

Comune Berzano di Tortona

Category: Municipality

business description: Berzano is a small agricultural municipality located on the foothills of the hills, dominating the plain with an enchanting view of the Grue Valley and the lower Curone Valley. The population is distributed across numerous hamlets (Cappellette, Valbona, Capoluogo, Chiesa, Magostino, Inselmina), which have been experiencing a gradual repopulation in recent years, thanks primarily to their proximity to major roads.

The town's tourist appeal is linked to its splendid landscape and characteristic crops. The town has a strong agricultural vocation: in particular, the area's favorable climate, combined with the tenacity and perseverance of local farmers, ensure that the production of high-quality red wines (Barbera and Croatina) and white wines (Cortese and Timorasso) takes on a particularly prominent role. This municipality's vocation par excellence is also the production of fruit—peaches, strawberries, apricots, and cherries—which, grown in perfect harmony with the surrounding environment, create a unique and unmistakable landscape.

The toponym Berzano derives from the Latin Berceolus, a derivation of the classical Bertium, meaning "hedge, garden." There is little information regarding the town's founding.

Officially mentioned for the first time in 998, a Roman foundation can most likely be ruled out: no artifacts from that era have ever emerged, and the layout of the roads and farm paths does not appear to be connected to the so-called "centuriation," the division of the land into square centuries measuring 710.4 meters on each side, typical of Roman colonization.

The most widely accepted hypothesis, though unproven, is that Berzano's origins date back to the Lombard invasions (7th-8th centuries), when the local populations moved to more inaccessible, hard-to-reach, and therefore more defensible, locations. Berzano, therefore, may have originated as a castrum (fortress) with a primarily defensive purpose, an origin that would unite it with other municipalities in the Curone Valley.

The deed of 998 concerns the sale of several lands, including Bersanum Derthonensium, by the Bishop of Tortona to Duke Ottone. The town's connection to the Berzano family of Tortona is controversial; some historians believe they may have played a key role in the construction of the first settlements, only to later abandon it for reasons that are difficult to reconstruct. In a deed of 1327, Berzano appears among the municipalities of the Tortona district, from which it passed, at the end of the century, to the fiefdom of Volpedo, controlled by the Visconti.

On November 9, 1412, Filippo Maria Visconti ceded the fiefdom to Pietro Cameri of Tortona, General of the Duke's Military States of Oltrepo. Pietro Cameri was granted considerable jurisdictional autonomy (Berzano did not, in fact, depend on the Tortona magistrates).

Upon Cameri's death (August 12, 1426), the fiefdom passed, according to his will, to the Fabbrica (administration) of the Milan Cathedral, then under construction, with specific clauses: a prohibition on levying taxes exceeding a certain amount and on transferring or selling ownership to others. This last condition was respected until 1733, when, due to growing debt and the changing political situation, the Fabbrica was forced to sell the fiefdom to Boniforte Busseti of Tortona, who assumed it with a seigneurial title.

After the last member of the Busseti family died out, his wife proceeded to sell fractions of the property to local private individuals.

In 1928 the municipality, which had remained autonomous until then, was abolished and merged with nearby Volpedo, from which it separated only in 1947.

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Assessment



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Pubblica in sezione Territorio

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