza compreso] and 'Reverently worship the Eternal and rejoice with devout triumph' [Adorate riverenti l'Eterno, e gioite con devota esultanza].

<sup>93</sup> ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 48 ff., *Regolamento del Tempio Israelitico di Carpi*, 22 January 1861; ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 46 ff., *Programma per il cerimoniale nell'inaugurazione del nuovo Tempio*, 2 February 1861. The objects found in the old oratory were: 'no. 3 large brass lamps called Ner Tamid / no. 2 small tins / no. 24 glass lamps / no. 15 brass Sabbath lamps / no. 12 brass *branchi da torce* / no. 1 iron crown / no. 1 lamp with 18 *branchi 18 detti* / no. 2 iron pedestals with brass torch bearers / no. 2 tin jugs / no. 35 pews / no. 4 women's pews / 8 iron pieces and another large one all around it / no. 6 curtains with their respective iron rods / no. 2 small, brass torch bearers / n. 2. *branchi da ligio*' [n. 3 lampade in ottone grande detti Ner Tamid / n. 2 Piccoli detti di latta / n. 24 lumi di vetro / n. 15 lumi del sabbato in ottone / n. 12 branchi da torce in ottone / n. 1 corona di ferro / n. 1 lumiera di branchi 18 detti / n. 2 piedistallo di ferro con porta torce di ottone / n. 2 brocche di latta / n. 35 banchi da chiesa / n. 4 detti da donna / ferri isolati 8 ed altro grande tutto all'intorno / n. 6 tende con suoi rispettivi ferri / n. 2 porta torce piccoli di ottone / n. 2 branchi da ligio]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the community in Carpi disbanded, the community properties were handed over to the Jewish community in Modena, and in 1921 the house hosting the synagogues was transferred to Quinto Rovighi, the descendent of a family from Carpi with Jewish origins, who took up residence there. With its sale, 'every sacred symbol recalling its former purpose'<sup>94</sup> was destroyed. Having removed the furnishings, removed the inscriptions, and demolished the depictions of the Ten Commandments – a comparison of the two photographs taken during this renovation shows the space before and after<sup>95</sup> – Rovighi obtained a large hall, which, thanks to its lavish decorations, could serve as the main space of the house (Figures 11-12). **INSERT**

**FIGURES 11 AND 12: BW]**

Visitors passing by the nineteenth-century synagogue today or entering the Fondazione Fossoli, unaware of the events that created these spaces, would not be able to recognise the sacred nature of Sammarini's work; similarly to the eighteenth-century synagogue, where the only reference to the sacredness of the space was the still extant inscriptions, there is nothing here that alludes to the importance that these spaces had for the Jewish community. The large rooms, whose architecture reveals nothing of their history, have nonetheless found in these new aspects – first domestic, when the Rovighi family lived there, and later public, with the founding of the Fondazione Fossoli – an

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Carpi, env. 1.9, folder 2, c. 50, *Nota degli oggetti ritrovati nella vecchia scuola ossia oratorio che sono stati riposti in un camerino annesso con doppia chiave*, February 1861.

<sup>94</sup> [le demolizioni di ogni simbolo sacro che ne ricordava la vecchia destinazione]. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, Cause e Istrumenti 1817-1922, env. 1, quoted in Vincenza Maugeri, 'L'Azienda Israelitica' di Carpi tra '800 e '900: problemi sull'amministrazione della sinagoga e sugli arredi sacri', in Franco Bonilauri, Vincenza Maugeri, eds., *Le Comunità ebraiche a Modena e a Carpi. Dal medioevo all'età contemporanea* (Firenze: Giuntina, 1999), 217.

<sup>95</sup> The photographs of the 'humble temple of Carpi' were probably taken by G. Becchi from Carpi just before the synagogue was transferred. ACEMO, Comunità ebraica di Carpi, env. 35, folder *Comunità Israelitica di Carpi 1907-1923; 1925, Letter from Umberto Campagnano to Foa*, 3 May 1922.

essential meaning tied to their origin, two interpretations of that everyday life and monumentality that even in the absence of ritual can still be perceived.

