

Prehistory, Cominium and the old Cerreto

The current town of **Cerreto Sannita** was built ex novo after the terrible earthquake of the 5th June **1688** that had destroyed the "**old Cerreto**". About this last settlement remains only the leavings of mighty tower and some ruins brought to light in recent archaeological excavations.

However, Cerreto has much older origins: in the locality Morgia S. Angelo or **Leonessa** was found a prehistoric settlement with finds dating back to **Paleolithic age** (100.000-35.000 years ago). Later than prehistoric settlement it is the Sannita-Roman village called **Cominium**, which was in Madonna della Libera, where it's possible to admire the remains of a mighty **temple**.

The **old Cerreto** was cited for the first time in one Imperial decree of the year **972**. Since the 12th century it was **Sanframondos'** feud, family who made Cerreto capital of the county. In the fifteenth century, it became **Carafas'** property. They kept these lands until the abolition of the **feudal system** which took place during the reign of **Giuseppe Bonaparte** (1806).

The boom of the Cerretese economy

From the 15th century, Cerreto experienced an increasing economic and demographic development, thanks to the flourishing woolen **cloth** industry and trade, becoming a **bishop's seat**. Almost all the buildings we admire in Cerreto were owned by woolen **merchants** and notaries who signed the various contracts. The same churches were built by their covens who owned thousands of sheep, earning by each large **profits**.

Cerreto's pottery

Cerreto Sannita has been working clay ever since: within the prehistoric settlement of Leonessa there was an oven for cooking clay. The current **Cerretese pottery** dates back instead to the years that followed the earthquake of 1688, when many masters (masons, stuccoers, ceramists etc.) came to Cerreto from everywhere to contribute to reconstruction of the town. The best-known potter to those years was **Nicolò Russo**, who came from Naples. He was to conceive of forms and decorations that have entered Cerreto **Ceramic Tradition**. In his shop, you they formed men who gave birth to whole generations of Potters: **Festa, Marchitto, Giustiniani**.

The "Faenza": The district of ceramists

The southern part of Cerreto in the 18th century was also called "**Faenza**" because there were numerous **ceramic** workshops, whose owners were transmitted by notarial acts (Nicolò Russo, Nicola di Gemma, Domenico Scarano, Giuseppe Buonotte, Giuseppe Giustiniani, Antonio Gaudioso etc.). Testimonies of this were found remains of **furnaces**, ceramic fragments and tiles of scrap, under different homes located in the ward of the **Cathedral**.

The name "Faenza" given to the district derives from the **town**, in Emilia Romagna, which is famous around the world for the quality of its ceramics, so to become synonymous with these.

The earthquake of 1688 and reconstruction

In the afternoon on the **5th June of 1688**, a catastrophic **earthquake** (7.7 Richter's degree) that raises to the ground the old Cerreto killing about 3.000 Cerretese.

Marino Carafa, Count Martius' brother, brought here immediately from Naples doctors, meals and medicines to assist the **survivors**. Marino himself tried to get out from debris people trapped, saving many women together with their **children**. According to ancient documents it was Marino that decided to rebuild the town on an anymore stable and flat ground, probably with **Giovanni Battista Manni** engineer's advice; decision ratified by Count Martius, who obliged the Cerretesi more **reluctant** to obey and any lack of compliance to laws was punished by the imprisonment.

Thus, the current Cerreto was born, characterized by a regular layout that suffers from Renaissance culture of the **ideal city**.



The emblem

It shapes a **cerris**, very widespread tree on the Italian hills belonging to the kind of oak. The legend around recites "City of Cerreto, the capital of Superior State". Cerreto was in fact the capital of the Northern feuds of the Carafa.

Ceramic Newsagents

In the first hall of the museum there are 1:1 backlit photographic reproductions of **Cerreto's ceramic** newsstands, drawn from specimens at Cerreto Sannita and in neighbouring countries.

Those who were commissioning the newsstands placed them on the facades of their homes or their work-shops to invoke **divine protection**.

