settlement structures. The scarce data about the period have been analysed in light of the direction of national research with particular focus on the supposed survival of a settlement network connected to the main routes and the supposed hub role played by places of worship. Despite the lack of data, the existence of settlement dynamics and forms has been hypothesised in light of the evidence in the Genoa area and Central and Northern Italy between the 9th and 11th century. Thanks to the enormous growth of written sources, the settlement and territory organisation have only been known since the 12th century. However, it is important to note that despite such large number of documents, systematic and complete studies analysing the relationships between different forms of power, encastellation and settlement structure do not exist. In addition to this, Medieval archaeology has only developed in the last decade with studies conducted in certain castles. The current research, with the revision of historical and archaeological literature, the analysis of written sources (published and unpublished) and the study of data gathered during surface surveys, has allowed to outline a thorough framework of the organisation of the area between the 12th and 15th century. In particular, the focus has been on the timing and modes of encastellation and the connections between encastellation, the structure of settlements and the use of natural resources following the historiography debate at national and regional level.

Aperture datate negli edifici delle zone montane: una tradizione da indagare – Dated openings in the buildings of mountainous areas: a tradition to be investigated

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In 1989 Tiziano Mannoni, Isabella Ferrando and Rosa Pagella published a study that laid the foundations for what is known as “chrono-typology”, in which it was observed that on the buildings of mountainous areas dates engraved on stone structural frameworks were frequently found. From this finding other authors then underlined how in the territories studied (Valdinievole in Tuscany and the area around Brescia) these dates were most commonly found in mountainous areas and rarely on hills or on flatland. We cannot state whether and to what extent this statement can actually be generalised, but it cannot be denied that in several residential areas in the Alps and in the Apennines the tradition of engraving the construction date in stone (besides other symbols of various kinds) is extremely common. In Liguria, stone was also frequently used along the coast, but dated stone portals can be seen mostly in the mountainous inland areas. The Intelvi valley, near the city of Como, was the place of origin of the magistri antelami who monopolised the builder’s corporation in Genoa. In this valley more than 60 portals display dates from the XVII century to the XIX century. However, very few dated portals may be found in Genoa, the workplace of these masters.
Thanks to the digital catalogue of openings compiled by Tiziano Mannoni and by other members of the Institute for the History of Material Culture (ISCUM) since the 1880s, it is possible to outline a map of this phenomenon, which provides interesting and thought-provoking quantitative data, even if it is not yet systematic and exhaustive.

Up to now ISCUM has conducted a census on 2676 openings, 740 of which show an engraved date (718 in Italy and 22 in Italy’s bordering countries). These openings are located in north-central Italy, especially in Tuscany and Liguria (and more specifically in the Lunigiana area, where the research started). A lot of data (not yet recorded in a digital form) was collected through student theses from the Faculty of Architecture in Genoa on the Ligurian region under the guidance of Tiziano Mannoni.

Nearly all the openings registered up to now are located in mountainous areas and following the ISTAT (National Institute for Statistics) classification it can be noted that only 16 openings out of 718 are located in non-mountainous areas of the Ligurian coast and of southern Piedmont. In addition, only 6 are in “partially mountainous municipalities” in Liguria and Tuscany, while the rest are “completely mountainous municipalities” located in various areas throughout the Alps and the Apennines.

Looking at the chronology of these dates, the following list was compiled: 12 in the XV century, 68 in the XVI century, 154 in the XVII century, 242 in the XVIII century, 226 in the XIX century and 34 in the XX century. The source material confirms that sufficiently frequent cases are traceable from the fifteenth century, even if in the Camonica valley there are some dated portals which date back to the previous century.

Even if the data available is not exhaustive and any conclusion is only provisional at the moment, it can be claimed that the habit of remembering the construction, the expansion or the finishing of your home through the insertion of a date (often but not only engraved on the entry doorway) is mostly (but not exclusively) common among inhabitants of the Alps and the Apennines, reaching even the most remote areas. On the contrary this habit did not seemingly spread in any important urban context and it very rarely appears in flatland areas. It is possible that the frequency or the lack therein of dates on buildings depends upon different social structures and linked also with ownership of property. In many mountainous areas starting from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries ownership of property and small patches of land spread as these areas, which were not highly productive, became abandoned by the feudal royalty that had previously settled there for military reasons. A new class of small landowners came about with the possibility for them to own permanent homes, as an expression of the people living, working and investing their wealth in them. From the sixteenth century in the wide flatland areas, thanks to land reclamation and new agricultural techniques, big families of extra-urban lineage or of clerical bodies started owning vast and profitable plots of land. They built and administered the manufacturing and residential buildings for farmers and day labourers.

The present article does not seek to explain the social and cultural reasons which led many populations to leave a material trace of their history, but it aims to draw the reader’s attention to this interesting tradition, without forgetting that it helps us to rebuild the evolution of the inhabitants of these regions, thanks to analysis of the dates, which are then compared to the chrono-typological charts that we will be able to build.