I would like to thank Margherita Lanzetta from the Archivio di Stato in Modena and Eleonora Zanasi from the Archivio storico in Carpi for their help with my research and for their kindness; Gianfranco Guaitoli, who lent me the results of his enormous, decades-long research into Carpi's Jewish community, including his unpublished catalogue *Gli ebrei di Carpi, secoli XV-XX. Parte prima (1412-1861). Regesto cronologico di documenti e atti di archivio*; Laura Graziani, for attentively reading my drafts and for her priceless advice about the interpretation of synagogue architecture; David Cassuto and Vincenza Maugeri, for their essential discussions; the staff at Fondazione Fossoli; Lorenzo Gnoli and Giulia Ghini, for their help with my research at the archive of the Ufficio centro storico in Carpi; Natascia Arletti from the Centro di ricerca etnografica; Daniele Salerno for his help during the translation of the text; Ramona Loffredo, for having shared and constantly discussed the research. This text is dedicated to Giovanni Chiaramonte.

## Captions

Figure 1. The former nineteenth-century synagogue.

Figure 2-3. Plans and sections of the building. The synagogues and their respective entrances are marked in dark grey. A. Entrance and staircase leading to the nineteenth-

century synagogue; B. The staircase leading to the eighteenth-century synagogue; C. The atrium of the nineteenth-century synagogue; D. The nineteenth-century synagogue; E. The matroneum in the nineteenth-century synagogue; F. The entrance to the eighteenth-century synagogue; G. The matroneum in the eighteenth-century synagogue; H. The eighteenth-century synagogue.

Figure 4. Map of the city of Carpi, 1860. The 'scuola degli Ebrei', or School of the Jews, only the boundaries of which are indicated with a dotted line, is marked as number 13. Although its location was hidden from the street, it was connected directly to the main piazza in Carpi and with the most important places in the city.

Figure 5. The former eighteenth-century synagogue.

Figure 6. The stairwell leading to the former eighteenth-century synagogue.

Figure 7. Bartolomeo Artioli, Appraisal of the home of Isacco, Anselmo, and Giacobbe Finzi, 20 June 1827. The letter 'O' indicates the 'Staircase shared with the synagogue', while the letter 'T' indicates the courtyard that would be closed about thirty years later to build the new synagogue.

Figure 8. The staircase leading to the former nineteenth-century synagogue.

Figure 9. The atrium of the former nineteenth-century synagogue.

Figure 10. The exterior of the nineteenth-century synagogue prior to restoration.

Figure 11. The interior of the nineteenth-century synagogue, facing the Aròn, 1920s.

Figure 12. The interior of the nineteenth-century synagogue, facing the entrance, 1920s.





