

# *Between local and general history. On the writings of Luigi Staibano (1822-1877)*

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## *Introduction*

Luigi Staibano was a man of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century who exclusively lived, according to the sources, in the territory of Amalfi Coast. From this Mediterranean world, placed in a not yet unified and pacified Italy, he took some attitudes, some points of view and some ways of doing that we can find in his works. In this way these works convey historical elements and localized anthropological suggestions. Staibano was born in Scala on October 17, 1822<sup>1</sup> and he died in Salerno on March 12, 1877<sup>2</sup>. He devoted his entire life to forensic activity and to Maiori and Salerno, adoptive homelands to which he always remained strongly attached.

His interest in history turned into a constant cultural production, focused on the Mediterranean world with its changes and its people. The Tyrrhenian coast remained the focal point of his pen but the cultural contaminations in the history of Amalfi, Maiori or Salerno often gave rise to some *excursus* on other lands and civilizations. This happened in the unpublished *Raccolta di memorie storiche su Maiori città di Principato Citra* (in which Staibano discusses, among other topics, the siege of Salerno by the Saracens) and in the *Il pellegrinaggio degli Armeni in Salerno*.

The latest studies produced by Domenico Taiani (2020) in the *Memorie genealogiche delle famiglie di Maiori* highlighted again the

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<sup>1</sup> *Atti di nascita* 1822, in Archivio Comunale di Scala (from now AC Sc), prot. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Atti di morte* 1877, in Archivio Comunale di Salerno (from now AC SA), prot.183, c. 47.

figure of Staibano, a lawyer and scholar from the Amalfi Coast. His name returns to the contemporary world thanks to the interest of historians who often mention him in their works, glorifying him and giving him a new visibility. In fact, for various reasons, the intellectual landscape of the second half of the 19th century in Amalfi often reduced the weight and value of his studies. For this reason, the author left many works unpublished or unfinished, depriving them of the possibility of an effective appreciation and excluding them from the immediately subsequent historiographical bibliography.

Otherwise, other illustrious names, such as that of Marcantonio Oliva, still have fame thanks to the mentions of scholars. However in this case the writings of the author had already been lost at the time of Staibano. On the other hand, Staibano's passion for his city was relevant and it was recognized by his contemporaries.

The obituary written by Giovan Battista Crollanza (1877, pp. 339-400), director of the *Giornale araldico genealogico diplomatico italiano* at the time, on the occasion of Staibano's death is emblematic.

The nobleman Mr. Luigi Staibano of Scala, a member of our Academy, a scholar in archeology, numismatics and paleography is no longer alive. He ceases to live ... in Salerno where he had lived for several years and which he had illustrated with works of his uncommon talent. ... All of his works reveal with how much love and industriousness he worked for his second homeland.

From these words it is possible to detect the esteem of his fellow citizens, an appreciation that today consolidates with new references. Together with others, Staibano is a monument for Maiori and beyond: his memory is a fundamental element of identity and it is an important instrument of recognition for all the inhabitants of this context. In this way they, directly or indirectly, recognize in his legacies past glimpses of current urban spaces and perhaps historical information about their family.

Obviously, the unconscious assonance between the scholar and the coastal city also develops in the new generations of students. An iconographic suggestion consolidates the relationship of young people with the scholar since childhood: at the middle school in Maiori, there is a portrait of Staibano proudly holding a copy of *Guida*

*al Duomo di Salerno: composta ad uso dei viaggiatori* in his right hand. It is one of his late publications, probably the most famous. The author's name is mainly linked to this title. The popularity of this work even reached the interest of the sovereign Vittorio Emanuele II; a copy belonging to him and dating back to the same year of disclosure, is now kept at the Royal Library of Turin. It was printed by the National printing house in 1871 and, in the contemporary age, it has been a model for all the authors who dealt with the subject (Speranza, 2018).

