



IN SEARCH OF THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES. CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN 11TH-12TH-CENTURY ITALY

edited by

Alberto Cotza, Giuseppe Petralia



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**In Search of the High Middle Ages.
Change and Continuity
in 11th-12th-century Italy**

edited by Alberto Cotza and Giuseppe Petralia

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Searching for the High Middle Ages. Past and present of a periodisation

by Giuseppe Petralia

This volume publishes the proceedings of a seminar that, in December 2022, brought together some of the leading scholars who, primarily with regard to the Italian context, have studied and continue to study the 11th and 12th centuries. The aim was, and remains, to sharpen the focus on the characteristics, complexities, timing, and dynamics of what many consider to be the greatest phase of transformation and internal turning point within the medieval millennium, linking it to the notion of the “High Middle Ages”. The introduction outlines, in broad strokes, the evolution – within European and international medieval studies – of the main historiographical approaches connected to this crucial issue. It then argues for the necessity and timeliness of a new discussion freed from outdated narrative frameworks, and also attempts to define the complex set of questions to which such a discussion should respond. Central to the inquiry is the problem of establishing plausible connections and interweavings among the different levels of social reality and across the various spaces affected by change. In the final section, the analysis of each contribution is followed by an initial assessment of their impact on the debate.

Sono qui pubblicati gli atti di un seminario che, nel dicembre 2022, ha riunito alcuni dei principali studiosi che, prevalentemente per lo spazio italiano, si sono occupati e si occupano dei secoli XI e XII. L'obiettivo era, ed è, mettere a fuoco caratteristiche, complessità, tempi e dinamiche di quella che molti considerano la maggiore fase di trasformazione e di svolta interna al millennio medievale, collegandola alla nozione di “pieno medioevo”. L'introduzione traccia a grandissime linee l'evolversi, nella medievistica europea ed internazionale, dei principali atteggiamenti storiografici connessi a questo nodo cruciale. Argomenta quindi la necessità e l'attualità di una nuova discussione affrancata da schemi narrativi superati, e prova anche a definire il complesso questionario a cui essa dovrebbe rispondere. Centrale appare il problema di riuscire a stabilire connessioni e intrecci plausibili tra i diversi livelli della realtà sociale e nei diversi spazi investiti

Giuseppe Petralia, University of Pisa, Italy, giuseppe.petralia@unipi.it, 0000-0003-2817-8014

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dal cambiamento. Nella parte finale, alla analisi di ciascuno degli interventi segue un primo bilancio del loro contributo al dibattito.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, periodization, High Middle Ages, change, historiography.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, periodizzazione, pieno medioevo, cambiamento, storiografia.

...découper l'histoire en périodes, c'est-à-dire
substituer à la continuité insaisissable du temps
une structure signifiante.

(Antoine Prost, *Douze leçons sur l'histoire*,
Paris: Seuil, 1996, 115)

This book brings together the papers which were presented and discussed in Pisa from 5 to 7 December 2022 at an event entitled *Periodizzare il medioevo. Una discussione su continuità e cambiamento nell'Italia dei secoli XI e XII*. This formed part of a research project entitled *I tempi delle strutture. Resilienze, accelerazioni e percezioni del cambiamento (nello spazio euro-mediterraneo)* through which, over a five-year period (2018-22), the Dipartimento di Civiltà e forme del sapere at the University of Pisa was able to develop its scholarly activities within the framework of the first Italian national programme for “Departments of Excellence”. In 2017, the department’s medievalists – general historians, archaeologists, art historians, and historians of philosophy – chose to focus their attention on the 10th to 12th centuries, bringing their research together under the umbrella of a deliberately broad and ambitious formula: *Il farsi del (pieno) medioevo (secoli X-XII)*, or *The Making of the (High) Middle Ages*.¹ At the programme’s conclusion, those responsible for this specific line of research into medieval history – Simone Collavini, Mauro Ronzani, and Giuseppe Petralia – organised the final meeting, the proceedings of which have now been published here. More a seminar than a conference, it involved some of the leading scholars presently working on the issues of “change” and “continuity” in the 11th and 12th centuries, chiefly – though not exclusively – with reference to Italy. Alberto Cotza, this volume’s co-editor, himself made an essential contribution which ranges from the development of the overall framework of the initial programme draft to the publication of all the papers collected here. The speakers generously agreed to take part – often at short notice – in an event that had no precedent in Italy at the time, apart from a now-distant period of scholarship. The book does not include the texts of the discussions which, as we had hoped and expected, took the form

I would like to thank Simone Collavini, Alberto Cotza and Mauro Ronzani for reading the final version of this introduction.

