





## INTRODUCTION BY THE MUNICIPALITY OF FORLÌ

The Smart Heritage project, financed by the ADRION Program, gave to the Municipality of Forlì the possibility of creating a tourist-cultural product focused on a famous personality. Forlì has a close connection with Caterina Sforza, Lady of Forlì of the 15th century, and for that she was selected by Forlì as the key figure of the project. Moreover she is a familiar figure for the citizens of Forlì for the indelible, tangible and intangible marks she left.

Caterina Sforza was a woman of passion and power, a lover of fine arts and customs, a court policies and its equilibrium's forerunner, she is also the character on which the Municipality of Forlì has decided to spend the relaunch of the city as city of culture, enhancing this historical and mysterious figure.

Along with Smart Heritage activities, Forlì organised a series of initiatives as part of this framework: first of all it is important to underline the Festival of Caterina, now in its second edition, which, starting from this emblematic figure, offers leisure times and fun thanks to its wealth of events, workshops, presentations and artistic representations, scattered in the most evocative places of the historic center, but also an opportunity to make the lively Forlì community - above all the younger public - think on the most burning themes of the contemporary age, such as the value of freedom, an inalienable and essential right of man, the role of women, using the art and culture channel. No less important is the restoration of the Rocca di Caterina, which will soon be returned to the citizens with new cultural functions and finally, thanks to the Smart Heritage project and the digitization of the heritage connected with the lady Caterina, the creation of the virtual tourist-cultural route dedicated to it. This route will lead the tourist to walk on the streets of the city of the Tiger of Forlì and to breathe the atmosphere of intrigue and splendor, alchemy and fine arts of that time.

Here, therefore, that's the results of the Smart Heritage project, which are woven into the network created by them called "The faces of Europe". This undoubtedly represents for the city of Forlì a strong driving force for growth and development at a tourist and cultural level. It is also an extraordinary added value that together with for the efforts of the city, will make Forlì an attractive, innovative and dynamic "European" place.

**Valerio Melandri**

City Councillor - Municipality of Forlì

## WHO WAS CATERINA SFORZA, THE LIONESSE OF ROMAGNA

«Listen to this disconsolate Caterina da Forlivo, abandoned, who faces a great war on the border without any help. I do not see any man who mounts armed on horse and then shows his strength to defend my state, the whole world is frightened when they hear Franza shouting and Italy's might seems to have sunk. Ah! Italians are scared, I will come myself armed! I want to lose in the battle and die with honour... and before I go wasted with my children for the world and with shame I go to the bottom, first I want to be torn apart! Listen to this disconsolate Catherina from Forlivo .. »

**[Marsilio Copagnon - ballad of 16th century]**

Caterina Sforza, "the first woman of Italy", has deep roots in the people's memory and remains a common and shared heritage for all of Romagna.

In Forlì all the streets near the fortress, still popularly known today as the "Rocca di Caterina Sforza", are named after the historical characters related to Caterina.

The traditional annual fair of Santa Caterina on 25 November, has historical origins in the homage of the city of Forlì to its lady, benefactress of the monastery of San Girolamo, which stood in the area where the festival is still held today.

"E' smari 'd Catarnòn" is still a famous expression that Forlì people use to describe when someone pretends to be fake dumb.

This dialect expression derives from the usual practice made by Sforza of sending their men on a spy mission.

These men pretended to be foreigners and therefore did not understand the language at all or even pretended to be mentally retarded.

Their purpose was to gather opinions about the city government or information about some conspiracy.

The countess could be therefore constantly informed on the mood of the people and make decisions, intervening at the moment and in the most appropriate ways.

As the chroniclers reported, Caterina Sforza surpassed any other woman in fame and charm at that time.

He was tall, with a bursting chest, large eyes and an imposing nose, slightly hooked, typical of the Romagna, and also of the Sforza, whose origins came from the commander Muzio Attandolo of Cotignola.

She had wavy hair, usually tied behind her head.

We do not know if she was really blonde and pale in complexion or if she aspired to be it, by using creams and remedies that she personally prepared and that she handed down to us in a precious volume entitled *Experimenti de la Ecc.ma Signora Caterina da Furlj*, a collection of recipes of cosmetics, medicine and alchemy that she herself passionately collected, which will be deepened in the final section.

*«Caterina is one of the most beautiful women of our century, elegant in appearance and endowed with admirable shapes»*

**[Giacomo Felice Foresti da Bergamo]**





Caterina was a woman who anticipated the times and who still today would run the risk of not being fully understood in her modernity.

She was authoritarian, terrible, vengeful and merciless with traitors and enemies, quick in reasoning and sincere in speech, a wise ruler, educated but not academic, always eager to learn and curious to discover the secrets of nature, of the human being and the world.

She lived beyond the good and the bad, and should not be judged today for her anger or her brutal revenge, as a daughter of her times and because in fact she always moved with guile, wisdom and balance.

She really enjoyed her life, passing from the splendour of the Renaissance courts to the darkness of the papal prison, from the battlefields to the botanical gardens.

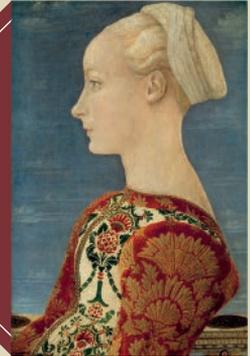
She knew how to combine and balance the creative feminine aspect of motherhood with the destructive masculine aspect of fighting and war.

Caterina was born in Milan or Pavia between 1462 and 1463, illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Lucrezia Landriani, noblewoman of the court and wife of Gian Piero Landriani.

Galeazzo  
Maria  
Sforza



Lucrezia  
Landriani



Being the illegitimate daughter, as a custom of the time, she was recognized and admitted to the Sforza family, where she was raised and educated by her grandmother, Bianca Maria Visconti, who introduced her to the figure of her ancestor Muzio Attandolo Sforza, a great leader.

Caterina became passionate about the "craft of arms" and horse riding.

Together with her brothers, she was educated at the refined Sforza court where she had the opportunity to receive a humanistic education, in an environment frequented by artists and writers of high cultural openness.

She also studied the herbal medicine, pharmacy and alchemical art, as it was customary to educate these subjects to young women of her social class.

Catherine was about 10 years old when she had been given in marriage to Girolamo Riario, nephew of Pope Sixtus IV, who was 30 years old.



The wedding took place in Milan on January 17, 1473.

A week later Girolamo Riario went to Rome, committing himself to return to take the young bride with him at the age of fourteen.

Four years later, it was Catherine who joined her husband, who was in the service of his uncle the pontiff.

In the Eternal City she found a particularly lively cultural environment and, thanks to the education received and her amiable and casual ways of doing things, she actively participated in the aristocratic life of the papal court, where musicians, poets, philosophers and artists flocked from all over Europe.

Thanks to these skills, she quickly won the trust of Sixtus IV and became an authoritative intermediary between the Roman court and the Milan court of origin.

Meanwhile Girolamo, already lord of Imola since 1473, in 1480, after the death of Pino III Ordelaffi, also became lord of Forlì.

With this new appointment of his nephew, Sixtus IV ensured the papal control over an area of great strategic commercial importance, represented at that time by the Via Emilia, which cuts across the city of Forlì.



## THE TIME WHEN CATHERINE KEPT THE PAPACY IN CHECK FOR TWELVE DAYS

### ROME, AUGUST 1484

In the night between August 12 and 13 Pope Sixtus IV died.

Following the news of the Pope's death, the streets of Rome were invaded by riots and terror from those who had suffered injustices during his pontificate. The Riario palace itself, the residence of Caterina and her husband Girolamo, was almost destroyed, while the Riario Sforza were engaged in the siege of Paliano at the behest of the pope.

On the evening of August 14, Caterina, twenty years old and pregnant with her fourth child, learned the news of the pontiff's death, and rode to Castel Sant'Angelo occupying it in the name of her husband. She took command of the fortress, she arranged to fortify the entrances and to turn the cannons against the Vatican. All the attempts to persuade her to leave the castle were in vain, her control in fact guaranteed the control of the city itself and therefore the possibility of putting pressure to the College to elect a pope well disposed towards the Riario.

The solution came when the Sacred College proposed to Girolamo Riario to abandon Rome in exchange for 8000 ducats, compensation for the damage suffered to his properties and the confirmation of his dominion over the cities of Imola and Forlì, as well as the position of captain general of the Church. Girolamo accepted the offer, however Catherine heard the news and responded by bringing another 150 warriors to Castel Sant'Angelo and preparing for resistance. It stimulated the pressure from the Sacred College towards Girolamo, to persuade his wife to leave the fortress and accept the compromise.

