

# Tommaso Ghinucci

Italian Architect and hydraulics engineer  
(16th century)

The place and date of birth of this architect of Sieneese origin, son of Bartolomeo, active for a long time in the 16th century between Bagnaia, Viterbo, Tivoli and Rome are not known.

Nothing is known of his training; while it is known that soon, in 1528, he received as cleric the benefit of the church of S. Andrea in Vico di Val d'Elsa directly from Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi. Previously, in 1525, he had appeared as a witness to the will dictated by Piero Ridolfi, father of the cardinal.

In the years 1535-36 Ghinucci may have designed the loggia of S. Agata dei Goti in Rome, whose gardens and part of the building were used by Cardinal Ridolfi himself. In January 1538 Ghinucci is documented in Bagnaia in the house of Giuliano Gallo to comment on the decree with which Cardinal Ridolfi had abrogated an agreement on loans between the Community and some Jews. On 9 Aug. 1538, in the bishop's residence of Bagnaia, the family member Ghinucci is registered in a deed of power of attorney of the same cardinal. The presence of the Sieneese architect is justified by the works in the bishop's palace, then the Loggia, and by the construction in progress of the road straight connecting with the church of the Madonna della Quercia, recently joined to Viterbo also with another straight road wanted by Paul III. Only between 13 Oct. 1540 and on 3 Oct. 1541 there are the first purchases of buildings for convenience and expansion of the palace and the relative loggias, which, together with other new structures, were intended to be built right on the road and on the access door to the castle, opening, near the ancient round tower, a new entrance further away and protected by another turret.

On 9th Oct. 1542, in the presence of Ghinucci, it is specified that Cardinal Ridolfi to open the new door and for the defense of the castle of Bagnaia had already had both the church and the sacristy of S. Giovanni demolished as well as some private houses and, in the same place, had built the new door and had built another church with a sacristy. The private individuals, whose houses had been demolished, were rewarded by giving them the old hospital with its rooms, granaries, shops and stables; finally the rectors of the Confraternity of the Disciplined of St. John, administrators of the hospital, accepted in exchange other buildings, which the same bishopric owned near Bagnaia. Even if the text of the piecwork with the workers engaged in the Bagnaia construction site is not known, the part received by Ghinucci emerges from the accounts for the years 1542-49. Only on 6 wk. 1553, on behalf of the rectors of the parish church of S. Maria, Ghinucci and the Roman Giuliano Gallo, well informed on the transformations undergone by the places, estimated the value of some rooms at 80 ducats, which, near the said church and above the new gate and the other church of S. Giovanni, they had been demolished by Cardinal Ridolfi, to create other rooms, in order to allow the expansion of the building.

Numerous documents during the fifth decade of the sixteenth century testify to an

assiduous presence of Ghinucci in Bagnaia, where he took part in the numerous city restructures.

In the autumn of 1543, Ghinucci from Bagnaia reached Cardinal Ridolfi in his diocese of Vicenza, where, however, it remains to be verified whether the works for that bishop's palace were carried out on his project.

The prestige achieved by Ghinucci is testified by a letter dated 1545 from Donato Giannotti, a family member of Cardinal Ridolfi, in which he is defined as "princeps architectorum". For the works of the Bagnaia palace, the same Community was engaged in the transport of tiles and lime for the years 1547-48 precisely at the request of Ghinucci, who also proposed to build a fountain outside the new castle gate. On 9 July 1549 in a dispute between private individuals, Ghinucci himself lent himself to act as depositary, defined as "architector" by Cardinal Ridolfi.

After the death of Cardinal Ridolfi, on 16 April. 1550 Pope Julius III's commissioner took possession of Bagnaia and allowed its transfer to his brother Baldovino Del Monte. As early as 9 Aug. 1550 the passage of Ghinucci to the service of the cardinal of Ferrara, Ippolito (II) d'Este, who in Rome, on the Quirinal hill, had just bought a vineyard with the intention of transforming it into a garden, and in whose hydraulics works was able to use Ghinucci, paid with an annual salary of 100 scudi until January 1559.

In 1553 Ghinucci was again entrusted with the project for the aqueduct and the source outside the Bagnaia gate.