¹ See <https://www.cfs.unipi.it/dipartimento/dipartimento-di-eccellenza/progetto-di-eccellenza-2018-2022/progetto-di-ricerca/medioevo/> (accessed on December 25, 2025), also for information on the other specific projects in the “Middle Ages” area.

of a lively and informal exchange of ideas, research, and reflections that were witnessed and shared by the many colleagues and friends who were either present in Pisa or took part online. It was undoubtedly a mistake not to have planned for their publication as well.

These introductory pages rework the seminar's opening address and reflect part of the preliminary discussions among its organisers. In this respect, they serve a practical purpose. They nevertheless express a personal point of view and – given the density of the issues raised – an inevitably schematic one, for which I am solely responsible. They do not represent a summary of those positions shared by the wider group of seminar participants. While there was and remains broad agreement on the relevance of the topics addressed as well as on the connections between them, the views of the authors, organisers, and editors differed and continue to differ: they reflect individual positions that are constantly evolving, as is the nature of historical enquiry.

1. *Periodising the Middle Ages*

The phrase *The Making of the (High) Middle Ages* was retained in the book's final title, albeit with a variation – *In Search of* – which emphasises this collection's non-conclusive and only weakly assertive nature. It is instead presented as a collective *Vorarbeit* which is oriented towards a not yet fully developed systematisation of knowledge. During the initial discussions, the possibility of investigating the intertwining of “resilience” and “accelerations of change” in relation to another phase of structural transformation – that preceding the medieval millennium, between the late Roman era and the world of the post-Roman *regna* – was also considered. It was thanks to Simone Collavini that we were persuaded to shift our focus to the transitional phase within the millennium, where historiography tends to locate the time frame in which the most distinctive features of that period we call the ‘Middle Ages’ are defined.

The phases of change that historians seek to identify at the beginning and end of this millennium in order to differentiate it from the eras that delimit it are in fact insufficient to circumscribe and isolate its most original features. This does not mean that the fundamental questions concerning the temporal boundaries separating the ‘Middle Ages’ from the surrounding ‘eras’ are no longer important. On the one hand there is the problem of differentiation from antiquity, with the decisive issue of the margins, contents, and duration of what we have now come to identify as ‘late antiquity.’ On the other, there is the perhaps even more crucial question of its boundary with the modern age, the definition of which depends on no less decisive choices in terms of periodisation. To downplay the relevance of the threshold separating the ‘late medieval’ from the ‘early modern’ period (perhaps after likewise attenuating that which stands between the ‘High’ and ‘Late Middle Ages’) in fact means placing the entire weight of historical change on the rupture which took place

in the mid-18th century, within a long conception of the ‘Middle Ages’ that – for example, in Le Goff’s work – comes to overlap with that of the *ancien régime*, or *Alteuropa* in Brunner’s classic sense.² On the other hand, bringing together those centuries from the 13th or 14th through the 16th or 17th (perhaps under an extended periodisation of the Renaissance) in order to emphasise their shared and distinctive features has often been the most straightforward way of interpreting the genesis of modernity as occurring within at least part of the ‘Middle Ages’ itself.³ Both perspectives are problematic: the latter pays the price of sacrificing the consideration of medieval societies ‘in themselves’ on the altar of the history of modernisation; the former, that of underestimating and flattening even structural changes in the name of the *longue durée*’s inertia as well as of the persistence of an organic and fundamental connection between land and power.

As Hans-Werner Goetz has observed, differences between the post-Roman societies of the early centuries and the European societies of the later Middle Ages are far more profound than the changes that occurred during the two transitional phases that conventionally delimit the ‘Middle Ages.’ It is for this reason that medievalists have tended to attribute primary importance to other turning points which unfolded within the ‘Middle Ages’ itself: *Die große Wende des Mittelalters liegt wohl [and cannot but lie] im Hohen Mittelalter*.⁴ In this sense, then, the meaning of ‘the making of the High Middle Ages / *il farsi del pieno medioevo*’ can legitimately shift towards that of ‘the making of the Middle Ages / *farsi del medioevo*’ itself, as the bracketing of ‘High / *pieno*’ in our project was originally intended to suggest.