On the evening of August 25, Caterina received eight cardinals, including her uncle Ascanio Sforza, and after long negotiations she resolved to leave the fortress and follow her family to the lands of Romagna.

Thanks to the resolute action of Caterina, the Riario Sforza family retained part of the privileges, they left Rome and moved to Forlì.

In Romagna, however, Girolamo was not welcomed either by the population or by the nobles and became the object of continuous attacks against his person.

After initially abolishing many taxes, Riario was forced to reintroduce them to feed the coffers of the now empty lordship.

The circumstances worsened when Girolamo started the construction of a Monte di Pietà, which should have been financed entirely by the Forlì nobility.

This was the straw that broke the camel's back and started a further series of attacks on Girolamo.

The last of these attacks scored on the evening of April 14, 1488, that was organized by the Orsi brothers, landowners.

Girolamo was killed and thrown from the window of the Sala delle Ninfe in the Town Hall.

## THE TIME WHEN CATERINA SHOWED "THE MOLD"

**FORLÌ, 14 APRIL 1488**

On the evening of April 14, 1488, Count Riario was brutally assassinated by the Orsi and defenestrated.

While the palace was being sacked, the Rocca di Ravaldino remained firmly in the hands of Tommaso Feo, who only responded to Catherine's orders and could have bombed the city at any moment. The Orsi were thus forced to let the countess in to the Rocca to have the surrender orders signed, but on entering, the Cobelli chronicles tell, that she walked triumphantly along the drawbridge and, having reached the door, turned back "*indriè e figli quatro figs*", that means she made the gesture equivalent of showing the middle finger. The gesture was not given weight, the rioters felt calm since Caterina had left them her children as a pledge. Catherine, on the other hand, proved to be not only of noble blood, but also cold blood and once inside her, she arranged for the regaining of power regardless of threats to her children.

And here the story becomes a legend, through perhaps the most narrated anecdote dedicated to this indomitable and proud woman: in response to the threat of killing her children, Caterina climbed the ramparts of the fortress, raised her clothes and showed them the shameful parts and she screamed that they could do whatever they want with her children, because she was left with the mold to make others.

The episode is absent in the chronicles of the time, but it is confirmed by Macchiavelli in the *Speeches above the first decade*: "... to show that she did not care about her children, she showed them the genitals, saying that she still had the opportunity to remake them".

After the murder of her husband, Caterina with a stratagem managed to lock herself up with her soldiers in the Rocca di Ravaldino.

With the excuse of negotiating the surrender directly with his loyalists, who otherwise would not have given up the fortress, the symbol of the city, he asked for permission to enter, leaving his children in enemy hands, as a pledge of his good intentions.

In reality Caterina was sure that no one would ever have the courage to twist a hair to her children who were the grandchildren of Ludovico il Moro and the late Pope Sixtus IV, took advantage of the situation, and from inside the fortress began the resistance, planning the attack to regain power.

At dawn on April 30, the conspirators had to leave the city, fearing an armed intervention by Ludovico il Moro, Caterina's uncle.

She thus became lady of Forlì, being a regent on behalf of the eldest son Octavian and her other five children.

Caterina's seizure of power was accompanied by a long trail of blood and revenge.

In particular, the lady of Forlì threw herself against the Orsi and ordered to destroy to the ground the large building owned by the family. This destruction went down in history with the name of "Guasto degli Orsi".



## THE TIME WHEN CATERINA HIRED AN EXECUTIONER

**FORLÌ, MAY 1488**

In the year of the murder of Girolamo Riario, for the first time the chronicles of the time speak about Matteo da Castelbolognese, better known as Babone.

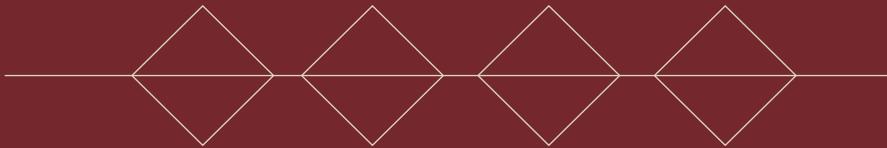
The anger for the death of husband in fact pushed the Lady of Forlì and Imola to hire a terrible executioner, the Babone, to avenge the murder of Girolamo. He killed and tortured the rioters, while the houses of the Orsi family, the inspiring nucleus of the conspiracy, were razed to the ground giving rise to a toponym that still inspires fear today: the Guasto degli Orsi.

The chronicler Leone Cobelli, in his *Cronache Forlivesi*, describes the Babone as a man of great stature and with a cruel face. Cobelli himself adds that he never saw a more frightening thing, "struck in those eyes" and "that twisted, filthy, ugly, long hair."

The chronicles continue narrating about the brutality of the work of the executioner, concluding as follows: «Reader, of course you would not believe it, but whoever called that square the bloody lake, did not lie. I tell you, that I saw it with my eyes, so much blood, so many hearts, so many pieces of flesh of those Christians, that you would be amazed ... ».

Satisfied with the revenge, Caterina began to govern with great wisdom and prudence, remaining in a defensive position and never throwing herself into military adventures that could jeopardize the rights acquired by the family.

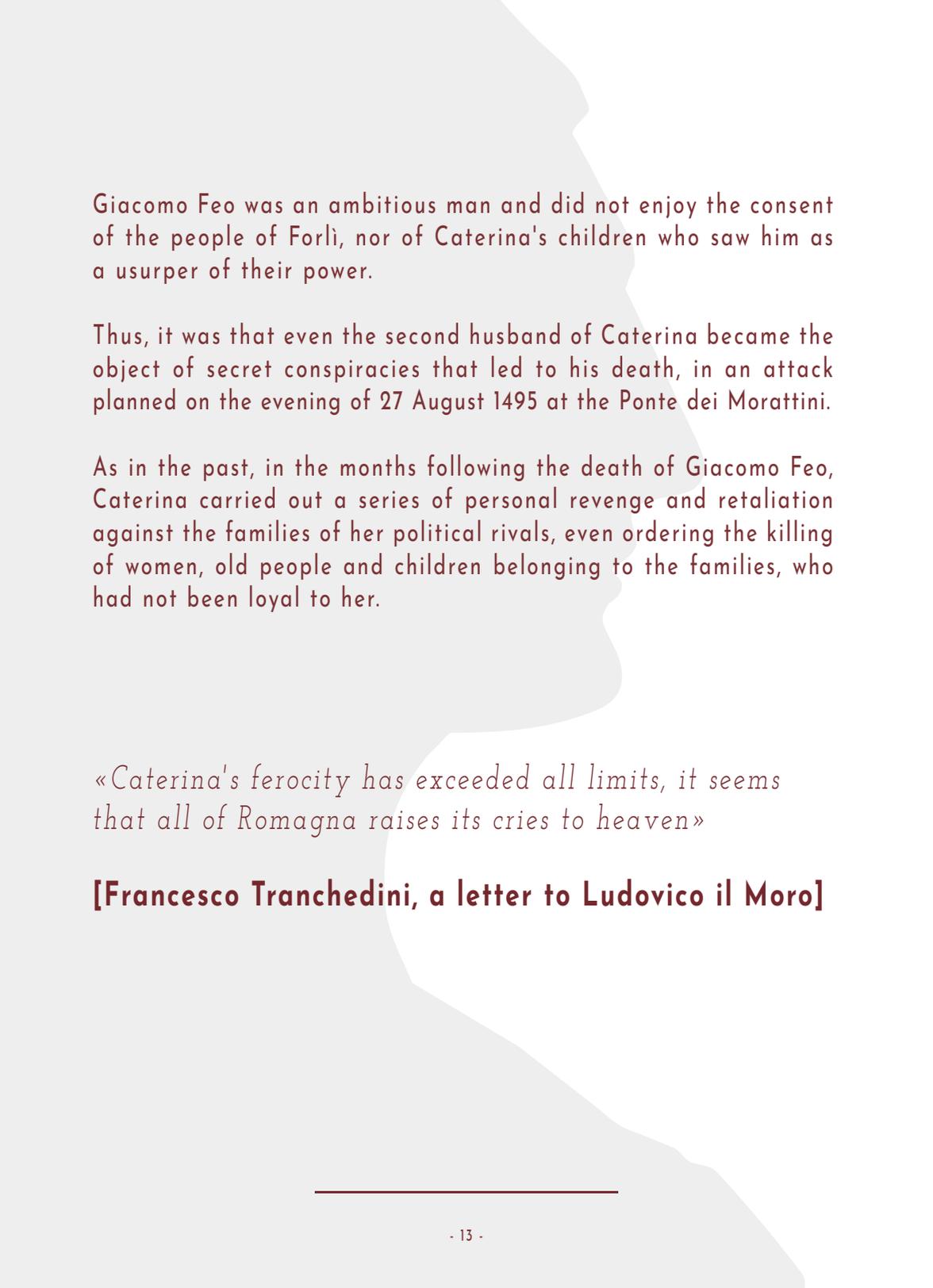
In this period of great serenity, in her new home called "Paradiso", close to the fortress, where the love story with Giacomo Feo began. He was of humble origins and brother of the castellan of Ravalдино, the same person who had helped her to regain power after the death of her husband Girolamo.