On 31 Aug. 1555 in the Council of Bagnaia the methods proposed by Ghinucci were discussed to complete the new aqueduct in the upper section; the fountain in the square outside the castle was not completed until 1577.

On July 15, 1561, the travel expenses of Ghinucci from Montefiascone to Rome are documented together with the architect Giovanni Alberto Galvani and with the painter Girolamo Muziano in the interest of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. In the years 1560-61 it is probable that Ghinucci was engaged in solving the technical problems for the construction of the aqueduct from Monte Sant'Angelo to the Villa d'Este in Tivoli; his activity on this site is documented by the salary received up to December 1569.

Cardinal Ippolito d'Este made use of Ghinucci to also build the aqueduct and the fountain in Piazza della Rocca in Viterbo as attested by some documents between 1562 and 1563, a work that in the past had been erroneously attributed to Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola.

The coats of arms of the two cardinal governors and the same inscription of 1566 trace the beginning of the work to Cardinal Ippolito (II) d'Este and the end to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. On 16 Dec. 1562 the Viterbo stonemason Paolo Cenni undertook to build the first part of the new fountain for 160 scudi, paying for any excess the price "declared by Messer Thomasso Ghinucci", present at the stipulation of the deed in the governor's palace. On 19th Dec. 1563 Paolo Cenni received the completion of the fountain on a piecework basis with precise references both to the model already made by the Sieneese architect and to the "drawing that Messer Thomasso will give you".

In 1565 Ghinucci was engaged in Rome for the cardinal of Ferrara in the works of the villa in Monte Cavallo across the road.

The expansion of the village outside the walls began as early as 1565, on 6 January. 1567 it was decided that in the next arrival of Ghinucci in Bagnaia the square and the streets along which to build according to terms to be implemented should be marked; so on the following 3 February the methods were discussed with the same architect and three people were elected with the authority to provide jointly. In the Council of 13 Feb. 1567 the drawing relating to the square and the streets was then presented with the places where it could have been built; he also proposed not to take the intermediate road towards the church of S. Sebastiano.

Ghinucci also had to work since the time of Cardinal Ridolfi on the transformation of the "barco" from a hunting lodge to the future Villa Lante.

In particular, Ghinucci can be referred to the first straight road that connects the ancient round tower of Bagnaia to the lower portal of the barco, or the "new road with which you go to the barco" as attested by an act of 25 May 1566; together with the original portal (the current one was rebuilt after the last world war). The other two straights, which together with the first form the trident of the new village of Bagnaia, were drawn and delimited on the spot, together with the square, already in 1567. In the new addition of the barco, the succession of the first three terraces has the western side coinciding with the continuation of the first straight of the trident; but the northern side of the first large square terrace is sized in such a way as to make its median point coincide, where the upper portal of the barco is, with the axis of the second straight of the village, while the north-east corner touches the western side of the third straight. therefore Ghinucci's collaboration within the villa and the village had to continue later, at the time of Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara, as attested by a document dated 10 December. 1574 in which the cardinal himself recognized the many services rendered by Ghinucci in the architecture of the building and the barque.

On 17th Jan. 1577 an abandoned road, divided by Ghinucci on commission from Cardinal Gambara, is sold to private individuals, to use the proceeds in the decoration of the new fountain in the village square. And again on 30 Sept. 1581 Michel de Montaigne, in his visit to Villa Lante in Bagnaia, testifies to us that "the same Messer Tomaso da Siena" who had worked in Tivoli was active in the construction site still under construction and therefore had the possibility of adding new inventions to the old ones, landing in the last work with the most interesting results of his entire production. In the addition of the barco, as a work by Ghinucci, the main fountain is then described, then with a large pyramid of water, and the four small lakes that surround it with the partly balustraded avenues and located right on the first square terrace.

Taking into account his advanced age, it is probable that after 1582 Ghinucci led a life that was no longer professionally active but almost retired, worrying only about managing the numerous patrimonial incomes, not neglecting relatives, friends and servants. The last time in which Ghinucci appears in the bishop's palace of Bagnaia is on November 8th. 1582.

The exact date of Ghinucci's death is not known, certainly prior to 21 Aug. 1587, when the episcopal vicar took formal possession of Ghinucci house in the village of Bagnaia for what was due to the bishopric.

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