Furthermore, the descriptive effectiveness and the archaeological attention to details led many tourists to visit the city, all eager to admire the sacred building described in these pages. It was a particular event for Salerno, a city that has never been able to count on tourism as a primary source of livelihood.

Among his publications, there are many other writings, both of historical-archaeological<sup>3</sup> and economic interest. In particular, there are many articles published in newspapers and magazines such as *Il Picentino*, *la Gazzetta delle campagne*, *Economia Rurale*, *il Raccoglitore* and *l'Orticolto* (Moscati, 1933, p. 6).

### *1. Is Staibano a failed historian? the case of the Raccolta di memorie storiche*

It is evident that his works do not end in extracts and small dissertations but that the soul of the author must be sought in that project full of attention, study and complexity of content entitled *Raccolta di memorie storiche per Maiori, città di Principato di Citra*.

This is a complete and finished paper which has never been published. Today it is found as a manuscript at the Library of the Neapolitan Society of Homeland History. Vitagliano's 1985 research explains the editorial history of this work and makes us understand the reasons for the inglorious shadow related to the Staibano case.

It is important to note that the notary Filippo Cerasuoli, an important point of reference in the intellectual panorama, was at the

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<sup>3</sup> Just remember the *Salerno epigrafica* or the *Catalogo degli uomini illustri della provincia di Salerno*.

same time in the same area. They both needed access to registers, deeds and testamentary documents to reconstruct the past with accuracy and rigor. The common goal soon generated a conflictual relationship that produced a closed and uncooperative environment. Not surprisingly, Vitagliano (1985, p. 111) speaks of Cerasuoli as an “a fierce collector of papers and news of historical interest”.

In fact, in order to be the bearer of unpublished news, he made it difficult for Staibano to access the archives which instead he easily reached both for his profession and for the fame he achieved. Staibano mainly consulted documents related to the forensic activity carried out by his family over the years and to the consultation of historical and geographical treaties.

Then, in 1853, thanks to Avallone's typography, he published the *Indice alfabetico di tutto ciò che sarà esposto da L. Staibano nella Raccolta delle memorie storiche di Maiori*, in which he illustrated all the topics that would be treated in the *Raccolta*.

It was a clearly advertising and wisely designed action, with the aim of directing the attention of the public towards the imminent publication of the text. Staibano in this way was able to interact with his readers during the construction process of the work: on the one hand he asked them for confirmation regarding the accuracy of the historical investigations, on the other he tried to make them protagonists and to direct them at the time of sale. Naturally, having been deprived of the possibility of collating his sources with others, he was worried about the accuracy of the study. Not surprisingly, Staibano never talks about the *Storia di Maiori* or *Scrutazioni storiche* but, always, about *Raccolta di memorie*, as if it were a set of unpretentious information (Vitagliano, 1985, p. 118).

When the *Indice* came out, Cerasuoli rejected the future collection in its entirety, defining it as inaccurate and full of serious historical errors. In the *Scrutazioni* (Cerasuoli, 1865), there is no trace of the previous Staibano's publication.

Staibano was so mortified that he gave up on continuing with the work arrangement. In his correspondence he explains why he abandoned his job. Staibano claims to be tired and tried by excessive forensic and family commitments, so much so that he interrupted the edition of his text which, with evident regret, he defines “strenuous papers” (Vitagliano, 1985, p. 120) or, in italian, *sudate carte*.

The abandonment of the project earned him the label of "failed historian" (Vitagliano, 1985), not only because such a publication could have consecrated him as a full-fledged scholar, but also because, not working on the correction of these drafts, he could not review errors and oversights

