

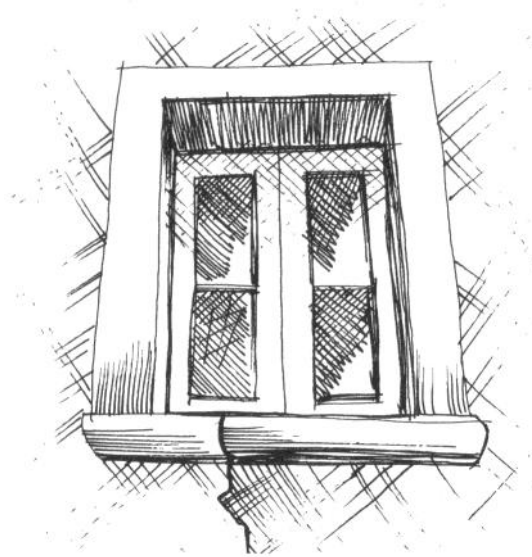
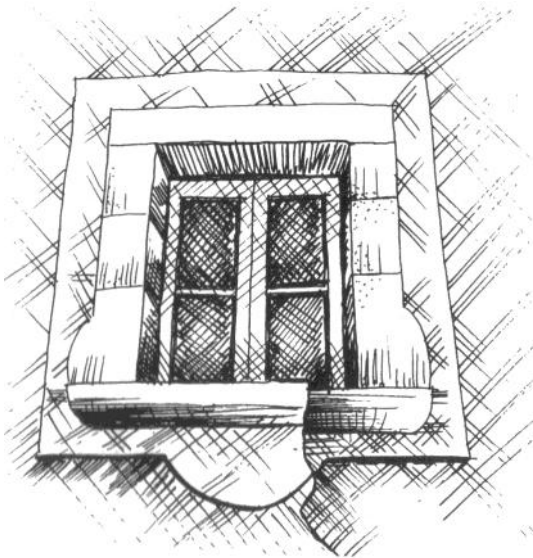
Alain Rideaud

STRANGE WINDOW-SILLS...

A rectangle has four sides - of course! And a rectangular window, anywhere in the world, has two vertical members, an upper edge, the lintel, and a lower edge, the sill.

Whenever a technical expert looks at a facade, his gaze will always pause at these horizontal features of lintel and sill because any cracks indicate that the building has suffered deformation. When exposed to vertical acceleration these structural features are likely to break. The window surrounds in San Lorenzello have of course been put to the test by successive earthquakes and the cracks in the stones which form the window sills bear witness to the fact.

On closer examination, however, it will be seen that some of these stones are deliberately cracked, that



is to say the sill is made up of two separate parts. Such a method would appear at first glance to be an anomaly. It is not usual in old buildings.

A number of points should be made here:

- the length of the other stones, notably those used for the vertical members of the surround, show that this method was not chosen because stones of the requisite length were unobtainable in the quarries;
- these "split" sills can be seen in the older architecture of San Lorenzello (apparently well before 1805). They are seen in windows and also in small balconies (projecting only 30 cm or so from the facade);
- some windows or balconies do not conform to this rule, especially in buildings later than 1805. But very often the stone which forms the sill has cracked of its own accord but we do not know

exactly when.

Even though we cannot offer an explanation, it is clear that by using this method, the window surround becomes a flexible structure. If exposed to vertical stresses at both ends, the sill can absorb these stresses, be upthrust in two parts and then settle back to its original position.