2. Shifting the ‘High Middle Ages’

The historiographical and methodological implications of these formulations extend to the entire history of our relationship with the general idea of the ‘Middle Ages,’ from its 19th and 20th-century elaborations through the first decades of the present century. The decision to focus on the 11th and 12th centuries reflects the results of a longstanding and ongoing search for the High Middle Ages. The major European historiographical traditions, largely independently, appear to have outlined a picture – although by no means exclusive or unique – in which the notion of rupture, or at least of decisive accelerations of change, comes to the fore mainly in those centuries.

² Le Goff, *Faut-il vraiment*; Brunner, *Sozialgeschichte Europas*.

³ From a bibliography that could be expanded almost indefinitely, one might cite: Grendler ed., *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance* and Hamish ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750*. These are not exclusively Anglo-American perspectives: among leading European historians of the early modern period, see Hintze, *Staat und Verfassung*; Braudel, *Afterthoughts*; and Prodi, *Introduzione*.

⁴ Goetz, *Moderne Mediävistik*, 44-5 (italics in the original), and more generally, 40-6.

In Italian historiography over the last fifty years, *pieno medioevo* has replaced the more traditional division between *alto* and *basso medioevo*. That earlier scheme was essentially consistent with the distinctly 19th-century, *Risorgimento*-era belief in the need to contrast a ‘feudal’ Early Middle Ages with a ‘communal’ Late Middle Ages within a grand national narrative based almost entirely on central and northern Italy. The category of *pieno medioevo* was adopted later, as a conscious imitation – and extension – of the concept of *Hochmittelalter* which was specific to the German historiographical tradition (and in part to the Anglo-Saxon notion of the High Middle Ages). In a more openly European – and distinctly Blochian – perspective, this category served to mark the central centuries, from the 9th to the 12th, as the *più caratteristici* of the medieval millennium insofar as they were seen as *ben distinti* from the worlds and societies that preceded and followed them.⁵ The Italian qualification *pieno* (‘full’) refers not so much to centrality as to the period’s completeness and full maturity. In this sense, it also recalls the original meaning of the adjective *Hoch* (‘high’ in the sense of ‘elevated’), which conveyed the idea of a period and society that had reached the peak of their distinctive characteristics and were framed between a *Frühmittelalter*, conceived as a phase of ascent, and a *Spätmittelalter*, understood as one of decline, within the course of a single life cycle. Besides, the German notion of *Hochmittelalter* is commonly held to have its 20th-century roots in the work of Karl Hampe, particularly his classic 1932 book, in which the history of the Holy Roman Empire – from the 10th-century reign of the Saxon kings to the death of Frederick II – was elevated into the framework of a vast general fresco of Western European history.⁶ In Hampe’s work, however, the unity of space (Europe) and time (corresponding to the era of a kind of ‘classical’ Middle Ages) was achieved through a synthetic endeavour conceived entirely within the framework of political history – as Gerd Tellenbach, a distinguished former student, would critically observe some thirty years later – understood *im Sinne der grossen deutschen Tradition des 19. Jahrhundert*; that is, without any openness to the necessity – as well as to the possibility already evident at the time – of *die geistigen, religiösen, wirtschaftlichen, rechtlichen, und sozialen Grundlagen, Triebkräfte und Auswirkungen der politischen Dynamik, mitzuerfassen*.⁷ To simplify greatly, in the German historiographical context one may retrospectively identify in Karl Bosl’s vast bibliographical output – culminating in a 1980 volume devoted to the *Aufbruch* of the whole of Europe on the road to modernity – one of the principal channels through which the category of *Hoch-*

⁵ See Sergi, *L’idea di medioevo*, 29–30. The simple division between *Alto* and *Basso Medioevo* was still common at the end of the 1980s, at the time when the volume edited by Delogu, *Periodi e contenuti*, was published. In that volume, however, the need for Italian historiography to adapt to the German (and English) tripartite division was already clearly acknowledged: Delogu, “Presentazione,” 9.

⁶ Hampe, *Das Hochmittelalter*.