Vitagliano reproaches the author for the absence of unpublished or original sources, capable of explaining "exaggerated" and "improbable" facts (Vitagliano, 1985, p. 118). In addition, it highlights, by way of example, an "attribution error" (Vitagliano, 1985, p. 119) related to the list of people in charge of the *Collegiata di Maiori*, which appears in the third chapter of the *Raccolta*<sup>4</sup>. However, some arguments that differ from those made by parallel authors emerge. This is the case of the disquisition regarding the denomination of the *Casale delle Paje* located in Maiori<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Staibano places the cardinal S. Giorgio after D. Guido de Bonaventura (1505 - 1508) and D. Giliberto Senile (1508 - 1510) claiming that, later, the provostship was ruled from 1510 to 1512 by a vicar: D. Pietro Mariotti di Urbino. Vitagliano brings up the *Series Praepositorum a fundatione*, kept at *Archivio Capitolare della Collegiata*, with whose attestation the notary Filippo Cerasuoli also agrees in his *Scrutazioni storico - archeologiche*. Here it is stated that the succession of provost was: 1505 G. Bonaventura, 1508 G. Senile, 1510 C. Cumbalo, 1537 P. H. Miracapilli. In fact, Cardinal S. Giorgio held the role of commendatory and not of provost at the Rectorate of the church of Santa Maria a Mare in Maiori and in 1505, he requested and obtained from Pope Julius II, his uncle, that the Rectorate be elevated to Collegiate "with a chapter made up of sixteen priests ... and chaired by a Superior, awarded episcopal attributes." (Vitagliano, 1985, p. 120).

<sup>5</sup> Together with the *Cronica* of 1836 quoting the lost text by Marcantonio Oliva, Staibano states that the Casale dei Pappasogna subsequently changed its name due to the Calabrese sailor Antonio Paia, who settled there with his family. In the *Scrutazioni storiche*, on the other hand, Cerasuoli moves away from this reading by stating that the Casale would have taken its name from a local Etruscan divinity called Pale, since the family who lived there was exclusively that of the Pappasogna. Camera helps refute this thesis by showing that "in 1485, there were some individuals in the Casale with the surname Paia and not Pappasogna" (Camera, 1881, p. 504).

## 2. *The scholar and his time. The 19th century between romanticism and national unity*

It would seem that Staibano is a "failed historian" also because he was completely absent from the history of his time. The scholar was born in 1822 and died in 1877. This biographical detail contains in itself an important chronological parenthesis for the entire history of Italy. The achievement of national unity dates back to 1861, but it is known that historical processes require a certain period of gestation. The Mazzinian and Garibaldi spirit, which inspired students, scholars and men of culture, began to expand in the 1830s.

With different priorities, everyone concentrated first on the fight against foreigners, then on the realization of the new Kingdom of Italy. In Southern Italy this was a much more complex process and it produced a division between the unitarians and the loyalists to the throne of Naples, including many notables, who, in order to protect their interests, would have accepted the collapse of the Bourbon kingdom only with the replacement of the crown (Pinto, 2019). At that time Staibano had a correspondence with Demetrio Salazar, known as a patriot painter. Today the letters sent by Staibano to Salazar are kept in Naples by the *Biblioteca della Società Napoletana di Storia Patria*. He was a figure who operated, like Staibano, right in the heart of the unitarian conflict: the Kingdom of the two Sicilies.

Despite this, he does not pronounce himself on the issue and he does not take sides for any front. It is assumed that his consent was given in a minimally invasive and extremely confidential manner, with the only purpose of ensuring his own peace of mind. Surely the adjective "silent" does not go well with the myth of the Risorgimento made up of colors, music, hymns and flags. What is astonishing is the fact that a man not far from the forum, not far from politics and culture has remained inert in such a delicate and overwhelming moment. Furthermore, the micro-historical research efforts of his work are carried out in a strictly localized perspective that does not help to explain the reasons and causes that led to the institutional upheaval of the unitary age. In the work, everything is born and dies within certain geographical boundaries and cannot be diverted into a more complex analysis of the present.

