

## 1. Lazarets



### **‘Lazarets never aimed to stop circulations’**

The history of lazarets lies at the crossroads between the history of circulations and that of pandemics. Initially built to isolate and treat plague patients, they were then closely associated with the economic development of the early modern European states, and ensured the development of safe circulation in the Mediterranean and Central Europe. Here, through the example of the lazaret of Trieste, we can also understand that a lazaret was a micropolis, and the social and cultural importance of such micropolis for the city, the history, and the memory of Trieste. This history is also that of an empire, of its governance and of the many actors operating at the local, regional and global levels, despite an ever-present pandemic risk.

Lazarets generally appear very marginally in the work of circulation historians. They are evoked almost as blind spots where nothing happened and where time was suspended. It is a functional history in which we recognize their strategic importance in limiting plague epidemics and in maintaining trans-continental trade but, as a place, lazaret seems to remain closed to the historian as well. One of the reasons for this is that historians of circulations elude lazarets, as if they were a place of pause, a necessary timeout in a long journey. A technical reason should be added to this intellectual obstacle. The archives of the lazarets have been not always well-preserved, and making the history of these lazarets requires an empirical approach.

The archives of the Trieste *Intendenza Commerciale*, recorded in Trieste—at the *Archivio di Stato di Trieste*—and in Vienna—at the *Österreichisches Staatsarchiv*—, may at first appear

disappointing. Above all, they evoke the regulations of the S. Carlo and S. Teresa lazarets. The construction of the latter (called *lazzaretto sporco*) also gives access to a series of surveys carried out in various Mediterranean ports, notably Marseille, Livorno and Genoa, in order to optimize the new Trieste facilities. The lazaret was perceived by the Habsburg administration for its economic interest. Other archives document its sanitary function. However, the health administration of the lazaret in Trieste had a police function as it was primarily involved in the identification of individuals seeking to enter the monarchy. It produced statistical knowledge, state-related knowledge, through which the Viennese administration informed itself, and from which it speculated and projected its economic policies.

Other sources must be used to gain access to the urban and cultural dimension of the lazaret and to grasp the extent to which it was able to play a major role in urban development. Some authors of the early nineteenth century recall the importance of the inauguration of the *Lazzaretto sporco* in 1769. In 1817, Giuseppe Maria Mainati wrote:

Already in 1720 Charles VI had the Lazaretto of the same name built in Trieste; but since it did not have a special and safe facilities for the ships with *Patente sporca*, and a long quarantine, Maria Theresa ordered a second one, which was completed and opened this year 1769, and was named Lazaretto S. Teresa. Magnificent festivities were held on this occasion, with expensive meals, parties, fireworks, and general lighting. On the same day, by a fortunate and happy combination, ships arrived from Smyrna – the first from that famous place – on commission of Panagiotti Gligoracchi, loaded with cotton and fruit, which entered the new lazaret to be quarantined, and those ships served to increase the common joy and happiness in such festive circumstances. In memory of this event two medals were coined, one large size (...) and one small size (...). The port of this lazaret is beautiful, has an adapted bottom, and is equipped with two mouths: ships subject to default enter and leave through the major one, which is watched by a military guard corps, and is closed by a chain; the secondary mouth only serves the boats and launches carrying the health officers as well as the lazaret authorities. The whole lazaret is very large, there are quarters for people in quarantine and passengers, storerooms for storing goods, squares and dry canopies for hanging out the sails. The house in the center is dedicated to S. Teresa. All this extensive building is surrounded by a 4-*Klafter* high wall; and at the front door there is a post of mounted guards. The direction of the lazaret is subject to all the subordinate staff, there are four guards, and the necessary porters. A chaplain was employed for the care of the soul and for the celebration of the saintly sacrifices. Antonio Guadagnini, a patrician from Trieste, was the first prior of this lazaret, who then decently held the position of legal, criminal, and prosecutor advisor. The General Regulations published in 1755 for all health care offices, and lazarets are normally used by employees and quarantined people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Già fin dell'anno 1720 Carlo sesto fece erigere il Lazzaretto dello stesso suo nome in Trieste; ma non avendo il medesimo un apposito e sicuro ricettacolo pei bastimenti di Patente sporca, e di lunga contumacia, perciò Maria Teresa ne ordinò un secondo, il quale terminossi, e si aprì quest'anno 1769, sotto il titolo di lazaretto di s. Teresa. Furono fatte in tale occasione delle magnifiche feste con dispendiose cuccagne, festini, fuochi artificiali, e generali illuminazioni. Nello stesso giorno per fortunata e giovale combinazione arrivò un bastimento da Smirne il primo di quella rinomatissima*

Mainati still used the lazaret in his narrative of the history of the Trieste Greek trading community. He made it almost the element of an initiatory journey through which one became a citizen of the city. As for the governor of Trieste, Karl von Zinzendorf, he mentioned in his diary and on several occasions the special care he gave to the city's most influential merchants or to their families when they had to stay in the lazaret. Attention was paid to their comfort, to protecting their merchandises, and to showing decency when the women's bodies had to be examined.

The lazarets were finally mapped and drawn like the view of Trieste proposed by Louis François Cassas in 1802, sketched from the lazaret pier where the rich merchants arrived and where they deposited their wares, with the prosperous city developing in the background. Despite its apparent marginality, the lazaret was at the core of society and empire.

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*piazza per conti di Panagiotti Gligoracchi, carico di cotone, e frutta, quale entrò nel nuovo Lazzaretto per farne la quarantena, e servì ad accrescere la comune gioja ed allegrezza in sì festiva circostanza. In memoria di quest'apertura furono coniate due medaglie una di modulo grande (...), l'altra di modulo piccolo (...). Il porto di questo lazaretto è bello, ha un fondo adattato, ed è munito di due bocche, per la maggiore, che è provvista di un corpo di guardia militare, entrano ed escono i bastimenti soggetti a contumacia, ed egli è chiuso mediante una catena; la minor bocca serve soltanto ai battelli e lancia, che conducono gli officianti della sanità e dello stesso lazaretto. Tutto il lazaretto è molto vasto, vi sono dei quartieri per contumacianti e passeggeri, dei magazzini per riporre le merci, delle piazze et tettoje asciutte per lo sciorino. L'abitazione nel centro è dedicata a s. Teresa. Tutto questo esteso fabbricato viene circondato da un muro alto 4 Klafter; ed al portone d'ingresso vi si trova uno stabile corpo di guardia. La direzione del lazaretto è soggetto tutto il personale subalterno, vi sono quattro guardini, ed i necessarij facchini. Per la cura delle amine e per celebrare i santi sagrificj trovasi impiegato uno stabile cappellano. Antonio Guadagnini patrizio Triestino fu il primo priore di questo lazaretto, il quale poi decorosamente sostenne la carica di consigliere giudiziale, criminale, e magistratuale. Il Regolamento generale pubblicato nel 1755 per tutti gli officj di sanità, e lazaretti serve di norma agl'impiegati e contumacianti.'*