Fig. 1



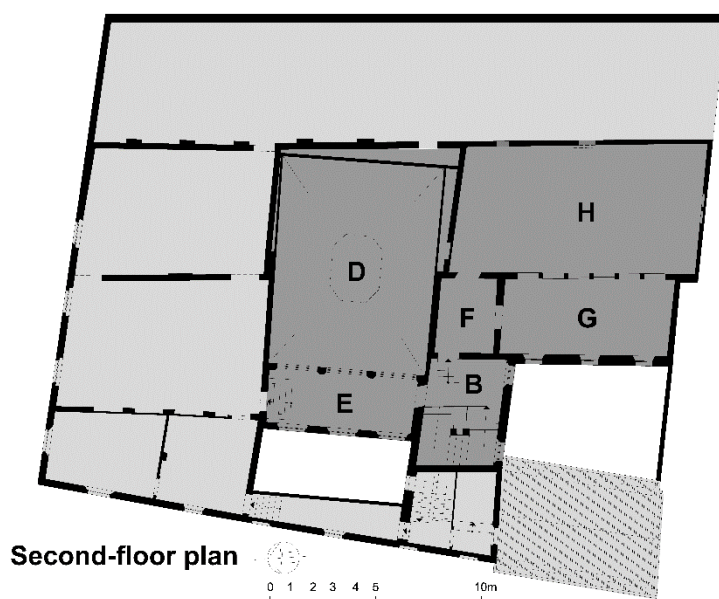
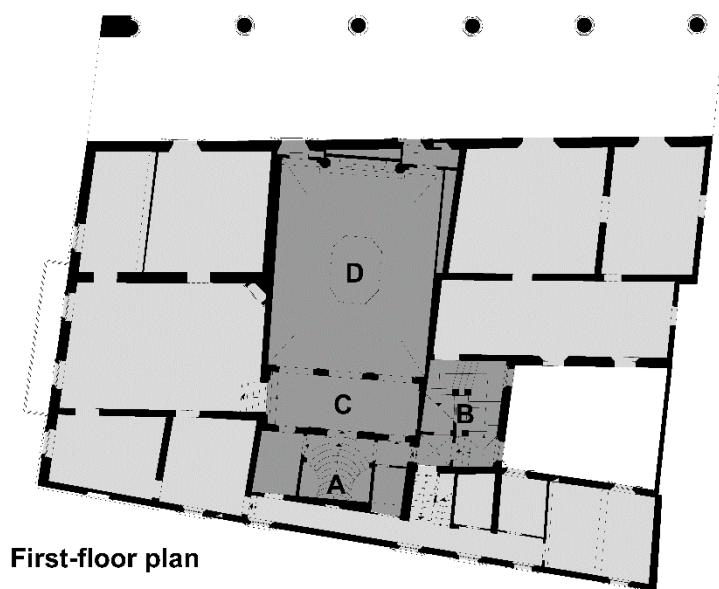
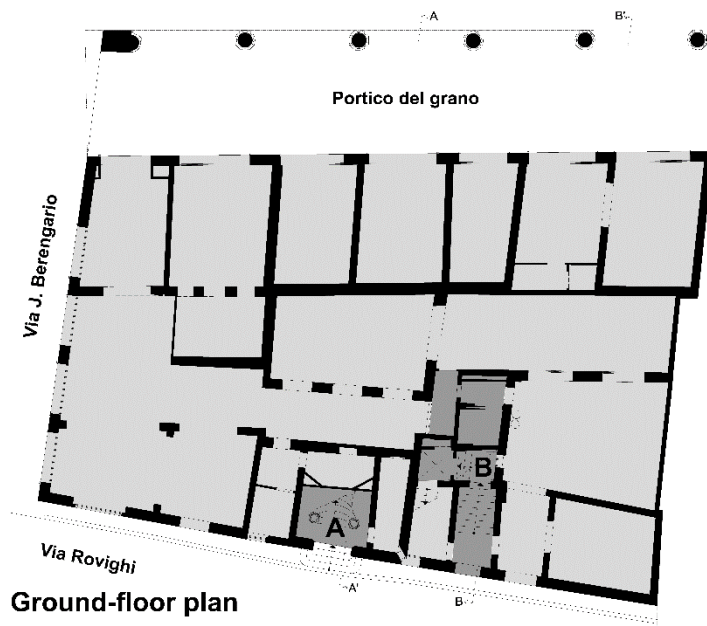


