

**Three Castles – Ten Venetian Well-Heads**

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The fame and travel appeal of Venice had a great impact on the refurbishing of medieval castles rebuilt in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century with Venetian well-heads. By the middle of the nineteenth century it became a custom of the European upper classes to travel to Venice and purchase well-heads to decorate the garden of their mansion house. Instead of presenting the well-heads listed in previous studies on Central European mansions<sup>1</sup>, the author has three rediscoveries to add to the corpus of known well-heads: well-heads in the castle of Wartburg (Germany), Kreuzenstein (Austria) and Bran (Romania). Some of the Venetian well-heads presented of these three castles are newly discovered Venetian relics hitherto thought to have been lost or never published before.

*Castle of Wartburg*

The reconstruction of the castle of Wartburg was ordered by the Grand Duke Karl Alexander of the House of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach in 1838. After these works finished in 1889, three Venetian well-heads were installed in the courtyards. The one in the centre of the northern courtyard is an original medieval carving from the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century (figs. 1-3). This cylindrical well-head is carved from Aurisina limestone. The surface is decorated with three horizontal bands which go round. On the top edge triple guilloche runs around while on the bottom edge twisted band can be deducted. The middle wide band is filled with arched columns containing different motifs, as Greek and Latin cross, Solomon's knot, single bird, two birds on either side of a tree and a fountain.

According to Ongania it's original placement was at the Isola di S. Erasmo in the lagoons of Venice, but in 1889 it was already in the property of the art dealer Giovanni Marcato<sup>2</sup>. However in the photographs of the Wartburg Castle it appears for the first time in the monograph of 1907<sup>3</sup>. The circumstances in which the well-head was transported from Venice to Wartburg are still unknown. In the publication of Voltolina in 1981, a confusion was

made: the photograph published by Ongania was badly retouched<sup>4</sup>. Rizzi noticed that composition of the piece today in Archeological Museum, Venice is very similar but there are some differences in the ornamentation<sup>5</sup>. Wessel dedicated a very good analysis to this well-head<sup>6</sup>. The closest parallels of this well-head are: 1. Venice, Archaeological Museum, Inv. no. 434<sup>7</sup>; 2. Ven-



1. Well-head. Wartburg, northern courtyard.



2. Well-head. Wartburg, northern courtyard.

3. Well-head. Wartburg, northern courtyard.

ice, in the forecourt of Palazzetto (Hotel) Stern a S. Barnaba<sup>8</sup>; 3. Venice, Archaeological Museum, Inv. No. 902<sup>9</sup>; 4. Treviso, Museo Civico<sup>10</sup>; 5. Surrey, private property<sup>11</sup>.

The photo collection of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, München, conserves photos of two other Venetian well-heads placed in the second / southern courtyard: one of them is yet there, the other one not any more. The piece that can be seen also today has a form of urn with narrow mouth (fig. 4). This type of well-head is a creation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Venetian masters. Other examples are in the court of the Guggenheim Museum in Venice (fig. 5)<sup>12</sup>; and in the Bjelovar Museum (Croatia) exposed in 2007 as of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>. On all three, the decoration attempts to imitate Romanesque motifs, such as birds, quadrupeds and snakes on the piece of Guggenheim Museum, two hares that are separated by a tree and two peacocks that drink on that of Bjelovar. The ornamentation of the carving of Wartburg is similar to that of the Museum of Guggenheim, it is articulated by an acanthus scroll. Among the scrolls we see quadrupeds eating grapes and two birds on either side of a column.

The piece, which is not any more where the photograph shows, is a composite type: the arched columns stand on the corners separately from the cylindrical body of the well-head. It's closest parallel can be found in the courtyard of Ca' Vendramin-Calergi, Venice<sup>14</sup>. The ornamentation can not be described on the basis of the photograph.



*Castle of Kreuzenstein*

The castle of Kreuzenstein rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Count Nepomuk Wilczek, was refurbished with neo- and original medieval carvings, among them three Venetian well-heads. Two of them are still in the castle, one in the second courtyard and the other in the chapel. The cylindrical well-head of the chapel was bought by Count Wilczek for his castle according to the album by Walcher published in 1907 (fig. 6)<sup>15</sup>. The dominant ornamentation is based on horizontal bands: twisted band, swirl tendril, scroll of half palmettes and vine-tendrils. The two closest parallel of this carving are today in unknown location: 1. known only from the drawing of Grevembroch's drawing: "La Famiglia Borella nel proprio Stabile Secoli fa così contraddistinse il suo Pozzo nella Contrada di S. Cassano" (fig. 7)<sup>16</sup>; 2. according to Ongania, it was originating from the house of Pegroni alla Mira, he saw it in the property of the art dealer Rietti in 1889<sup>17</sup>.