After having married Giacomo Feo in great secrecy, in order not to offend the sensibilities of his uncle Ludovico, he governed and managed power in a resolute manner, to the point of assuming an important role in the context of Italian politics.

The Feo from humble stable boy became the general governor.

He was arrogant and to increase his vanity he was awarded with the title of baron by the king of France Charles VIII. There is no coincidence that Bernardino, the couple's only son, was renamed Charles, to pay homage to the transalpine sovereign and to win his sympathies.



Giacomo Feo was an ambitious man and did not enjoy the consent of the people of Forlì, nor of Caterina's children who saw him as a usurper of their power.

Thus, it was that even the second husband of Caterina became the object of secret conspiracies that led to his death, in an attack planned on the evening of 27 August 1495 at the Ponte dei Morattini.

As in the past, in the months following the death of Giacomo Feo, Caterina carried out a series of personal revenge and retaliation against the families of her political rivals, even ordering the killing of women, old people and children belonging to the families, who had not been loyal to her.

*«Caterina's ferocity has exceeded all limits, it seems that all of Romagna raises its cries to heaven»*

**[Francesco Tranchedini, a letter to Ludovico il Moro]**

In 1496 Giovanni de 'Medici, known as il Popolano, arrived at the court of Caterina as ambassador of the Republic of Florence.

The Florentine nobleman came personally to manage an agreement for the purchase of Romagna wheat. Il Popolano was hosted in the rooms of the "Paradiso" and there was a large number of opportunities to spend time with the landlady.

In short, a great love blossomed between those two that led the lady from Forlì to her third marriage.

On 6 April 1498 Ludovico was born in Ravaldino, who was named after his uncle from Milan, to try to calm Moro's discontent towards this union.

Ludovico will then go down in history with the name of Giovanni dalle Bande Nere.

After the birth of her eighth child, Caterina had to deal with the worsening of the situation between Venice and Florence, since the territories over which she ruled are located on the passageways of the two armies.

Moreover, Giovanni de 'Medici fell seriously ill and, when his conditions worsened, he was transferred to Santa Maria in Bagno (now a hamlet of Bagno di Romagna), in the hope that the thermal waters could heal him.

On 14 September 1498, however, Giovanni died with Caterina at her bedside.



The union between the Medici and the Sforza gives origin to the Medici grand ducal dynastic line. In fact, from the marriage of Giovanni dalle Bande Nere with Maria Salviati (daughter of Lucrezia de 'Medici, of the main Medici branch), Cosimo I de' Medici, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany, was born in 1519.

The Medici line of succession lasted over two centuries, until 1743, extinguishing with Anna Maria Luisa de 'Medici.

After the death of her third husband, Caterina returned to take care of the defense of the Lordship of Imola and Forlì.

She personally directed the military maneuvers, training and procurement of soldiers, weapons and horses. A first attack by the army of Venice inflicted heavy losses on Caterina's army, who still managed to get the better of the Venetians.

Among these were also Antonio Ordelauffi and Taddeo Manfredi, descendants of the families that had governed Forlì and Imola respectively before the Riario.



## THE TIME WHEN CATERINA STOOD UP TO NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

### FORLÌ, JULY 1499

Demonstrating a certain style and experience in administering diplomatic matters, Caterina proposed to the Florentines the renewal of the conduct for her son Ottaviano and the sending of a company of crossbowmen to the city on the Arno. The Florentines were interested in remaining on good terms with Sforza, despite the fact that they saw margins for negotiation for a reduction in the remuneration to be paid. For this reason they sent thirty years old Niccolò Machiavelli to Forlì, who arrived in Romagna on July 16, 1499.

After a long and fluctuating negotiation, Caterina decided to temporize further, instructing her secretary Antonio Baldraccani to be friendly towards Machiavelli. Baldraccani unofficially informed Machiavelli that if Florence was no longer interested in Octavian's services, on the contrary Ludovico il Moro, who feared the imminent attack by the French, would have agreed to sign a contract for the young Octavian at a higher price, equal to that of the conduct previously agreed with the Florentines.

When Machiavelli thought he had reached the end of the negotiation, he was received by Caterina, who surprised him by telling him that during the night he had thought about it and had decided to wait for formal guarantees to arrive from Florence.

At the end of July, receiving a "no deal", the Florentine ambassador sadly resumed his way home.

The agreement was then signed, under Caterina's conditions, a month later in Florence, but the failure reported on that occasion by the author of *The Prince*, will tarnish his shining curriculum as a skilled negotiator.

In the meantime, Louis XII had risen to the throne of France, who boasted rights over the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples. In 1499 the transalpine ruler entered Italy, occupying Piedmont, Genoa and Cremona. He then took Milan, abandoned by Duke Ludovico who found refuge in Tyrol.

Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI, had allied with Louis XII to obtain his support in the establishment of a kingdom for his son Cesare in Romagna.

In exchange for the papal support for the French expedition to Italy to avenge the inheritance rights over the Duchy of Milan and the granting of the annulment of the marriage, the king of France would have helped Cesare Borgia to carry out the project of building a unitary state, eliminating then the small lordships.



Part of this project was to nominate Cesare Borgia as vicar of Forlì and Imola.

Doing this, the pope formally turned his back on Caterina.

Under the leadership of Cesare Borgia, Duke Valentino, the French army set out to conquer Romagna. Caterina, to counter the Borgia army, prepared to defend her lordship: she enlisted and trained as many soldiers as she could, amassed weapons, ammunition and provisions, strengthened the defenses of the Rocca di Ravaldino.

Moreover, in order to have nothing to lose in the battle, by eliminating any weak points to which the enemy could appeal to negotiate a possible surrender of the Lady of Forlì, she had her children leave for Florence.

One by one the cities of Romagna surrendered to Cesare Borgia. After taking possession of Forlì, the Valentino besieged Ravaldino. Between the end of 1499 and the beginning of 1500, the shelling continued for many days and nights, until, on January 12, the French managed to penetrate the fortress, killing most of the occupants.

Caterina fought hard until she surrendered and she was put into prison.

*«The defects in the construction of the fortress and the lack of prudence of those who defended it did not give the right emphasis to the countess's spirited enterprise and although her efforts were not successful, Caterina nevertheless brought back the honor that had deserved her courage».*

**[Niccolò Machiavelli, The art of war]**

«Even after the defeat, however, the myth of Caterina Sforza, instead of cracking, expanded into a series of folk tales and songs that fed the myth of the virago of Forlì for centuries. (...) The people used to say: **"When in Italy they believed that when the Frenchman had to do with men, they found women, when they had to deal with women, they found men"**.

A statement that, in addition to giving credit to Caterina, recognizes the high moral stature and fighter of the other great women protagonists of the Italian Renaissance. Even the French soldiers wanted to honor the countess by calling their best culverine with the nickname of Madame de Fourly. The Italian soldiers at the bivouac, on the other hand, sang the Lamento di Caterina Sforza, composed by a certain Marsilio Compagnon, in a low voice.

In this song, the Italians, united around the figure of the countess, were called to redeem and fight together to drive out the French invader. Ultimately, on 12 January 1500, the fall of Ravaldino marked the end of the earthly power of the lady of Forlì, but at the same time the beginning of her immortal legend».

**[Marco Viroli, from "Caterina Sforza, leonessa di Romagna" (Il Ponte Vecchio, Cesena, 2008)]**

Fighting with the support of the French, Cesare Borgia had to deal with a transalpine law that forbade taking women as prisoners of war, so he had to limit himself to "imprisoning" Catherine, treating her formally as a guest.



## THE TIME WHEN CATHERINE BECAME PRISONER AND WAS CARRIED AWAY WITH GOLD CHAINS

**ROME, 26 FEBRUARY 1500**

Almost two months after the surrender of Ravaldino and the fall of Catherine into the hands of the French armies and Cesare Borgia, Valentino returned to Rome triumphantly, effectively returning the dominion of the Romagna to his father, Pope Alexander VI.