Fig. 2

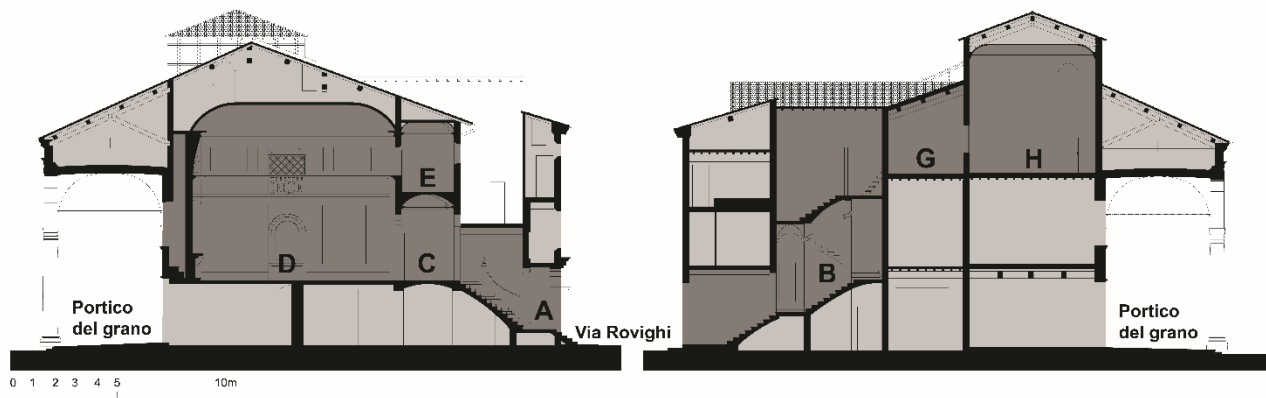


Fig. 3



# Pianta della Città di Carpi

## Chiese

- I. Duomo
- II. S. Chiara
- III. S. Ignazio
- IV. S. Maria
- V. S. Nicolo
- VI. S. Giuseppe
- VII. S. Paolo
- VIII. S. Bernardino
- IX. S. Raffaele
- X. Francesco
- XI. Maria
- XII. Duomo vecchio
- XIII. S. Antonio
- XIV. S. V. delle Grazie

## Punti principali della città e Stabilimenti

1. Palazzo
2. Caserma
3. Conservatorio delle Orfane
4. Seminario e pubbliche scuole
5. Ospedale delle Fanciulle
6. Conservatorio dei Minori Orfanelli
7. Ospedale Infermi e Poveri
8. Piazza di S. Maria Moderna
9. Ospedale
10. Ospedale Poveri
11. Piazza delle Erbe
12. Ospedale di Mendicanti
13. Scuola degli Orfani
14. Mercato del Grano
15. Palazzo Comunale, Archivio Pubblico, S. Ignazio e Scuola di Disegno
16. Piazza Maggiore
17. Giudecca e Carceri Criminali
18. S. Duca Castello
19. Teatro Comunale
20. Scuola di Musica
21. Carceri di S. Maria
22. Piazza del Palazzo
23. Monte di Pietà
24. Torre del Duomo
25. Porta di S. Giovanni
26. Scuola di Carità e S. Bernardino



27. Palazzo delle Grazie
28. Palazzo S. Chiara
29. Porta Mantova
30. Palazzo S. Nicolo
31. Piazza pubblica
32. Palazzo S. Francesco
33. Porta Moderna
34. Palazzo S. Agostino
35. Palazzo della Musica

Il Perimetro della Città di Carpi, misurato al Polo esterno delle mura, è di tole 567218, corrispondenti a Metri 2189,25.