The deities most depicted in Cerreto are the **Madonna** (especially Madonna Immacolata and Madonna del Carmelo), Sant'Antonio di Padova and Arcangelo Michele.



This guide is a draft. It must be corrected by English language teachers. We apologize for any errors.

The Cerretese *belle époque*

In the first half of the 19th century, the Cerretese economy knew a period of **decline**. The wool industry, that for centuries had created riches, ceased to exist. Only thanks to the **Unification of Italy**, the situation had a sharp recovery: the realization of infrastructures, roads, cemetery, railway, aqueduct and the creation of public schools destined to the "people's maidens", led to a net improvement of living **conditions**.

So much work was shaken for a few years by the boss bandit **Cosimo Giordano**, sad figure passed to the chronicles only for the many murders, seizures and thefts that he did even before the Unification of Italy. He used the money from extortions to finance its own foreign trips.

Just during a trip to France, he was betrayed by a woman who, after having recognized it, led him to Genova where he was **arrested** in 1882. Known guilty of many crimes, he was sentenced to forced **labors long for life** and died in 1888, in prison of Favignana in Sicily.

The improvement of the economic conditions followed at Unification of Italy was witnessed also since the birth of **three banks**, closed a few decades later, due to the severe economic crisis followed by the former World War. The growing literacy led to the foundation of newspapers, magazines and the writing of numerous books that mainly concerned the local history. In those years, the advent of electricity was celebrated by a delightful "electric light ode" in cyrillic dialect written by poet Pietro Paolo Fusco. .

What to eat and what to buy

In many restaurants of Cerreto Sannita you can eat traditional dishes based on **typical products**. In April and May, it is advisable to enjoy dishes with delicious "**virni**", mushrooms growing in the highland pastures. Tasty also the cheeses, produced by the cerretese dairies and the **extra virgin olive oil** obtained in the mills located in the districts. Cerreto's oil has gained numerous awards also at national level. In some farms, wine is also produced, and tasty jams and delicious paté on the bread are served. In the many **ceramic workshops** scattered around the town, you can buy souvenirs to bring to friends and family.

The Cerretese ceramic production

Cerreto's potteries are of "popular inspiration". Cerretese ceramists interpreted the artistic taste of time **synthesizing** it in shapes and design decors. The latter are generally fluid and simple even though there are many elaborate accomplishments wanted by rich commands. The decorations of those potteries are strongly affected by artistic creativity at the base of the **Neapolitan Baroque**. However, there are no influences from other Italian and foreigners (France and Spain) manufactures. The **typical colours** of the ceramic are yellow, rummy green, blue Cerreto and orange. The contours are manganese. The Cerretese pottery is also produced in **S. Lorenzello** (in the past, part of Cerreto Sannita).

Most relevant events

There are many events organized during the year: from the "Sagra degli Asparagi e dei Virni" (May) to the bovine exhibition (September), from "Buongiorno Ceramica" (June) to "Domeniche dell'olio" (November), "Presepiarte" (December) and the Orange Flag days. During the summer, numerous religious festivals are often celebrated by pyrotechnics.

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Cerreto Sannita



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Cerreto Sannita: Why is it a foundation city?

The founding cities are established centers based on **new regulations**. It is the case of Cerreto Sannita: edited with a regular urban layout after the destruction of the old medieval town center that was located a short distance away. When the **Carafa family** imposed the construction of the **new Cerreto**, he was concerned about making the reconstruction as fast as possible by requiring those who had occupied the land to build their homes without interruption, forcing the land to be sold to others. There were also built houses that occupants could pay in comfortable rates with the interest of 6%. The exemption from communal **taxes on foreigners** who had settled in Cerreto (which was already included in the civic statutes of the fifteenth century) facilitated the arrival of many foreign workers, especially Neapolitans, in the town. Cerreto, the capital of the upper county of Carafa, gives its feudalists thousands and thousands of ducats coming mainly from taxation on woolen cloths. It was therefore **necessary** to rebuild the town as soon as possible to repair the Carafa family's crates