⁷ Tellenbach, “Nachwort,” 420–2. Tellenbach was in Heidelberg, working under Hampe’s supervision, during the writing of his *Habilitationsschrift* on the *Zeitalter des Investiturstreits*.

mittelalter was transformed into an epochal threshold of overall dynamism, extending across all areas of social life.⁸

During the second half of the 12th century, however, German-language historiography did not confine itself to slowly pouring the new wine of a renewed conception of history into the old amphora of the period between 900 and 1250. Rather the concept of *Hochmittelalter*, in historiography as well as in the numerous German-language textbooks devoted to the European Middle Ages, gradually narrowed to the chronological span between the mid-11th and the mid- or early 13th centuries – at a pace even more rapid than the full reception of the socio-historical, institutional, and cultural orientations evoked by Gerd Tellenbach.⁹ This temporal shift and contraction occurred not only without losing sight of the framework of a political history of the empire, albeit a profoundly renewed one, but also – under the clear influence of the success of Tellenbach's early work on *Libertas ecclesiae* – by grounding the choice of periodisation, to the point of nearly complete overlap, in the consolidation of a national meta-narrative of the *Investiturstreit* as an epochal turning point; that is, by turning the crisis of the relationship between empire and papacy into a Weberian *Entzauberung der Welt*, one readily translatable into terms of the genesis of modernity itself, or else of Europe's (and Middle Ages') contribution to that genesis.¹⁰ In this regard, it can hardly be considered coincidental that one of the few voices to oppose – some forty years ago – the conception of the *Hochmittelalter* threshold in terms of *Aufbruch* ultimately sought to radically deconstruct the entire national narrative built upon the cornerstone of the Canossa event as well.¹¹

⁸ Bosl, *Europa im Aufbruch*, and Bosl, *Die Grundlagen*; Bosl, "Das Hochmittelalter." See also Haverkamp, *Aufbruch und Gestaltung*.

⁹ This is the case, for example, with the four editions and the repeatedly reprinted volume 7 of the Oldenburg Grundriss der Geschichte: Jakobs, *Kirchenreform und Hochmittelalter* (see in particular the third edition, 1999, Seite 1, where the *Hochmittelalter* period – between the Synod of Sutri in 1046 and the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 – is defined as the "geistige Mitte des Mittleren Zeitalters"). Other examples may be cited as well, however. Schieder, *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte* still approaches the Middle Ages from a predominantly political perspective and divides them into two volumes (published in 1976 and 1987, respectively): 1. *Europa im Wandel von der Antike zum Mittelalter*, with a *terminus ad quem* in the mid-11th century; and 2. *Europa im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter*, with a clear internal threshold set at 1250. A similar chronology is adopted in the *Handbuch der Geschichte Europas* edited by Peter Blickle (more explicitly 'modern' in orientation and fully open to economic and social history as well as to the broader panorama of international medieval research). Its first volume was entrusted to Hans-Werner Goetz, *Europa im frühen Mittelalter, 500-1050*; the second to Michael Borgolte, *Europa entdeckt seine Vielfalt, 1050-1250*, a volume explicitly devoted to the *Hochmittelalter* (ch. 1: "Europa im hohen Mittelalter. Ereignisketten und historische Räume"). See also Borgolte, 337-56, for a full critical awareness of the methodological difficulties inherent in the concept, as well as for an excellent and pioneering discussion of the plurality of periodisation choices that emerged in the national historiographies of the second half of the 20th century.

¹⁰ Weinfurter, *Canossa. Die Entzauberung*. See Johrendt, *Der Investiturstreit*; Kohl, "Einleitung," and Zey, "Der Investiturstreit."

¹¹ Fried, *Canossa: Entlarvung*. On Fried, see below.