Scala in Metri

Fig. 4



*Fig. 5*



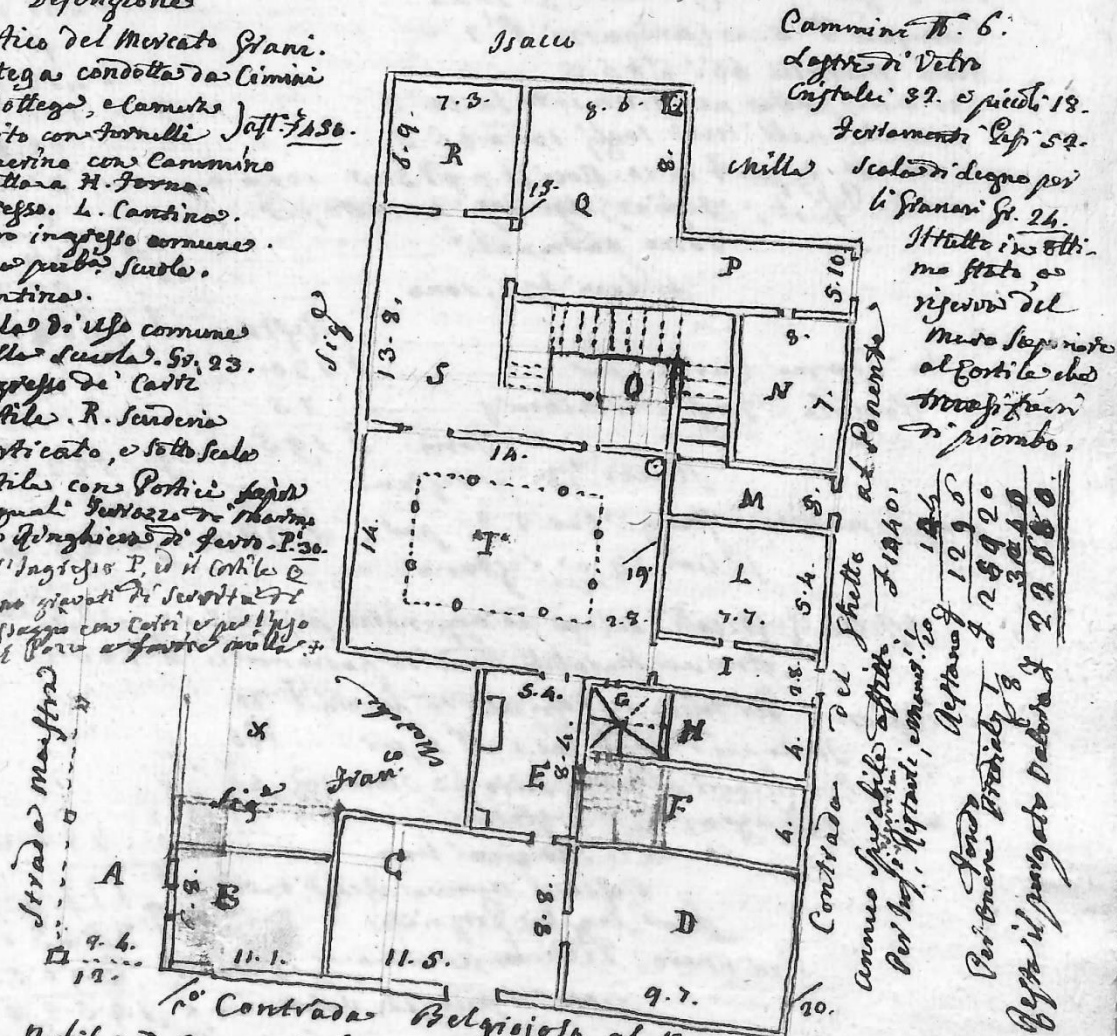


Fig. 6

Adi 10. Giugno. Casa in Carpi M. N. 654. di rag. delli sig. Isaac, Anselmo, e  
 Giacomo Belli-fingi. misura, figura, e stima.

### Defenizione

- A Portico del Mercato Grani.
- B. Bottega condotta da Cimini
- C, D. Bottega, e camera
- E. Andito con fornelli
- F. Camerina con Cammino
- G. Scatellara H. Forno.
- I. Ingresso. L. Cantina.
- M. altro ingresso comune  
colle strada sud.
- N. Cantina.
- O. Scala di uso comune  
colle strada. 57. 23.
- P. Ingresso di Corte
- Q. Cortile. R. Sordana
- S. Porticato, e sotto scala
- T. Cortile con Portico sopra  
di quale fuorzo di marino  
con inghiera di ferro. P. 30.
- N. B. l'ingresso P. di il Cortile Q.  
sono giardini di scorta di  
passaggio con corti e per l'uso  
del Porto e fanno nulla.



1° Contrada Belgiojolo al Nord  
 Piano Nobile B Camera, che si estende sopra X. X. altra Camera.  
 C Sala quale si estende sopra X E. D F H G. Due Camere. I. Secchiario di  
 maso, e Cefo. L. Cucina, M. N. Camera. R. Penale

2° Piano granari da Braggia, A. altro granari da Braggia, che  
 si estende oltre ad X.