After all, the celebration of that romantic feeling of connection between land and people that pushes the authors to engage in proud patriotic writings is also fully nineteenth-century. With the Risorgimento uprisings there is the practical implementation of a fermented process in the reflections of the intellectual world. It is clear that, before being realized, the great historical upheavals also pass through the letters. Just think of what happens with the Protestant Reformation conveyed by Luther, the outbreak of the French Revolution supported by the productions of the Enlightenment or the massive propaganda carried out regarding the National Socialist theories of the twentieth century.

Literary romanticism is based on the famous *Sturm und drang*: in this era at the center there is no longer the ratio, but the instinct. In fact, the protagonists of this current are always driven by totalizing and overwhelming feelings. In his small way, Staibano shows himself sensitive to these attitudes and inextricably linked to his roots. This earth - man relationship is nourished by πάθος: it is deep, unconditional, visceral, so that the polygraph concentrates all its resources on it<sup>6</sup>. We can even hypothesize some sort of parallelism between his writings and therapeutic writing.

In this case, the practice would not eliminate a doubt, a fear or a memory that generates anxiety or sadness, but it could relieve the soul of the author from those pervasive sensations of enthusiasm and passion that can weigh on the heart and mind as much as their opposites. However, first of all, we must remember that Staibano is a man of the law and, as such, hardly conditioned by the irrational.

Therefore, his ardor is more staid and celebrates his origins in a delicate process that brings his fellow citizens together, embracing

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<sup>6</sup> The scholar celebrated this intense feeling by consecrating every line of his to Maiori, the coast and the city of Salerno and it is a clear and unequivocal fact not only about the entire printed production, but also for all that manuscript: *Memorie storiche per Maiori* volume I and II, *Appendice I° alla Raccolta di Memorie storiche di Maiori*, *Saggio per servire la storia di Maiori* volume I and II, *Famiglie di Maiori*, an unfinished text focused on the main lineages of the place, *Notizie e fatti notabili di Maiori*, *Dissertazione Storico- Archeologica- Critica sulla fondazione di Santa Maria dell'Olearia*, *Lettera a Demetrio Salazaro*, *Memorie sulla nobiltà salernitana*, *Memorie storiche dei comuni di Giffoni Vallepiiana, Seicasali e di Cava dei Tirreni*.

them in a single body as a single and proud identity. At this point, it is clear that the Staibano case has a certain complexity.

### 3. *An unsolved problem*

The animated discussion involving him in the possible authorship of the *Cronica di Maiori* of 1836, considered as a sort of draft for the subsequent *Raccolta di memorie*, is still an open parenthesis.

Once again, the protagonists of this dispute are Vitagliano and Taiani who, in 2002, dealt with the critical edition of the unpublished text and who was the first to hypothesize the link between the work and the author. According to Taiani, the writer certainly comes from Maiori, as he shows a detailed and, in some cases, direct knowledge of the people, topography and events of the place. Furthermore, the handwriting of the anonymous is “is very similar to that of Staibano and it presents the same guide lines and style in the exposition of facts and events” (Taiani, 2002, p. 17). Therefore, although he was only fourteen at the time, it is possible that he was the boy exhorted in the poem found in the last pages of the *Cronica*.

Among these verses, written by a third hand, Taiani finds an explicit invitation, addressed to the author of the text, to “claim the wrongs suffered by the homeland Maiori due to hypothetical rascals” (Taiani, 2002, p. 18)<sup>7</sup>.

Despite the suggestion of this hypothesis, Vitagliano underlines his skepticism regarding the fact that a young man of such tender age, almost inexperienced in the field, could conduct such meticulous research work. Furthermore, it is possible that the drafting began even before 1836 as it is a very complex piece of writing. However, there is no evidence confirming one or the other position. Therefore, we approach this fascinating unsolved question with caution.

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<sup>7</sup> There is reason to believe that the name was addressed to the historian Matteo Camera who, in 1836, published a work that was not very flattering towards the city.



*4. Social and cultural roots behind Staibano: genealogy and heraldry of the Staibano family. Latest acquisitions.*

In *Memorie genealogiche delle famiglie di Maiori*, Taiani also reconstructed the lineage of the Maiori branch of the Staibano family. Research shows that this branch would have originated from the marriage between Andrea Staibano and Diana de Ponte (Taiani, 2020, p. 607).