CERRETO'S POTTERY MUSEUM

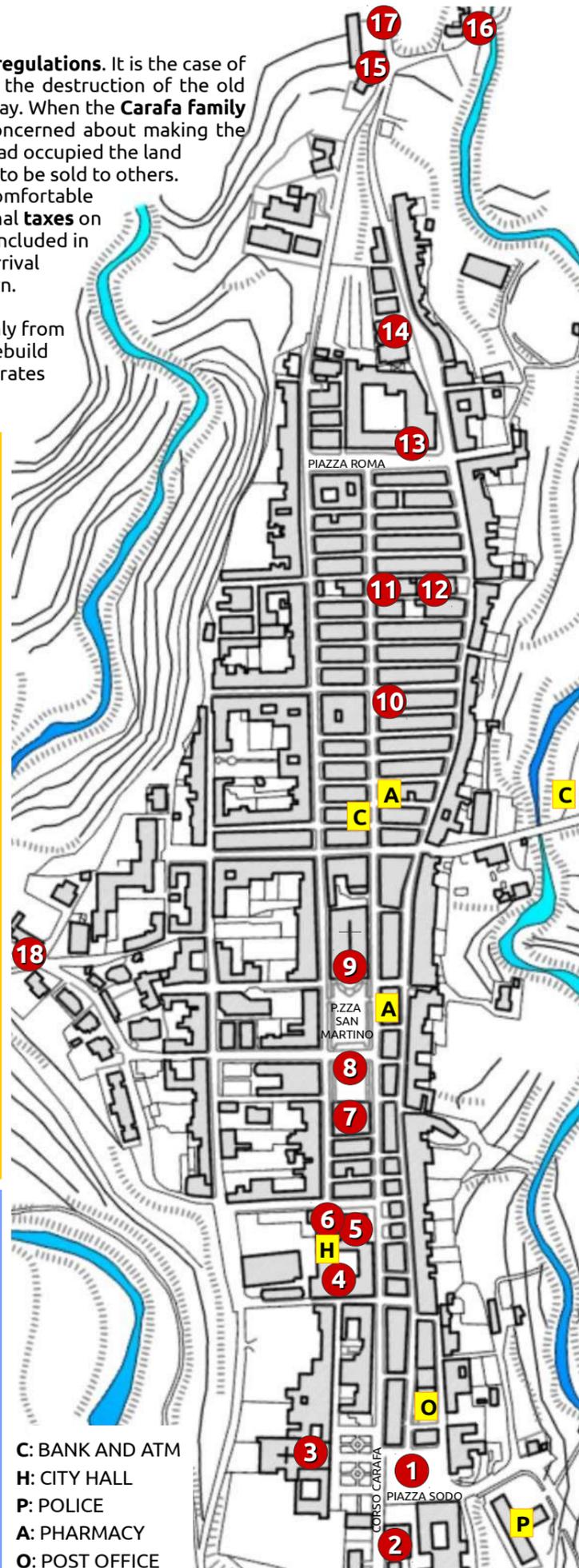
Inside the **palace S. Antonio** (in the map, 4) it finds the civic museum of ceramic cerretese, established in 1993 and expanded several times, thanks to donations from private families and the Institute of Art. The museum contains hundreds of finds: from Paleochristian lilies to the amorphous amphorae, from the **blue Cerreto albarelli** to the sweeping tureens, from the dishes exquisitely decorated to the prestigious Rosati ink-pot. The most conspicuous collection is that of the **Mazzacane family**, which collects precious cerretese ceramics mainly from the eighteenth century. The museum, whose entrance is for a fee, is open every morning (Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays even in the afternoon). It is closed on Mondays.



THE MARCON

The **contemporary art ceramic** section of the civic museum, set up in the cloister of Palazzo S. Antonio, contains the works of the most important Italian ceramists of the last decades.