+ il bud. Pozzo nel Cortile e di Bart. Capone Anselmo ing. e  
 propriet. Miller, come da Ragione Capone 23. Agosto 1793.

Fig. 7





Fig. 8



*Fig. 9*





Fig. 10

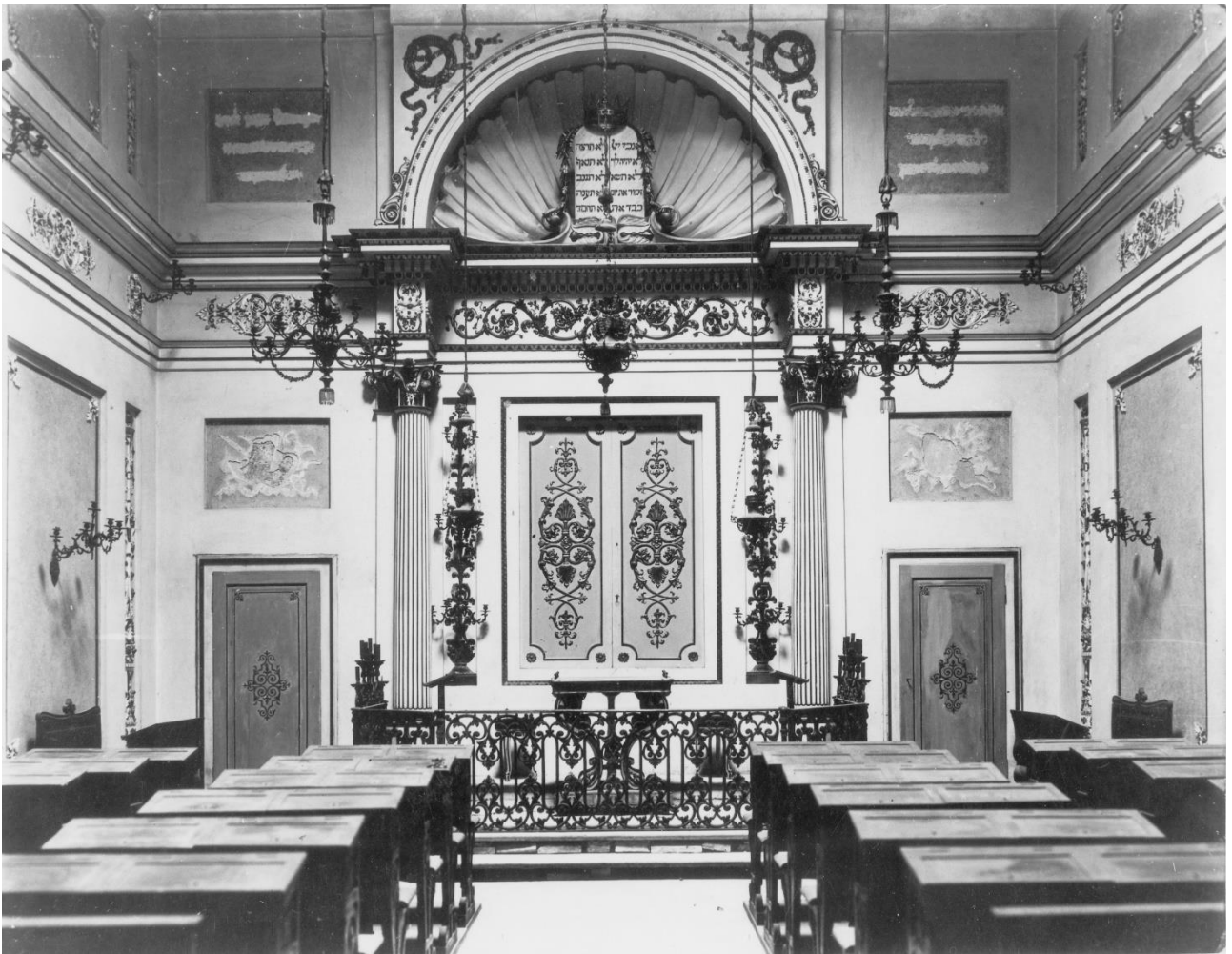


Fig. 11



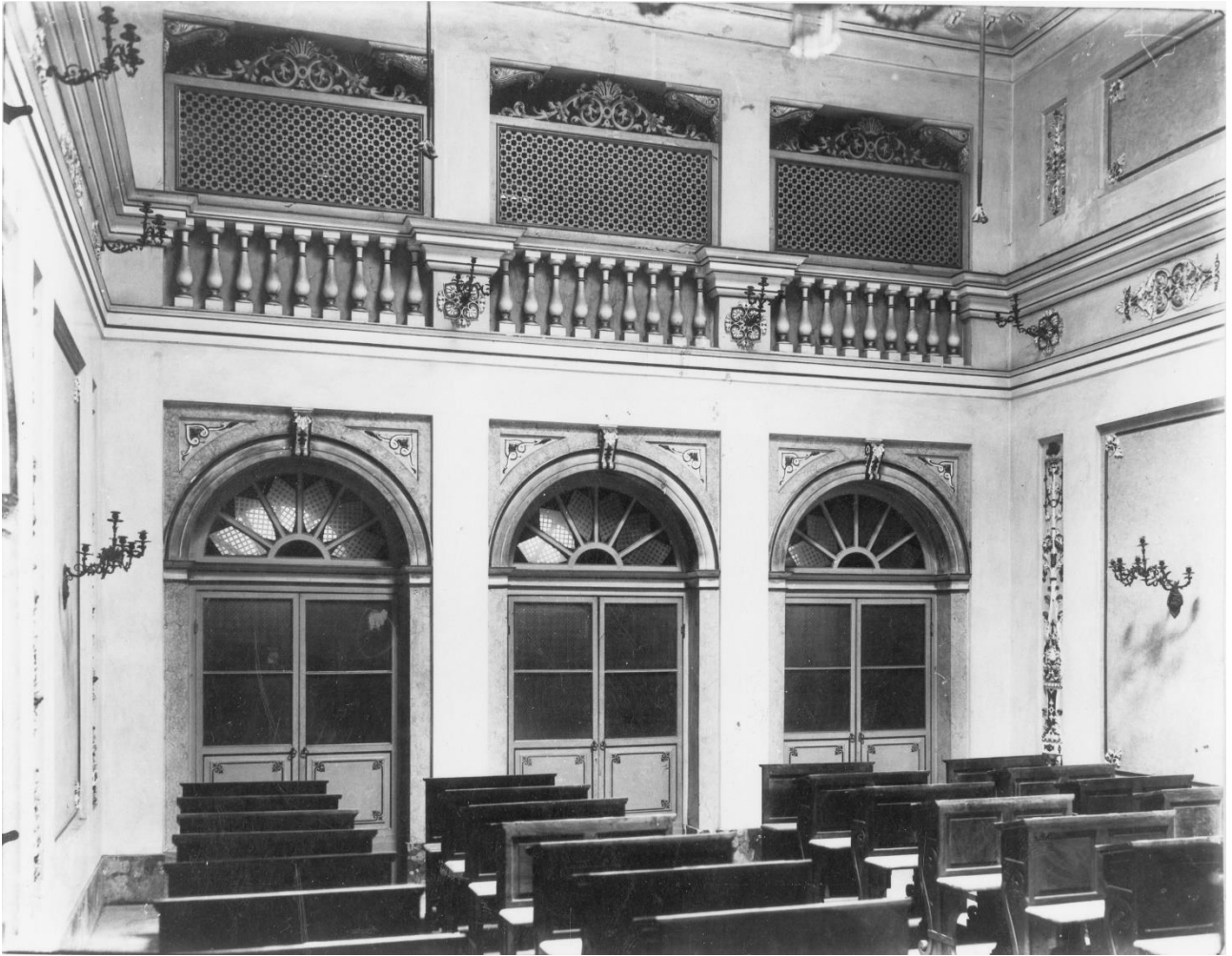


Fig. 12