By comparing the genealogical tree in question with the descendants illustrated by Staibano himself in the *Raccolta*<sup>8</sup>, it was possible to go back a few steps in the lineage of the family. Unfortunately, within the volume, the family tree outlined by Staibano was lost due to the removal of some papers<sup>9</sup>.

Moreover, the pages of the manuscript dedicated to this topic cannot be defined as exhaustive and complete: trees often have deletions and corrections. In fact, although the schematization of the de Ponte family, "line of the Duke of Casamassima"<sup>10</sup> (Staibano, 1853, p. 152) is quite detailed, there are also lineages without an actual progenitor. However, at the bottom of the page, we can see a removed area of the text in which the names of Diana and Andrea appear.

The small tree is evidently part of an independent corpus that does not have any ancestry with the other lines. In particular, the most evident names refer to 1400 and are those of Pietro and Bencivegno de Ponte. The third of Pietro de Ponte's four children, Giacomo, married Giacoma Miracapilli from Maiori. The first son of this union, Matteo, in 1522 will be the first of the lineage to unite his branch with that of the Staibano, marrying Laura. From this

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<sup>8</sup> The first volume of the unpublished *Raccolta di memorie storiche* on the city of Maiori dedicates 59 pages to the genealogical trees of the noblest families of Maiori. In order of appearance : d'Aruca, Aurisicchio, Camaldolese, Amato, di Bianco, Bombace, Buonocore, Campanile, Citarella, Cinnamo, Cumbalo, Confalone, Cava, Crispo, Crisconio, Farina, Ferraro, Ferrigno, de Grado, Imperato, Lanario, Lantaro, Landola, de Maio, Mandina, Mezzacapo, Mostacciolo, Oliva, Miracapilli, De Ponte, Russo, de Riso, Scafogliero, Venosi, Volpicella, De Fiume, Pisanello, Ferraioli and Pisacano.

<sup>9</sup> From paper 156 dedicated to Scafogliero family we go directly to paper 167 with Venosi family.

<sup>10</sup> He claims that also exist "different lines known as D'aponte or Deponte".

marriage Diana de Ponte, wife of Andrea Staibano, will be born in 1565. Hence the long lineage that reached Luigi Staibano, who, in 1860, joined Cristina Casalbore<sup>11</sup> and, after just one year, gave birth to her first son, Ernesto, who was followed by Paolo after ten years (Taiani, 2020, p. 607).

A heraldic study on the coat of arms of the family would allow us to better understand the mentality and common values in force in this family context.

In this way it is possible to “bring to light the origins of a family, of a municipal or religious body” analyzing symbols, because men have an “inherent need ... to communicate exploiting the visual element, arousing passions and symptoms of belonging” (Ciarletta, 2020, p. 51).

Often, even the social position and faith of a certain character can be derived from the blazon study. Reflecting on heraldry, Bascapè even goes back to the ancient banners connected to the Israelite tribes (Bescapè et al., 1999, p. 10). This shows that there is an ancient human need to reveal their affiliation to a specific human group, which can be ethnic or social: an instrument of recognition, a guarantee of brotherhood.

This discourse is easily updated: just think of the ancient tattoo culture which, having changed in value and meaning, can now be found on the bodies of millions of people.

In these symbolic representations, each sign and each color has its own precise explanation and tells, to the observer, of the link between its bearer and an intimate past experience, of the subjection of the same to a dream or a future ideal, as if it was a haunting thought or, again, the declared and reciprocal ownership of two people. The symbolic element continues to be part of everyday life and to fascinate the new generations, incorporating them into a very ancient mechanism.

In his *Memorie genealogiche*, speaking of Amalfi heraldry, Taiani shows that, with a certain frequency, it is possible to encounter many noble weapons attributable to the same lineage.