The well-head of the second courtyard (figs. 8-9) is part of a group of about ten late-Gothic Venice specimens produced between the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by the 14<sup>th</sup> century capitals of Palazzo Ducale, among which stands out the well-head of Ca' d'Oro by Bartolomeo Bon in 1427-1428<sup>18</sup>. The structure and type of decoration is dominated by angular protomes and allegorical figures. Its two reliefs depict the fortress and a coat of arms.

The third well-head, conserved today in the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, inv. no. 1936.19, is a composite one:

4. Well-head, Wartburg, southern courtyard.

5. Well-head. Venice, Guggenheim Museum.





angular pillars stand on the corners separately from the cylindrical body<sup>19</sup>. Ongania described this piece as deposited in the Museum of Fine Arts, S. Trovaso<sup>20</sup>. According to the Museum inventory, it was "purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, gift of Edward Drummond Libbey" in 1936. It's history and ornamentation is described in detail by Rizzi in the third edition of his book, *The Well-Heads of Venice*<sup>21</sup>. These three well-heads are part of the many Venetian art works, especially "patere", that the Wilczek family had collected in this castle<sup>22</sup>.

#### Castle of Bran

The castle of Bran was restored and arranged to be used as a residence of the royal family after the citizens of Brasov, through a unanimous decision of the city's council, offered the castle to Queen Maria of Romania in 1920.



6. *Well-head*. Castle of Kreuzenstein, chapel.

7. Giovanni Grevembroch, *Well-head*. Venezia, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, ms. Gradenigo-Dolfin 108.

8. *Well-head*. Castle of Kreuzenstein, second courtyard.

9. *Well-head*. Castle of Kreuzenstein, second courtyard.

10. *Well-head*. Bran, courtyard of the castle.



From 1920 until 1932, the castle was converted into a royal summer residence, coordinated by the Czech architect Karen Liman<sup>23</sup>. Four Venetian well-heads were placed in and next to the castle in this period.

On three of the faces of the late-fourteenth century Gothic well-head standing in the courtyard of the castle are sculpted two different amphoras and one shield surmounted by a helmet with a sitting lion (figs. 10-11). Cabbage leaves ornament the corners. This well-head was known till now only from the drawing series of Grevembroch with the caption: "Pozzo in contrada di S. Sofia nella corte tuttavia detta di Ca' Michiel, ma anticamente posseduta da chi apparteneva il sopradimostrato stemma"<sup>24</sup>. The shield represents a rampant lion, a widespread motif of coat of arms, on the basis of which it is difficult to identify the origin.

Three other well-heads are located at the foot of the castle. One of them is a remarkable Renaissance work with male masks on the corners of the octagonal and fruit festoons between them (fig. 12). A similar ornamentation can be seen on the piece in Corte Teraza near Barbaria de la Tole<sup>25</sup>. The second well-head has a cylindrical shape that widening down (fig. 13). The surface is divided to two horizontal bands which go round: on the top edge twisted band runs around while the wide band below is filled

with arched columns containing different motifs: single bird or two birds in different positions. The style and the mix of motifs imply a dating to the 19th century. The third piece at the foot of the castle is also cylindrical carving (fig. 14). A twisted band runs around on the top edge while the wide band below is filled with arched columns containing different leaves motifs: leaves themselves or with bird. The incongruity of style and motives clearly tends to 19th-century dating. On the basis of the style of the leaves the closest parallel is a well-head exposed in the Museum of Fine Arts Budapest, once in the park of the mansion of Count Hadik in Tormanádaska<sup>26</sup>.

While the well-heads of Wartburg and Kreuzenstein were more or less known in the literature of Venetian sculpture, the four pieces of Bran were unpublished till now. The history of these three monuments shows that use of Venetian carvings in refurbishing rebuilt castles was relevant in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The previous literature thought that the commerce with Venetian well-heads ceased with the outbreak of the first world war, but the case of Bran shows that the period between the two world wars was also active from this point of view<sup>27</sup>.