In the capital, as well as the Carnival, the Jubilee of 1500 was being celebrated and the city was crowded with pilgrims, masks and allegorical floats.

The pontiff wanted to celebrate the return of his favorite son with solemn celebrations.

Legend has it that in the procession, Madonna Caterina appeared behind the chariot of the triumphant with her wrists tied by gold chains.



Caterina enjoyed this privilege during her "imprisonment" in Forlì, however, once in Rome, Cesare Borgia took the Countess Riario Sforza to Castel Sant'Angelo.

She remained imprisoned there until June 30, 1501, until she was freed thanks to the intervention of the French general Yves d'Allègre who, passing through Rome and discovered Catherine's imprisonment, enforced the French law described above.

The Borgias, however, had the foresight to have Caterina sign a document where she definitively renounced the lordship of Imola and Forlì. She reached Florence by sea, where she was reunited with her children.

## THE TIME WHEN CATERINA WAS ACCUSED OF TRYING TO POISON THE POPE

### ROME, 1500-1501

Arriving in Rome following Valentino, Caterina was received by the pontiff in a cordial manner, and in an equally cordial manner she was proposed to sign a formal renunciation of the dominion of the lands of Romagna.

Caterina flatly refused. «She is devilish and strong of spirit» - as the chronicles of the time wrote. She was thus locked up in the Belvedere palace and controlled by a guard of honor night and day.

Despite this, towards the end of May she managed to try to escape. It failed and she was locked up in the papal prisons at Castel Sant'Angelo.

In order to justify the countess's imprisonment to the French, to whom the Borgias had assured that they would treat her as a guest and not as a prisoner, they invented the accusation against Caterina of having tried to kill the pontiff through poisoned letters, sent him from Forlì in November 1499.

She spent the last years of her life in the Medici villa, called Castello and in the other residences owned by the family of her husband Giovanni.

She died in Florence on May 28, 1509, at the age of forty-six: she had velvet skin and all white hair.

Her body was buried in the monastery of the Murate in Florence, in front of the main altar. Her nephew Cosimo I de 'Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, subsequently had placed a plaque on her tomb, however today no trace of the tomb of Caterina remains.



THE EXPERIMENTS OF  
CATERINA



Caterina Sforza during her impetuous existence, became interested in science, cosmetics and alchemy.

The art of embellishing her face and body fascinated her no less than politics and in this regard she wrote a collection of recipes and experiments. The manuscript has the title:

*"GLI EXPERIMENTI DEL LA EX.MA S.RA CATERINA FURLJ"*

The recipes, written in Latin, vulgar and ciphered, are over 450 in all and include recipes for medicine, chemistry and cosmetics.

Her lifelong dedication to experiments made her truly competent in this field, as evidenced by the enormous amount of correspondence she had with doctors, scientists, noblewomen and sorcerers, in order to have an exchange of "secrets" for the preparation of make-up, lotions, straighteners, elixirs and ointments.

Her most important adviser in this field was Lodovico Albertini, an apothecary from Forlì, who remained fond of it and continued to serve Caterina even when she no longer lived in Forlì.

The most famous recipe contained in the text is undoubtedly the Aqua Celeste which: *"It is of so much virtue that old people become young and if they were 85 years old, it will make them become aparent of 35 years, and it will make dead people become alive".*

Aqua celeste se fa nel modo qui de sotto, et se po' chiamar aqua de giovinezza et de la vita, cio è che fa regiovire la persona et de morto fa vivo, et se fa in questo modo:

Piglia garofani, noce moscata, zenzebero, pevero longo, pevero rotondo, grana de ginepro, scorza de cetrangoli, foglie de salvia, foglie de basilico, de rosmarino, de majorana fine, de menta rotonda, loribache, pulegio, gentiana, calamento, fior di sambuco, rose bianche et rosse, cardamomo, cinamomo fino, calamo romatico, meligette mastico, incenso bianco, aloe patico, semenza et foglie de anesi, semenza de artemisia, fichi secchi, uva passa ultra marina, carne de dattili, mandole dolci, pignoli, mandole amare, poi tolli tanto zucchero fino che sia el doppio de tutte le ditte cose et omne cosa per se sia ben pulvirazata quelle che se possino polverizzare et le altre siano peste incorporate insieme et mettile in tanta aqua de vita che sia tre volte tanto a peso quante sonno le sopra ditte cose, la quale aqua sia destillata cinque volte alambicco de vetro pigliando sempre la bona, et questo fatto, metti tutte le ditte cose in l'acqua de vita una bozza ben chiusa et lutata et lassata star cusi per due di naturale et poi mettilo nel suo fornello col lambicco lutato le junture fa destillare con foco lento et meglio seria con bagnomaria eu uscirà un'acqua chiarissima et pretiosa et continua lo foco per fin tanto che l'acqua muterà colore et come tu vedi venir aqua bianca muta lo recipiente et recevi quella aqua bianca, la quale vale a fare la faccia et la pelle odorifera chiara et lustra et colorita et leva omne segno et macula dalla faccia.

## RECIPE

Take carnations, nutmeg, ginger, long pepper, round pepper, juniper grains, cucumber, sage leaves, basil, rosemary, fine marjoram, mint, elderflower, white and red roses, cardamom, cinnamon, odorous cane, white incense, opaque aloe, anise seeds and leaves, mugwort seeds, dried figs, raisins, sweet almonds, pine nuts, bitter almonds.

Take as much sugar until it is double of all things said and everything is well pulverized than can be pulverized and the others are pest incorporated together and put them in as much water that is three times and as much of all other things. , the water is distilled 5 times in a glass alembic always taking the good water, after doing this, put all the things in the water in a well closed bowl and weld well and let it stay like that for two days and then put it in the its stove with its closed lambicco and to be distilled over low heat and even better in a bain-marie and a very clear and precious water will come out.

Continue with the fire until the water changes color and when you see that the water becomes white change the container and put that white water, which is used to make the face and skin smell, to make it clear, clean, colored and removes all marks and stains from the face.

## ◇ TO BECOME BEAUTIFUL

All the chronicles agree in defining Caterina as a woman of extraordinary beauty. Undoubtedly for this reason, a large part of the book consists of recipes to preserve this beauty, which slavishly followed the canons of the time: to "make your face very white and beautiful", "make your hair grow", "make your hair blonde gold", to "make your hands white and beautiful so that they will look like ivory" are just some of the many beauty recipes.

Caterina devoted herself to her "experiments" with constancy throughout her life, making her not only competent but also anticipating future times. It is to her, for example, that we owe the invention of what today we could define as a kind of waxing.

### *To make the hair fall out that will never come back:*

Piglia polvere de botte, farina de lupinj, alume de rocco arso once 2 et falle bollir con uno bocale de aqua et come leva el bollare tolli dal foco et colale per feltro et lassa riposare nel vaso per otto giorni poi lava el loco dove voli che vada l'j peli con aqua poi bagna una spongia in ditta aqua et bagna el loco dove voli pelar più volte et tutti li peli cascheranno e mai più ricresceranno.

#### **RECIPE**

Take barrel powder, lupine flour, 2 ounces of cooked rock alum and boil with a mug of water. As it starts to boil, remove from the heat, filter and let it rest in the jar for eight days.

Then wash the place where you want the hair to fall out with water and then wet a sponge in the water obtained and pass it on the point where you want the hair to fall out several times and all the hairs will fall out and never grow back.



## THE FIRST EXPERIMENTS OF ANESTHESIA

Medicine recipes are certainly the most numerous, and those dedicated to sleeping pills, to be smelled or ingested in pills, certainly find a special place, because they are particularly avant-garde.

One of these is easily assimilated to an anesthetic.

*To make a person sleep so that you will be able to operate in surgery and he will not feel it:*

Piglia opio succo de iusquamo succo de papavero succo de mandragora succo de foie de edera succo de fava inversa succo de cicuta mecti tucti li suchi et l'opio in uno vaso de ramo al sole overo al foco lencto et mecti dentro a bombari una spunza et lassala dentro finche si suga omni cosa, la qual spunza quando voi operare falla tenere per una ora al naso et sindormentera et alora levela via et opera ciò che voi et quando lo voi destare mectile al naso un pocho di pane brusticato bagniato in aseto forte et desterassi.

### **RECIPE**

Take Opium, Giusquiamo juice, poppy juice, mandrake juice, ivy leaf juice, bean juice, hemlock juice and put everything in a copper pot in the sun or on a low heat.