These variables also involve the Staibano. Among the sources that mention their coat of arms we can find the description

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<sup>11</sup> *Atti di matrimonio*, 1860, in AC SA, prot. 100.

produced by Giovan Battista Crollanza (1888, pp. 559-560) in the *Dizionario storico blasonico delle famiglie nobili e notabili italiane estinte e fiorenti*. In the second volume of the work, the genealogist describes it: “Silver, with the blue band, embellished with three gold stars, accompanied by three red roses, two in the head and one in the tip”. This version is also found “on a pillar of the Staibano noble chapel, dedicated to the Deposition of Jesus” (Taiani, 2020, p. 651) placed in Maiori. Instead, it is “Di azzurro, con la fascia d’oro, impreziosito da tre stelle d’azzurro ed accompagnata da tre rose di rosso con gambi e foglie verdi, due in capo, una in punta” (Taiani, 2020, p. 655) in the version of an eighteenth manuscript, *Notizie, ed Armi Gentilizie delle Famiglie nobili del Ducato Amalfitano cogli stemmi dé suoi particolari Comuni* (Taiani, 2019, p. 84).

Finally, a third further possibility of interpretation is the Italian shield “carved in marble on an ancient baptismal font, in the parish church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Maiori” (Taiani, 2020, p. 651). The elements are the same but they are differently arranged: there are three roses and three stars, two in the head and one in the tip. These are three similar interpretations; the substantial difference, in truth, concerns the colors. The second description, in photographic terms, seems to be the negative of the first: the silver of the background darkens into blue, the stars and the band exchange their tones with each other; not to mention the presence of green in the foliage and stems, completely absent in the first coat of arms. In general, the coat of arms uses a palette with precise symbolic values: silver, blue, gold and red dominate the shield<sup>12</sup>.

Between the 12th and 14th centuries a.C., white was associated with the Guelph party with logical consequences of meaning. Among the Staibano there were many men of the Church and people loyal to religion. Therefore, silver would represent a public manifestation of secular loyalty to the Church of Rome. Furthermore, it is a color that recalls spiritual virtues close to the historical attitudes of the family: truth, justice, temperance and clemency. According to this, the blue band<sup>13</sup>: in heraldry, it relates directly to the sky and is associated

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<sup>12</sup> Gold and silver are the two heraldic metals par excellence, usually reproduced by the two corresponding colors: yellow and white.

<sup>13</sup> For band we indicate a horizontal strip about 2 modules high (2/7 of the width) which in heraldry has a predetermined and invariable position on the shield. They are

with the highest spiritual virtues. It is a color that speaks of devotion, fidelity and nobility. Not surprisingly, it also represents the Guelph side (Taiani, 2020, p. 641). The three gold stars refer, in shape and color, to ambitions, sublime actions and the achievement of higher things<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore it could represent the wish for a bright future for the descendants of the family. The star is also among the major Christian symbols and it often appears in ecclesiastical heraldry. Roses are a well-known symbol of beauty, but also of nobility, honor and merit. Their heraldic depiction uses red or white<sup>15</sup>. The choice of purple would reproduce the blood of Christ's wounds, shed to save humanity, as a manifest of love for God and for the other people.

Together with the hexagram and the pentagon, the triangle is among the favorite symbols to highlight the relationship with the divinity. The triangular figure does not appear explicitly on the shield, but it is given by the arrangement of the elements on it and by the number of times each image appears. The three roses or the three stars, two at the top and one at the tip, build this geometry by reproducing its angles. In conclusion, the coat of arms that emerges seems almost a warning not to forget, over the centuries, the priorities, morals and tradition of this family; values which then find interpretation in an educational line of rigor, discipline and observance. It is a manifesto of faith and identity that has lasted for generations.

## *Conclusions*

Staibano himself regulated his life on those parameters, common to a specific social class to which his family belonged: the local upper middle class.