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11. *Well-head*. Bran, courtyard of the castle.

12. *Well-head*. Bran, at the foot of the castle.

13. *Well-head*. Bran, at the foot of the castle.

14. *Well-head*. Bran, at the foot of the castle.



**1** A. Tüskés, *Vere da pozzo veneziane in Ungheria*, "Commentari d'arte", XVII, 2011, pp. 61-74, cat. 48.  
**2** F. Ongania, *Raccolta delle vere da pozzo in Venezia*, Venezia 1911, cat. 123.  
**3** *Die Wartburg: Ein Denkmal Deutscher Geschichte und Kunst*, ed. by M. Baumgärtel, Berlin 1907.  
**4** G. Voltolina, *Le antiche vere da pozzo veneziane*, Venezia 1981, cat. 20.  
**5** A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo di Venezia: I puteali pubblici di Venezia e della sua laguna*, Venezia, 1981, p. 324.  
**6** K. Wessel, *Der Brunnen im Vogteihof der Wartburg*, "Wartburg Jahrbuch", 2001, pp. 9-24.  
**7** G. Grevembroch, *Supplimenti alle antichità delineate, alle varie e venete curiosità sacre e profane e alle cisterne*, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venezia, ms. Gradenigo-Dolfin 108, fig. 10; A. Rizzi, *Le vere da pozzo pubbliche di Venezia e del suo estuario*, "Bollettino dei musei civici veneziani", XXI, 1976, p. 115 (supplemento); A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., p. 324, fig. 375.  
**8** A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., pp. 14-15.  
**9** G. Grevembroch, *Supplimenti alle antichità...*, cit., fig. 3; F. Ongania, *Rac-*

*colta...*, cit., tav. 160; A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., pp. 304, 322-323, catt. 372-373.  
**10** R. Polacco, *Sculture e tassellati paleocristiani e altomedievali del Museo Civico di Treviso*, Treviso 1990, pp. 83-84, cat. 164; G. Tigler, *Scultura medievale a Treviso (VI - XIII secolo)*, in *Treviso e la sua civiltà nell'Italia dei Comuni*, ed. by P. Cammarosano, Trieste 2010, pp. 289-296.  
**11** P. Hetherington, *Two Medioeval Well-Heads in England*, "Arte Veneta", XXXIV, 1980, pp. 9-17.  
**12** A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., p. 55.  
**13** G. Jakovljević, *Baptismal Font, Daruvar*, in *A hundred Stones from a lost Paradise, Romanesque Sculpture in Museums and Collections between the Sava and the Drava Rivers*, Zagreb 2007, p. 55.  
**14** F. Ongania, *Raccolta...*, cit., fig. 129; A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., pp. 15-16.  
**15** *Burg Kreuzenstein an der Donau*, ed. by A. Ritter von Walcher, Wien 1914, p. 47.  
**16** Grevembroch, *Supplimenti alle antichità...*, cit., fig. 8; A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., p. 12.

**17** F. Ongania, *Raccolta...*, cit., fig. 31; G. Voltolina, *Le antiche vere...*, cit., fig. 18.  
**18** A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., figg. 11, 12, 376, 380, 381, 409-410.  
**19** *Burg Kreuzenstein*, cit., p. 70.  
**20** F. Ongania, *Raccolta...*, cit., tav. 128.  
**21** A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo di Venezia. I puteali pubblici di Venezia e della sua laguna*, Venezia 2007, fig. 454-456.  
**22** *Burg Kreuzenstein*, cit., p. 31.  
**23** R. Coroamă, M. Neaguțu, O. Ilie, M. Verzea, *Familia Regală O istorie în imagini*, București 2008.  
**24** G. Grevembroch, [*Sulle vere da pozzo di Venezia pubbliche e private*], Venezia 1761, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Gradenigo-Dolfin ms. 107, fig. 13.  
**25** A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., pp. 154-155.  
**26** J. Balogh, *Katalog der ausländischen Bildwerke des Museums der Bildenden Künste in Budapest IV.-XVIII. Jahrhundert*, Budapest 1975, l. 35, cat. no. 10, ll. fig. 11; A. Rizzi, *Vere da pozzo...*, cit., pp. 55-57; A. Tüskés, *Vere da pozzo veneziane...*, cit., p. 66.  
**27** A. Tüskés, *Vere da pozzo veneziane...*, cit., p. 61.