Put a sponge in it and leave it in until everything dries.

When you want to operate, hold this sponge for an hour under the nose of the patient who will fall asleep.

At that point you can remove it and operate; when you want to wake him up, put a little bread soaked in strong vinegar under his nose and he will wake up.

## ◇ FOR BODY HEALTH

In two moments of the Riario-Sforza dominion in Forlì, the plague struck the city.

The first was in April 1486 and the second in the summer of 1499, a few months before the siege of Cesare Borgia.

On both occasions, Caterina immediately ran for cover.

In 1486 she called a doctor, a surgeon and two monatti and went personally among the sick, regardless of the possible contagion, using treatments and ointments prepared by herself.

Furthermore in 1499, fearing the weakening of the defenses, she enforced strict rules and measures, which allowed her, even in a sometimes unpopular way, to circumscribe the epidemic.

It was in fact common in those times, when the first signs of the disease appeared in the city, the lords moved their residences from the cities to the countryside.

Not wanting to leave the city to be able to personally control its defenses, Caterina subverted this habit.

She divided the city into compartments, closed the gates in and out and called doctors from nearby cities. Then she set up hospitals outside the city walls in which it was possible to take care about the sick persons.

The measures that Caterina put in place to combat the epidemic included the free distribution of food and medicines, the order to burn clothes and in some cases even the homes of the sick and the arrival in the city of monatti for burials and transport of the sick.

The rapid and radical intervention of the countess made it possible to remove the danger of an epidemic in a few weeks, suffering only 176 deaths compared to the thousands that could have been.

### *Remedy against poison and plague:*

Piglia un fegato de porco quale sia extratto. Da esso porco masculo et si e possibile el porco sia vivo et quanto più presto lo haverai aperto piglia quel fegato et atturalo bene in una pignatta invetriata con una foglia de pasta come quella che se fa alle torte et cusì bene aturata ponile nel forno a seccare et come e secco pistalo et fanne polvere et ogni volta che habbi suspetto de veneno o de peste pigliane omne matina uno mezzo cuchiaro con bono vino o vero brodo di carne.

#### **RECIPE**

Remove the liver from a pig. The pig must be male and alive, and immediately after opening it, take the liver and put it in a glazed pot wrapped with a sheet of dough like that used for cakes.

So wrapped put it in the oven to dry and when it is dry pound it and add powder.

Whenever you suspect poison or plague, take half a spoonful of good wine or real meat broth every morning.



## SUPERSTITIOUS CATERINA

Catherine's book is a mirror of the state of scientific knowledge at the end of the fifteenth century: certainly full of legacies of medieval superstitions, it nevertheless presents insights and remedies that form the foundation of modern homeopathy, based on the formula "similia similibu curantur", "the same cures the same" or fight fire with fire.

The collection includes various categories of preparations, some of them are even curious and nice. Among these recipes we can certainly include those against evil and demons, which show us that despite Catherine appears to us as a modern and enlightened woman, she was still a woman of her times, made of superstition and popular beliefs.

### *Contra li malefitij de li demonij:*

Iperium ouero la fuga deli demonij tenuta in casa descacia tuctj li demonij.

Ancora: lartemisia impesa alo limitare de la casa fache nullo malefitio nuoce a quella casa

Ancora: la pietra la quale se chiama magnetes, cioè calamita in tutto tolle la discordia intra el marito e la mogliera.

Ancora: chi porterà il core de la cornige maschio e femena porterà quello de la femena lo marito e la mogliera staranno ben sempre may insieme.

### **RECIPE**

The Hypericum plant, also called the fague of demons, if kept at home, casts out all demons.

Again: the mugwort, hanging on the corners of the house means that no spell harms that house.

Again: the stone called a magnet removes all discord between husband and wife.

Again: if the man carries the heart of a male crow and the woman the heart of a female crow, husband and wife will be together forever.

## ◇ ALCHEMY ON THE LIMITS OF LEGALITY

Among the more than 450 recipes, there are about thirty related to alchemy, which reiterate the manipulation and transformation of metals.

About 15 recipes revolve around the pecuniary sphere, such as "giving value to Duchies and other coins" and "giving great value to a shield or ducato de oro...", and testify, as do the letters that she wrote in Milan, the constant shortage of funds that plagued it.

### *To convert tin into fine silver:*

Piglia stagnio quanto voli et calcina poi trita sopra el marmo con sale armoniaco poi laualo con el succo della citronelli tanto chel succo venga chiaro poi lassa seccare al sole poi piglia pece greca et ponila a fondere in una cazza de ferro cum foco lento et come e fusa proice lo stagnio dentro poi dalli foco lento finche la pece se consunna poi fondi lo stagnio in verga et questo fallo tre o quattro volte et se hauesse qualche stridore pone in una libra de questo stagnio de mercurio et mettilo a fondere et dalli el foco forte de modo chel mercurio vada in fumo.

### **RECIPE**

Take some amount of tin and lime as much as you want, then chop them on a marble slab with ammonium salt and wash with lemon juice until the juice is clear, then let it dry in the sun.

Then take some Greek pitch (solid, yellow and transparent vegetable resin) and put it to melt in an iron box over low heat; when it is melted, put the tin in it and let it simmer until the pitch is consumed.

Then melt the tin into rods three or four times and if it still has any imperfections put in a pound of this tin of mercury and melt everything again on a strong fire so that the mercury goes up in smoke.

## ◇ THE COPIED SPELLS

From the very first page of the code, you enter the world of Caterina, in fact on the first page of the Experiments you can see the following:

The copied spells.

b f k p x

a e i o u

This is the simple code used in the preparation of some recipes that Caterina wanted to remain secret.

Most of the recipes written through this code relate to the sexual sphere.

*“A fare lxxrkbrf inestimabile”:*

Piglia acqua de Betonica con acqua rosa et beuine con vino caldo o Latte che uederai grande experientia.

### **RECIPE**

To make you lust inestimably

Take Betonica water with rose water and drink it with mulled wine or milk and you will see what a great experience.

“If I could write everything,  
I would amaze the world”

Caterina confides this to a priest before dying.

And even today, centuries later, without her having written everything, discovering her life, her deeds and her acute and avant-garde mind, the amazement still strikes us and shows us what a great woman she was and what importance had Caterina Sforza for the late medieval-Renaissance period.



# FORLÌ IN THE 15TH CENTURY

At the end of the 15th century, Forlì had about twelve thousand inhabitants, a number that can be estimated medium-high if we consider that Rome had about fifty thousand.

The city was devoid of traces of its Roman origins and had also lost its medieval connotation due to repeated destruction caused by the wars and fires. The reconstruction was started in the 14th century by the cardinal legate Egidio Albornoz - who had conquered the city on behalf of the pope - and continued in the 15th century by Cecco III Ordelaffi and his brother Pino III.

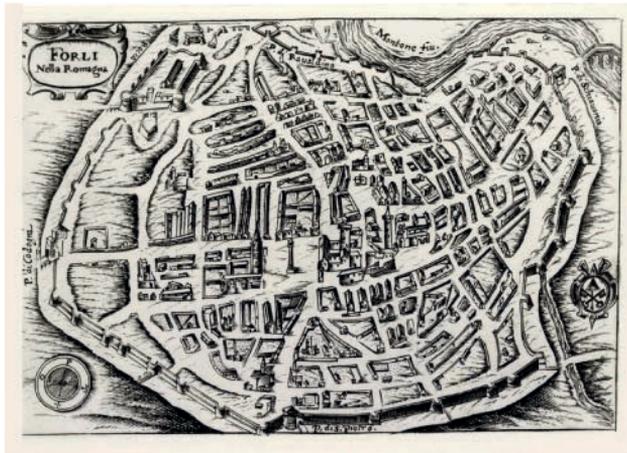
At the end of the 15th century, ancient, modern, rustic and urban buildings blended nicely in the architecture of a city that was trying to adapt to the new Renaissance styles. In the center there were the elegant palaces of the patriciate, built in bricks and embellished with stone ornaments. In the western part, between the Brighieri bridge (later the Morattini bridge) and Porta Schiavonia, there was the humblest area, where farm laborers and pieceworkers lived. Inside the walls, close to the town, there was the green strip of gardens.

The Montone and Rabbi rivers flowed between Ravaldino and Schiavonia. Part of their waters had been channeled and directed towards the city where the ditches of the fortress served and provided the energy needed to set the mill blades, millstones and textile machines in motion. Among the urbanization innovations of the Middle Ages we should mention the Ravaldino Canal, a complex engineering work for the hydrographic control of the Rabbi, which for a few centuries had converted the river into the collector and engine of urban factories. Once emerged for most of its city route, it is now possible to see a single stretch of it in the open air in the city, in via Canale di Ravaldino.

