

San Marino, centuries-old freedom Hewn in Titano stone

by Edith Tamagnini

San Marino ambassador at the UNESCO, she coordinated the complex application formalities for the addition of San Marino to the List and sat the Committee exam in Canada in July 2008.

The historic centres of **San Marino** and **Borgo Maggiore** and **Mount Titano**, a Heritage Site covering a total of fifty-five hectares, were added to the list of the **UNESCO's World Heritage Sites** on **7 July, 2008**.

As an intangible heritage, it is the expression of the harmonious interaction of history, customs and traditions dating back many centuries.

As a tangible heritage, the ancient street plan, the numerous public monuments and the natural habitat of **Mount Titano** represent important values in terms of architecture and landscape and are in symbiosis with the intangible heritage. San Marino is an exceptional example of a living cultural tradition, having been the capital of an independent republic since the 13th century.

Among the country's major monuments are: the **three Towers** located along the skyline of the Mount, the Government Building, the ancient and mighty city walls with their gates and ramparts, the **Basilica of Saint Marinus** and the **Small Church of San Pietro**, the **Convent and Art Gallery of San Francesco**, the **Monastery of Santa Chiara**, now the home of the University, the **Titano Theatre**, the State Library and Archives, numerous historical buildings in the various town quarters, the Rupe nature park, which together with the Costa dell'Arnella links Città to Borgo Maggiore, the home of the **Natural History Museum** and of two major Churches: that of the Suffragio and that of the B. V. della Consolazione, the work of architect, G. Michelucci.

In the characteristic squares and under the porticos of Borgo Maggiore, according to ancient traditions, the town market is still held every Thursday. This small town has been of economical and strategic importance ever since the middle-ages.

Over time, the three Towers have become a symbol of the excellence of the ancient City-State nestled on the top of the Mount, between heaven and earth, protected by the city walls and part of a natural environment steeped in meaning. The central part of the **Guaita Tower**, the first fortification of Mount Titano, is called "Rocca" and, according to documents of the period, dates back to the year 1000. This monument, which has become a symbol of peace, has always been a military fort, built to guard and defend San Marino, as the name Guaita itself suggests (this derives from the German Weite, a wide space for keeping watch). Over the years, it has undergone extensive restoration,

especially in the 16th century, under the supervision of Captain Nicolò Pellicano and architect Girolamo Genga.

A passionate and untiring researcher, during the years from 1925 to 1935, Gino Zani of San Marino carried out careful restoration work and it was in that period that the First Tower took on the appearance it still has today. **The Cesta Tower** very definitely dates back to the 13th century, because according to a document in the state archives, it was already operating as a military outpost in the early-14th century. It stands, overlooking the coastline, at the highest point of Mount Titano (756 m above sea level). The Tower has been a symbol, from the grand tours of the 19th century to the present day, of a symbiosis between tangible heritage, represented by the medieval fortification, and intangible heritage, consisting of the defence of the centuries-old independence of the ancient City-State nestled on Mount Titano. The original stronghold, as evidenced by the Latin etymology of the word Cesta, served as an observation post. It has been restored many times over the years; the work done by Gino Zani, between 1925 and 1935, and based on existing historical evidence, gave to the ancient fortalice, erected in a suggestive and unique location, a neo-Romantic appearance, mid-way between fairy tale and reality. Today, the tower houses the State Museum of Ancient Arms.

The third tower, called the **Montale**, has a pentagonal base. Its origins date back to the 13th century. It was an important bulwark in the country's defence against the powerful Malatesta family, Lords of nearby Rimini. These wars saw the active participation of the San Marino Commune, which was allied with the Duchy of Montefeltro. They ended in 1463 with the defeat of the Malatestas. Piazza della Libertà. A magic square. The harmony of the buildings and monuments is enhanced by the landscape, where colours transform the place into a tableau vivant. It is in this square that history, institutions and tangible and intangible heritage all come together. It is here that every day, the Captains Regent, the Heads of State, arrive in their official cars to reach their offices in the Government Building, the seat of Parliament, known as the Great and General Council.

You are kindly invited to become better acquainted with the site by visiting the **State Museum** (free admission) in San Marino's Old-City Centre. To better enjoy the exceptional scenery of Mount Titano – weather permitting and after taking all due precautions – a **beautiful nature path** has been reopened which starts at the Genga del Tesoro of Borgo Maggiore and ends at the Towers (Piazzale Gandhi).

“San Marino is one of the world's oldest republics and the only City-State that there is, representing an important stage in the development of democratic models in Europe and worldwide”. So says the declaration of outstanding universal value.”