

***BAT'A AND THE COMPANY TOWNS. An international project on their origin, evolution and rehabilitation.***

**G.L. Fontana – C. Fumian**

Worker villages and company towns can be considered as a central and unique phenomenon of modern industrialization, whose peculiar aspects could be reconstructed in a comparative and 'evolutive' perspective. This phenomenon has been so far investigated through the analysis of some of the most developed areas of Western Europe and North America. In the last few years, however, research has underlined the importance of company towns in other geographic areas of less traditional investigation, showing that this phenomenon is actually more widespread than is thought.

At the History Department of Padua University, since 2007 a research project aiming at studying company towns through a wider vision of its nature and extent has been carried out under the lead of prof. Luigi Fontana (coordinator) and with the help of prof. Carlo Fumian (scientific committee member).

The contribution to the international conference "Company Towns of the Bat'a Concern", which shows the international and interdisciplinary project "Company Towns in the world. Origin, Evolution and rehabilitation (16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries)", focuses specifically on the Bat'a town and on its relationships with some other main company town sites worldwide.

Therefore, the main research actions of the project concern a census able to give an adequate overview of the phenomenon worldwide and an all-round interpretation on the phenomenon, that entails the use of analytical tools belonging to multiple disciplines involved (from historical sciences to economic, sociological and anthropological sciences, from historical archaeology to architecture and town planning, from business history to the history of material culture and mentality);

Dealing with a wide range of case studies, the contribution aims at putting the Bat'a case among the most significant experiences between in Europe and other areas of the world. A comparative picture that can show up common aspects and differences on the territorial, social and economic level, characterizing the origins and evolution of the phenomenon (causes, influences, interdependencies, continuities and fractures).

The Bat'a case will be part of the Company Towns *Virtual Atlas* (containing all historical, economic, urban planning and architectural elements), as part of a multifunctional web site linked to the main international industrial heritage sites.