Finally, further east, a few kilometers outside the walls, in the direction of Cesena, flowed a third river, the Ronco or Bidente.

Forlì had an oval shape, surrounded by walls, with four doors from which the four main roads passed. Towards Ravenna Porta San Pietro welcomed travellers, while towards the hills Porta Ravaldino stood.

The Via Emilia crossed the city from the east, where Porta Cotogni was located in the direction of Cesena, to the west, while Porta Schiavonia indicated the way to Faenza.



The four main intersecting streets formed a cross with the Piazza Grande in the center, in front of the Abbey of San Mercuriale. In the corner opposite the sacred building were the Palazzo del Podestà and the Palazzo del Comune e della Signoria, which was enlarged by Cecco III and Pino III degli Ordelaffi on the original nucleus of a building dating back to around the year 1000.

The Piazza Grande was dominated by two high opposing towers to represent political and religious power. On the west side, behind the Palazzo del Comune and the Signoria, there stood the tower of the people and on the east side the bell tower, in Lombard style, built in the 12th century next to the church of San Mercuriale.

Among the numerous churches in the city, San Mercuriale was the most important and was held by the monks of the Vallombrosan congregation. It stood in the ancient Campo dell'Abate, on the area that between the 4th and 5th centuries was occupied by the parish church of Santo Stefano.

On the south-east side of the square there was the Crocetta, in memory of the place where the Forlì Ghibellines had buried the victims of the "bloody pile", the French soldiers commanded by Giovanni d'Appia, exterminated in 1282 by Forlì people, commanded by Guido da Montefeltro.

Near the Crocetta the trumpet stopped every day, calling the citizens from a pedestal to listen to it reading the edicts and proclamations of the lords, as well as the most important news.

In the heart of the medieval city, on the foundations of the ancient parish church of Forlì, there was the Cathedral of Santa Croce with its bell tower.

After the year 1000, the parish church was elevated to the status of the cathedral of the diocese of Forlì, after a long power struggle with the abbot of San Mercuriale, in which the bishop's authority had the upper hand.

The other big churches in the city were:

- San Girolamo, today San Biagio, which housed frescoes by the most famous Forlì painters
- San Francesco Grande, where the lords of the city and famous people were buried
- San Domenico, seat of the Dominican order.

When, in 1212, the Campo dell'Abate was donated to the community, it transformed over time into Piazza Grande which gradually grew compared to the square that stood in front of Santa Croce.

The Borgo Grande stretched between the two churches, a place of commerce and a destination for citizens' meetings.

Furthermore, as still happens today, on market days in the square, itinerant merchants and peasants came from the surrounding area to sell their products and their wares.

Around the square and in the Borgo Grande there was the area of the shops, "*very well stocked with merchandise and cloths of many colors*", as the chronicler of the time Leone Cobelli wrote, while the craftsmen had concentrated their small factories along the canals of the city. The square was also the place where preachers gathered crowds or where street performers made their shows.

In the square people married, celebrated the baptism of a new born or greeted the death of a friend or a deceased relative.

The square was a place of business negotiations, political opinions, conspiracy and bargaining.

In the square it was held the festival of masks at carnival, with music and songs, tournaments and equestrian jousting took place and, on April 30, the feast of San Mercuriale, the palio was disputed with great celebrations and display banners of the districts.

In the act of taking possession of the city, the new Lord made three laps of the Piazza Grande on horseback, in front of the crowd cheering him loudly.

All the religious processions that departed from the various churches to carry around the city the statues of the saints or the relics, made a passage from the square.

However, the square was also the «*blood wash ... for many men there who 'shed blood, and many beheaded*», as Cobelli notes.

It was the place of the pillory, the gallows, the block and the cleaver and the public executions were carried out there, so that the vision of the sentence inflicted on the condemned man served as a warning for criminals and not.

The government of the city was exercised by a lord, who united all the powers and was assisted by an auditor. Then there were the Council of Forty who exercised administrative power, and a governor and a podestà, who jointly exercised executive and juridical power.

Some lay communities, devoted to prayer and good works, were very active in the city,. They were these-called *Battuti*, which were divided into blacks, whites, reds, light blue, green and gray. Among these the most infamous were the *Battuti neri*, who dealt with reassembling and burying the corpses of the executed and murdered, but also of the poor, the destitute, the sick and the abandoned people.

This was the general picture of the Forlì at the end of the 15th century, when in 1484, after the death of Pope Sixtus IV, the Riario Sforza family arrived permanently.

# POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1 Aurelio Saffi Square
- 2 San Mercuriale Abbey
- 3 San Mercuriale Bell Tower
- 4 Civic Tower
- 5 Cathedral of Holy Cross or Duomo
- 6 San Biagio Church
- 7 Ravaldino Canal
- 8 Monastery della Torre  
and the Church of Santa Maria della Ripa
- 9 Church of the Holy Trinity
- 10 Casa Palmeggiani
- 11 Palazzo del Monte di Pietà
- 12 Rocca di Ravaldino



## 1 AURELIO SAFFI SQUARE

📍 Piazza Aurelio Saffi / 44.2220, 12.04111

In 1212 the ancient Campo dell'Abate was ceded by the prior of San Mercuriale to the community of Forlì.

It then became Piazza Grande, that even today it still remains one of the most evocative in Italy because of its extent and the beauty of the buildings that enclose it.

At the crossroad of the four main streets, where two of them formed the famous Via Emilia, at the time of Caterina Sforza the square was the beating heart of the city. A lot of activities took place here, such as religious festivals and sermons, festivals and acrobat shows, tournaments, and of course, markets and trade.

It was also the place where executioner exposed the prisoners to the pillory and exercised public death sentences on the gallows.

The following buildings that existed in the time of Caterina Sforza, you can find nowadays:

**1.** Municipality and Signoria Palace, at the beginning of the XV century, the Ordelaffi family moved their residence there and it became the centre of political power of the city. The third window on the first floor on the left side of the facade corresponds to the Sala delle Ninfe, from where the Orsi brothers threw themselves out after having murdered Girolamo Riario, the first husband of Caterina Sforza.

**2.** Podestà Palace, gothic-style building that was completely restructured in 1460, under the leadership of Matteo di Riceputo, uncle of Melozzo degli Ambrogi, on the ruins of a previous building constructed a few months earlier, but collapsed soon after.

**3.** Albertini Palace, elegant 15th century building with explicitly Venetian character. At the time of Caterina Sforza it was owned by the Albertini family of which Ludovico was part, a trusted apothecary and a close friend of the lady of Forlì



## 2 SAN MERCURIALE ABBEY

📍 Piazza Aurelio Saffi, 17 / 44.22295, 12.04214

At the time of Caterina Sforza the Abbey of San Mercuriale was already an undisputed symbol of the city and it seems that the lady of Forlì was particularly attached to it, even more than to the Cathedral.

The sacred building has very ancient origins. It was built on the remains of an ancient parish church, dedicated to the Protomartyr St. Stephen, that had already stood on the site of the ancient burial ground of bishops of Forlì.

In 1173 it was destroyed by a violent fire caused by numerous riots between Guelphs and Ghibellines. The parish church was rebuilt in the Romanesque-Lombard style.

It is likely that in consequence of this fact the building was erected following a planimetric structure with three naves and with a crypt under the main altar.

At the time of Caterina Sforza the church was located outside the urban centre, that was separated from it by the Ravaldino Channel, a regimented branch of the Rabbi River. It flows right under the loggia of the Town Hall creating the so-called Dark Bridge (Ponte Buio).

The lunette above the entrance portal is a very important sculptural complex depicting the **Dream and adoration of Magi** attributed to the Masters of the Months of Ferrara who built it around the early 13th century.

It is worth mention some remarkable artworks inside the Abbey, such as the funeral monument of Barbara Manfredi by Francesco di Simone Ferrucci da Fiesole and some valuable paintings by Marco Palmezzano: **Madonna with the Child Jesus enthroned between St. John the Evangelist and St. Catherine of Alexandria; Immaculate Conception with Sant'Agostino, Sant'Anselmo and Santo Stefano; San Giovanni Gualberto forgives the killer of his brother in front of the crucifix and Saint Mary Magdalene.**



### 3 SAN MERCURIALE BELL TOWER

📍 Piazza Aurelio Saffi, 17 / 44.22295, 12.04214

A Lombard type bell tower rises to the right of San Mercuriale Abbey, 72.40 meters high, it is isolated from the main structure. Completed in 1180 on a design by Francesco Deddi, it was built by master Aliotto, as it is evidenced in latin on the small plaque, walled up on the side of the bell tower facing the square.

