



Photo: former church of San Giacomo in Ferrara | © Mauro Ferretti

IS THE FIRST GRAND MASTER OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR BURIED IN FERRARA?

The research team of the Salzburg International Templar Studies Network - SITSN for short - has made new findings on the possible burial place of Hugo de Payens. Sources suggest that the first Grand Master of the medieval Order of the Knights Templar was buried in the Upper Italian city of Ferrara. The province of Salzburg is funding this research with 230,000 euros for the next three years.

The legal historian Daniele Mattiangeli and the bioarchaeologist Jan Cemper-Kieslich from the Department of Forensic Medicine and Forensic Neuropsychiatry at the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg founded the "Salzburg International Templar Studies Network" in June 2021, a unique research network.

The Salzburg researchers are the only team worldwide to receive such strong support for their work on the Templar Order. The City and Province of Salzburg, the Archdiocese of Salzburg and the Holy See, represented by the Pontifical Committee for Historical Research, are official patrons. The researchers have been granted unrestricted access to the Vatican Secret Archives and the Vatican Library. The SITSN is also pleased to have received research funding from the Province of Salzburg amounting to around 230,000 euros for the next three years.

Document from 1621 provides clues to Ferrara

The research team is currently investigating a lead to the possible burial place of the first Templar Grand Master - discovered in a document dating back to 1621. Mauro Giorgio Ferretti (Grand Master of what is currently the largest Templar association in Italy) and Daniele Mattiangeli, along with a project manager from SITSN, came across the written source a few months ago, written by the historian Guarini, which describes Ferrara as Payens' burial place.

In the past months, the scientists have tried to locate the possible burial site using geo-pro prospector methods (geo-radar) and were able to narrow the search down to a small area: the former church of San Giacomo - now Cinema Apollo - in Ferrara. Further geo-radar investigations revealed clues to five possible locations in the ground where graves could be present. Following this, it was even possible to locate two historic stone graves, one on the right and another on the left past the former church door.

An archaeological, pre-analytical measure in early November 2021 also led to promising preliminary findings. The subsequent on-site investigations in Ferrara were commissioned and managed by Mauro Giorgio Ferretti and Esplora SRL - a company at the University of Trieste for geological investigations at historical sites.

The data from the geo-radar survey is currently - at the end of 2021 - being processed by colleagues from the fields of archaeology and anthropology at the University of Trieste. The data will then be sent to the SITSN research team for further historical processing. Legal historian Mattiangeli provides a forecast: "In the coming weeks we will work with Grand Master Mauro Ferretti and the mayor of Ferrara to obtain permission to excavate the former church and to recover the two skeletons from the graves for analysis. Should results from the examination of the remains match historical information, and if we can prove the remains are those of Hugues de Payens, it would be a sensational discovery."



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