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figures formed by dividing lines and, by way of example, we can point out the pole, the fascia, the band, the bar, the cross, the decusse, the pergola, the echelon, the head (Manno, 1907, p. 29).

<sup>14</sup> Gold is part of the two heraldic metals and it spiritually symbolizes faith, clemency, temperance, charity and justice as well as splendor, joy and sovereignty.

<sup>15</sup> Other symbolic values related to red are: generosity, greatness, nobility, audacity and valor.

In this community, as a privileged subject, he was able to develop a course of classical studies aimed at the forensic career, very dear to the tradition of the family. In fact, Moscati remembers the Staibano as “illustrious men in science, in arms, in robes, in church dignitaries, in letters and philanthropic” (Moscati, 1933, p. 376). Staibano graduated at the age of twenty-five from the Federico II of Naples, in December 1851 he was already a conciliator in Maiori and in October 1852 he was promoted to alternate judge in Salerno<sup>16</sup>. Well inserted in this social environment, he forged relationships with various personalities of his time linked to the world of culture, such as: Matteo Camera, Pecori, Trara Genoino, the aforementioned Salazar and Linguiti.

His texts prove to be a treasure chest of further information useful for the reconstruction of the Staibano mosaic. The illustrative additions tell us about a certain inclination for art and drawing. His hand uses ink and graphite to give depth and three-dimensionality to the figures. However, these sketches cannot be defined as valuable works: he mostly reproduces monuments and inanimate objects, all useful to give feedback to his words, so none of them have an effective artistic value.

Moreover, between the lines of his works there are interesting signs on the mentality of the time. Just think of what happens with family trees, all of which share a fundamental element: the indication of social status at the top left of the page. These are adjectives or nouns such as: nobles, landowners, gentlemen etc. that identify a group in which the members act protected and comforted by their own social etiquette. This expresses the characteristics and needs of an era in constant fluctuation between the directives of the Ancien régime and the affirmation of new social classes that emerged from the industrial upheavals of the nineteenth century.

In accordance with this logic, Staibano reconstructs the noble lineages that contributed to the greatness of the city, projecting the elite memory of a certain number of lineages into the future.

The popular whispers, handed down from generation to generation and appearing in the pages of the *Raccolta*, are a further

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<sup>16</sup> To confirm this, a printed text by Staibano with collocation DIV.SAL.I.3.97. is preserved in the Provincial Library of Salerno (Staibano, 1852).

opportunity for reflection. This is bizarre news from a purely historical point of view. However, in anthropological terms, they provide an interesting and detailed overview of the area. For example, there are the foundation chronicles of the eleven churches in the Maiori area, collected in the third chapter of the first manuscript.

It is not possible to prove the truthfulness of the facts, but the multiplicity of popular narratives is undoubtedly fascinating. The stories concern miraculous facts and supernatural events involving churches, statues and sacred objects and they provide a privileged point of view on a society that sinks its pillars in the humblest world, the one populated by farmers and fishermen. Each of them has a fundamental role in economic growth, traditions, uses and customs. Such miraculous events are inevitably linked to the historical needs of these people, continually seeking divine protection for their own difficulties. Dealing with entire fishing seasons, away from home, means starting from a safe harbor without being sure of returning. Therefore, it was a great comfort for all of them to know that they could count on the watchful, benevolent and merciful eye of the Virgin Mother who watched them lovingly from the Church of Santa Maria a Mare, whose facade was wisely turned towards the sea.

In conclusion, considering the critical points of Staibano's work and reflecting on his figure and the content of his writings, it is still possible to appreciate some elements of great value. In fact, his texts often become descriptive caskets of peculiar elements of the reference context. The value of Staibano is therefore linked to the collection of fascinating traces on the taste and needs of the men of this area, caught in a specific historical period, influenced by the legacy of the previous ones.

All this restores dignity to his profile. With his works we can reach a higher level of understanding by opening windows with a different perspective on the facts, useful for any type of investigation.

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