At the time of Caterina Sforza the amazement of those arriving in Forlì would have been enormous. Even from the distance this construction attested the power of the Vallombrosana Congregation, the community of Benedictine monks founded in 1039 by San Giovanni Gualberto.

At the base of the pinnacle, on the right side there is a plaque with the Dantesque triplet which recalls the episode of the "bloody pile" and the belonging of the city to the Ordelaffi family:

«la terra che fe' già la lunga prova /  
e di Franceschi sanguinoso mucchio /  
sotto le branche verdi si ritrova»

The city which once made the long resistance,  
And of the French a sanguinary heap,  
Beneath the Green Paws finds itself again

**Divine Comedy (Longfellow 1867)**  
**Volume 1/Canto 27**

In 1282 the square witnessed the scene of the epic victory of Forlì Ghibellines, led by Guido da Montefeltro, against the French troops sent by the pope, led by Giovanni d'Appia.

At the end of the municipal era, in the early 14th century the hegemony of the Ordelaffi family began, which, between ups and downs, maintained the city dominion from the end of the 13th century until the arrival of the Riario Sforza (1480).



## 4 CIVIC TOWER

 Torre Civica / 44.22315, 12.03990

The Civic Tower rises behind the Town Hall.

From the very beginning it was a symbol of the temporal power and municipal identity of Forlì.

It was built on the ruins of a previous sighting building of Roman origin, situated on the banks of Rabbi river, which now is the city centre.

Between the 9th and 10th centuries, when Forlì obtained municipal independence, the tower became a symbol of the city. As time passes its functions increased.

Later a clock was installed on the top of the tower and from that moment it started to mark the rhythm of city life, along with the bells that defined religious masses.

The size of the dial and the single hand of the clock made it possible to read the time from the surrounding countryside.

The tower has also a function of a bell tower, with the task of announcing the unfolding of important events and the occurrence of sudden serious dangers.

At the times of Riario Sforza lordship, the residence of his family was situated between the Civic Tower and the Tower Hall, which, after the assassination of Girolamo Riario, was demolished.

The recycled materials were used to construct the Paradiso, a fortified palace where Caterina Sforza, her children and the court moved in to feel protected. It was built in connection with Ravaldino Fortress.

The residence disappeared after the siege of Cesare Borgia, between the end of 1499 and the beginning of 1500.



## 5 CATHEDRAL OF HOLY CROSS OR DUOMO

📍 Piazza Ordelaffi, 1 / 44.22409, 12.03853

The Duomo or Holy Cross Cathedral is situated next to Ordelaffi Square. It is called "Holy Cross" because of the relic of the Sacred Wood that is conserved there.

The sacred building stands on the ruins of an ancient parish church, earlier than the 12th century. The current appearance is the result of the massive rebuilding, which followed the demolition of the Romanesque-Gothic church, completed in 1841.

The right aisle leads to the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, formerly the Sanctuary of the Madonna della Ferita, built in 1490 at the behest of Caterina Sforza who commissioned the project to the architect Pace di Maso del Bombace. The chapel was initially detached from the rest of the structure, which is why it is located in a slightly oblique position respect to the central nave.

On the left altar there is a 15th century fresco "**Virgin of the Wound**" by an unknown artist, originally placed on an external wall. It is called like this because, according to tradition, a soldier belonging to the Orgogliosi family, angry at having lost in the game, struck a blow to the sacred image which, miraculously, began to bleed.

On the left side of the Cathedral there is the Chapel of Madonna del Fuoco, made of marble and decorated with paintings. It was built between 1619 and 1636. At the centre of the chapel there is a woodcut depicting the virgin and Child, dating back to the end of the 14th century. It is the image of Madonna del Fuoco, patroness of the Forlì, that on the 4th of February 1428 was saved from fire at Maestro Lombardino school and whose cult was already widespread at the time of Caterina Sforza who was particularly devoted to her.

Deep down the left aisle there is a splendid example of a wooden crucifix, dating the 12th century of the Lombard-Romanesque school, a work of great historical value.

It can be considered the top of its kind in Italy.



## 6 SAN BIAGIO CHURCH

📍 Piazzetta Don Pietro Garbin, 8 / 44.22741, 12.03752

This religious building, rebuilt in 1953, was erected on the ruins of the old church of San Biagio in San Girolamo.

On Sunday evening of 10 December 1944, the ancient structure, consecrated in 1433 and remodeled in the 17th century, was razed to the ground by a German air raid.

Forlì had been liberated by the Allies a month earlier.

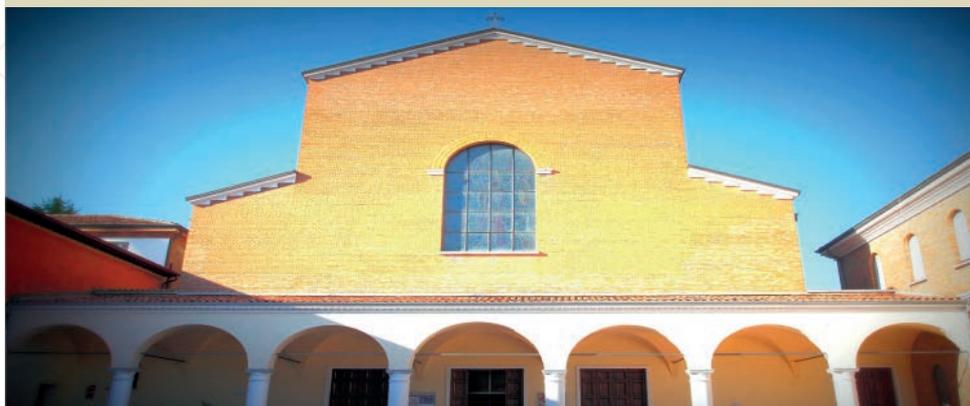
Inside there are some works that survived the devastation. On the first altar on the left there is a late 15th century Triptych **Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints**, by Marco Palmezzano, while on the first altar on the right there is the **Immaculate Conception** by Guido Reni, built around 1627.

On the steps leading to the presbytery, you can find a 15th century stoup in white marble.

In the collapse of the church, there was lost the Cappella Feo (1493-94) and the magnificent frescoes by Marco Palmezzano with it.

The chapel, dedicated to San Giacomo Maggiore, was commissioned by Caterina Sforza, for the benefit of her second husband Giacomo Feo and his family. Here Giacomo Feo was buried after being killed in an ambush near the Morattini Bridge on the evening of 27 August 1495.

In 1466 Barbara Manfredi, first wife of Pino III Ordelaffi, was buried in San Girolamo, whose splendid funeral monument, the work of the sculptor Francesco Ferrucci di Simone da Fiesole, was restored after the war and reassembled inside the San Mercuriale Abbey.



## 7 RAVALDINO CANAL

📍 Via Canale di Ravaldino / 44.226813, 12.035523

Around the year 1000 Forlì was located on a sort of island, bordered by the Motone and Rabbi rivers.

The tradition says that to remedy the frequent floods that devastated the city, the urban branch of the Rabbi was regimented to create the Ravaldino Canal.

During the medieval period the entire stretch of the channel flowed in the open, except the point where it touched the Municipality building and the Signoria, where it was covered in 1459 by order of Cecco III Ordelaffi, giving rise to the portico which still exists today.

At the time of Caterina Sforza, as well as feeding the moat of the Rocca di Ravaldino and having functions related to the daily life of the population, the channel was used for mills and factories to impart motive power to millstones and shovels.

Defined by the historian Gianluca Brusi the "backbone of the city", in the last century the channel was almost entirely covered, except in the short stretch where it still runs in the open air under a modern building in via del Canale (di Ravaldino), next to the San Luigi room, in via Luigi Nanni.

From the Fiumana lock on the Predappio hills, to the junction with the Bidente river at Coccolia, towards Ravenna, the Ravaldino Canal has a total length of about 23 kilometers.

The difference in height between the entrance to the walls of Ravaldino and the exit to the walls of Pelacano is 12.48 m.

With appropriate safety measures, it could return to its city part for 1,895 meters, crossing Forlì underground, from Porta Ravaldino to the northeastern end of the historic center (via della Grata).



## 8 MONASTERY DELLA TORRE and CHURCH OF S. MARIA DELLA RIPA

📍 Via della Ripa, 1 / 44.22600, 12.03337

To the north of the city center, close to the gardens of via Curte, there is the imposing Monastery della Torre and the adjoining Church of Santa Maria della Ripa.