The exhibition is entitled to the potter **Salvatore Cipolla** (1933-2006). He launch the idea of making Cerreto Sannita the first biennial of contemporary ceramic art, which took place in 1998



C: BANK AND ATM
H: CITY HALL
P: POLICE
A: PHARMACY
O: POST OFFICE

THE TOP FIVE PLACES IN CERRETO SANNITA: the five most interesting and suggestive places to see absolutely



Sites of Interest in the Old Town: **1.** *Luigi Sodo's Square*: in the center there's the Armed Victory, monument to the inhabitants of Cerreto who had fallen into the war. It faces the former ducal palace, now, High School Institute. **2.** *Santa Maria di Costantinopoli's Church*: it has a beautiful facade with a medallion made of stucco, depicting an angel pouring water on Constantinople in flames. **3.** The *episcopal palace* has a graceful portal surrounded by stucco rococò and a wooden masquerade. The Cathedral has a unique stone facade and two low bells covered with majolica scales; inside there are beautiful eighteenth-century paintings. **4.** *Cerreto's Ceramic Museum* is housed in the former convent of the Conventual Friars of S. Antonio. **5.** The *Church of Sant'Antonio* has a sixteenth-century wooden blade, a Renaissance Crucifix and a painting realized by Francesco Celebrano. **6.** The *seat of the Società Operaia*, in neoclassical style, was made in 1884. Attached to the latter, it's the *Confraternita della Madonna del Pianto* with a frescoed dome. **7.** The block south of Piazza S. Martino hosted the *Municipal Theater* (Palazzo del Genio), the feudal prisons, the ducal tavern and the hospital. **8.** The *Dolphins' fountain* is characterized by the combination of lighter stones with darker stones. **9.** The *Collegiate of San Martino*, featuring local stone staircases (1733), houses 18th-century paintings, a magnificent baroque organ and ceramic ceramic floorings. **10.** The *Church of San Gennaro* hosts the museum of sacred art. The exterior is dominated by the alternation of the majolica of the dome and the facade stones. **11.** The graceful *Palace of Monte di Pietà* dates back to the end of the 18th century. **12.** In the *Church of Santa Maria* the dead were buried until the middle of the eighteenth century as the skull recalls in the large stone portal. **13.** The former *Clergy Monastery* (Institute Leo XIII) hosts the *Sisters of Good and Perpetual Assistance*. The annexed church is one of the best preserved in Cerreto and has a large atrium entirely paved with ceramic ceramics. **14.** The *Churches of San Giuseppe and San Rocco* existed in this place even before the earthquake of 1688. There is an interesting burial crypt under the church of San Rocco. **15.** The tremendous remains of the *Tintoria Ducale* testify to the importance that woolen cloths have had in the past for the local economy.

Sites of Interest Outside the Old Town: **16.** Taking the road leading to the *Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie*, it's easy to come shortly to the important religious site. In the church there is a beautiful carved wooden shovel. Continuing, after about 3km, it's possible to reach the *Leonessa or Morgia S. Angelo*, an interesting rock stone similar to a feline. Inside there is a rock cave. **17.** The Old Cerreto route leads after 1km to the ruins of the ancient Cerreto destroyed by the earthquake of 1688. The remains of the *Tower* stand out. Continuing and making the necessary deviations you can visit the rural *churches of Madonna del Soccorso, Sant'Anna, Madonna della Libera* (in the churchyard are the remains of a temple of Roman age), *Madonna del Carmine* and *San Giovanni*. **18.** The road leading to Cusano Mutri leads after 3km to the *Hannibal Bridge*, an ancient bridge over the Titerno stream. Continuing, you reach the *Forelle di Lavello*, small canyons dug out of the water over the millennia.



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Cerreto's Big Masks: what is their meaning?

In several Cerretese palaces, the main gates are embellished with carved wooden masks. Even today scholars discuss their actual function: some say that they had a simple **decorative** function, others claim to possess more mysterious and magical meanings, pinned on the power to move evil and negative **influences** from home. Others still see in the masks signs for the hikers: the smiling ones indicated welcome and hospitality...from the angry ones it was better to stay away!



Cultural volunteers organize free guided tours. For information:

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The map to the side was elaborated on a plan designed by Architect Nicola Ciaburri.