The impressive site occupies a total area of about 23,000 square meters.

Its history is ancient and complex.

The construction of the monastery began in 1474, commissioned by Bishop Alessandro Numai, who laid the first stone on land donated to the curia by the then lord of Forlì, Pino III Ordelaffi.

After his death, first Girolamo Riario, then his wife Caterina Sforza became protectors of the monastery, establishing a deep bond with the Franciscan nuns who resided there.

The wall enclosure was completed in 1484, while the church and convent were consecrated on May 7, 1497, in the presence of Caterina Sforza.

Between the 17th and 18th centuries, at the height of its splendor, the complex could accommodate about eighty nuns and the boarding school, attended by young people from the noble families of Forlì.

After having been the seat of the Military District in the last century, today the Monastero della Ripa, owned by the State, is awaiting a recovery project that enhances its historical and monumental importance, and allows the return to the city of one of the its places of greatest charm.



## 9 CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

📍 Piazza Melozzo, 7 / 44.22560, 12.03369

Considered by some scholars to be the first Forlì cathedral, it stands in piazzetta Melozzo degli Ambrogi on the foundations of an older sacred building.

The original orientation of the building was the opposite of the current one, so the entrance was facing the external part of the city, serving as an invitation to pilgrims coming from outside. The current disposition was completed in 1782. The only one part of the ancient building is the 14th century bell tower.

Until the Baroque rearrangement at the end of the 18th century, the church was a place for the tombs of great Renaissance artists from Forlì, including the tomb of Melozzo degli Ambrogi, a painter loved by Caterina Sforza.

To the left of the entrance there is an episcopal chair made of veined Greek marble, dating back to the 5th century AD which is believed to have been the chair of San Mercuriale, the first bishop of the city.

On the altar of the fourth chapel on the left, hidden by an altarpiece by the painter Giacomo Zampa from Forlì, there was found a part of a fresco dating back to the 15th century. This is what remains of a triptych (the central altarpiece and the right one) depicting **Christ at the column and Saints**, the work of an unknown author.

Not far from the Trinity Church, you can find the remains of the Morattini Bridge, protected by a glass plate, that are visible at street level.

Composed of a single round arch, built in brick with marble inserts, the oldest bridge in the city was isolated from the other ones that arose in the early Middle Ages as it was placed on the canalized city branch of the Montone river.

On the evening of 27 August 1495, the Morattini Bridge was the scene of the deadly ambush of Giacomo Feo, second husband of Caterina Sforza.



## 10 CASA PALMEGGIANI

📍 Corso Garibaldi, 133 / 44.22408, 12.03566

Casa Palmeggiani was built in the 15th century on ancient pre-existing structures.

It is one of the most fascinating examples of 15th century architecture in the city, as well as one of the oldest existing buildings in Forlì.

It was owned by the painter and architect from Forlì Marco Palmezzano, favorite pupil of Melozzo degli Ambrogi who never lived there.

Later it belonged to his heirs: the Palmeggiani.

At the end of the 15th century, Marco Palmezzano, the favorite disciple of the painter Melozzo degli Ambrogi, was part of the small court of artists in the service of Caterina Sforza.

The facade is composed of four large columns that support the three bays of the portico, one of these has a double lowered arch, while each of the other two encloses a pair of hanging arches that merge in the center on a drop-shaped stone capital, decorated with a four-petal rose.

The octagonal section columns are about half the width of the span high and at the top have flattened capitals with concave collar and bevel.

The ceiling of the portico is made of wooden rafters with shelves resting on two long beams hidden behind the hanging arches.

The original pointed-arch windows were bricked up in the course of the eighteenth century and replaced by rectangular windows.

Over time, the interiors have completely lost their peculiar and original connotations due to the numerous renovations to which the building has undergone.



## II PALAZZO DEL MONTE DI PIETÀ (GUAStO DEGLI ORSI)

📍 Corso Garibaldi, 45 / 44.22268, 12.03835

The elegant building was erected in the 17th century in brown brick on the so-called "Guasto degli Orsi", or on the ruins of the large Palazzo Orsi, of which Caterina Sforza, in 1488, ordered the complete destruction in retaliation following the murder of her first husband, Girolamo Riario, which took place on April 16 of that year.

The ancient Palazzo degli Orsi seemed to occupy also the area of the adjacent Church of San Filippo Neri and the adjoining convent that were built later.

After the destruction of the palace, on the orders of Caterina Sforza, the rubble was not purposely removed, so that it served to warn those who dared to attempt again to the life and power of the lords of Forlì.

The discovery of a handwritten document allows us to date with certainty the foundation of the Sacro Monte della Pietà in Forlì to 21 March 1510.

Oggi ospita gli uffici e parte della collezione privata della Fondazione Cassa dei Risparmi di Forlì.

Today it houses the offices and a part of the private collection of the Cassa dei Risparmi Foundation of Forlì.

On the main floor there are some marble capitals with the Ordellaffi coat of arms, probably recovered from the nearby **Caxa Granda**, today Palazzo (Ordellaffi) Albicini, which until the early 15th century was the headquarter of the family that held power in the city.



## 12 RAVALDINO FORTRESS

📍 Via Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, 1 / 44.21641, 12.03772

The Ravaldino Fortress is popularly known as the "Fortress of Caterina Sforza". Built on the foundations of two pre-existing fortifications, it is situated on the highest part of the city, which has always been dedicated to defense. It was commissioned by Pino III Ordelaffi who, in 1471, commissioned the project to the architect Giorgio Marchesi Fiorentino da Settignano.

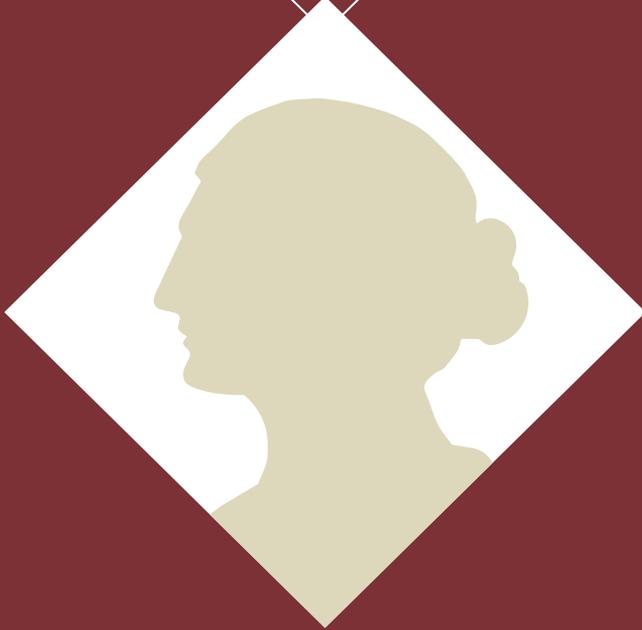
In 1496, on the remains of the "old fortress", Caterina Sforza ordered the construction of a ravelin, called "Paradiso", for the construction of which were used recovery bricks obtained from the demolition of the wing of the Town Hall and the Signoria where the Riario Sforza family and its court resided. After the murder of Girolamo, Caterina and her children, to feel more protected, first moved to the fortress, then to this palace, which was completely lost as a result of the capture of Cesare Borgia.

On April 6, 1498, Ludovico, son of Caterina and Giovanni de' Medici, made his first cries here, then went down in history as Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, the last of the great Italian leaders and father of Cosimo, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany. The fortress is a typical "transition fortress", as it was designed and modified in the years when firearms were revolutionizing the way of waging war. It looks like an imposing quadrangular architecture, with four low cylindrical towers at the corners. The squat male, with a square section, is divided over three floors. From the internal courtyard, access to the keep was via a spectacular spiral staircase in sandstone, still intact but not accessible, which connected the three floors. The unique staircase, without a central pivot, is made up of 67 steps that support each other by overlapping.

The large citadel, where later at the end of the 19th century the prison was built, is defended by only two towers placed in the direction of the city. Citadel and fortress were surrounded by a deep moat, drained and partially filled as the fortress lost its defensive functions. On the curtain it is still possible to admire the coat of arms, made by Cesare Borgia after the bloody battle that caused over six hundred deaths, the capture of the castle and the surrender of Caterina Sforza. The Borgia emblem, in Istrian stone, in which the tiara and papal keys stand out, is walled up in the position where the Valentino soldiers managed to make the breach that, in the evening of 12 January 1500, allowed him to penetrate inside the fortress.







# CATERINA SFORZA

from forlì