The conclusion reached by German historiography at the end of the 20th century is ultimately not very different from that reached independently by much of British historiography. This convergence is already evident in one of the most influential syntheses devoted to the Middle Ages – which is also owing to the global reach of its language – whose title is directly (albeit unintentionally) echoed in the name of our own research project. “The formation of western Europe from the late 10th to the early 13th century is the subject of this book”; thus Richard William Southern opened his 1952 work, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, which brought together political and religious history, institutional and social history, and cultural and intellectual history.¹² Interpreted in terms of the genesis and construction of modern Europe, the Middle Ages found its keystone in a long central period spanning from 972 to 1204: between the probable year of Gerbert of Aurillac’s move from Rome to Reims – prior to his election as Pope Sylvester II, and his role alongside Otto III – and the fall of Constantinople to Latin forces. This reference to Gerbert pointed to a guiding motif of the rebirth of reason intertwined with the renewal of the Church and the papacy, while the choice of the fall of Constantinople signalled a desire to make the formation of Latin Europe coincide with the very matrix of its progressive spatial and cultural expansion. With all due distinctions, this perspective is not far removed from the no less influential monograph by Robert Bartlett (a student of Richard William Southern), who in 1993 explicitly transformed the formula of “the making of the Middle Ages” into that of “the making of Europe”, achieved through its expansion during the High Middle Ages and here conceived as extending from the mid-10th to the mid-14th century.¹³ Nor is it far removed from the more idiosyncratic book by Alexander Murray on the emergence of modern reason itself which was published in 1978 and written in the conviction that “in studying Europe in the central middle ages we study the first recognizable ancestor of the society we still on” – a narrative in which the mathematician Gerbert of Aurillac figures as one of the principal protagonists.¹⁴ In all three cases, these texts express a marked tendency within the Anglo-American historiographical tradition to gravitate towards the 11th and 12th centuries as a fundamental threshold of cultural separation between the “High Middle Ages” and the preceding “Dark Ages” (or in more neutral terms, the “Early Middle Ages”). In this respect, the influence of *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* by Charles Homer Haskins is clearly recognisable – an influence later taken up, and then translated into the sphere of ecclesiastical reform and renewal, by Giles Constable.¹⁵ After emphasising the transition from antiquity to the Early Middle Ages in terms of the Roman

¹² Southern, *The Making*, 11.

¹³ Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*.

¹⁴ Murray, *Reason and Society*, 5-6.

¹⁵ Haskins, *The Renaissance*; Haskins, *Renaissance and renewal*; Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*. Within this historiographical tradition, though from a much broader perspective: Noble, and Van Engen, *European Transformations. The Long Twelfth Century*.

world's transformation, a clear internal break – set at 1050 – between the early and late Middle Ages is likewise present in the highly influential synthesis by the American historian Barbara Rosenwein.¹⁶ It would nevertheless be misleading to extend the idea of a single High Middle Ages to the entire Anglo-American historiographical milieu. In the *Longman General History of Europe* series, which was edited in the mid-1960s and the early 1970s by Denis Hay – who was not coincidentally a historian who located the origins of the Renaissance in the 14th century – we find, in succession, a volume by Christopher Brooke devoted to a *Central Middle Ages* spanning 962 to 1154, followed by a volume by John Mundy entitled *High Middle Ages* covering the period from 1150 to 1309.¹⁷

3. *French imprint*

Confirming the leading role played by French historiography throughout the second half of the 20th century in shaping international historical research – and not only in medieval studies – the more extensive roots of this tendency to shift the decisive phase of transition forward within the medieval millennium, and consequently to transfer to the 11th century, the 12th, or both the burden of defining the ‘original’ and distinctive characteristics of the Middle Ages, are to be found in France. This shift had the effect of allowing the idea of an intermediate period corresponding to the millennium’s four central centuries to wane. An early and emblematic sign of the primarily French origin of this reorientation – one that would later reverberate throughout continental historiography – can be seen in the decision, in Germany, to entrust Jacques Le Goff with the volume of the *Fischer Weltgeschichte* devoted to *Das Hochmittelalter*, which was published in 1965 and centred on the idea of the take-off of European society and its economy starting from around 1050. When translated into Italian in 1967 as *Il basso medioevo*, the title itself conformed to the long-standing national tradition of conceiving the medieval millennium as divided simply into two parts.¹⁸ Le Goff was chiefly influenced, once again, by Bloch, who in *Société féodale* introduced the distinction between a first and a second feudal age, the latter overlapping with the “révolution économique” – primarily demographic – of the period 1050-1250.¹⁹ It was nevertheless the grand narrative of the ‘revolution’ or ‘feudal transformation’ (or more precisely, the ‘seigneurial transformation’), based on Georges Duby’s 1953 monograph on the *Maconnais*, that made the 11th century the absolute

¹⁶ Rosenwein, *A short history*.

¹⁷ See Brooke, *Europe in the Centrale Middle Ages* and Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, followed by Hay, *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century*. See also Hay, *The Italian Renaissance*.

¹⁸ Le Goff, *Das Hochmittelalter*, and Le Goff, *Il basso medioevo* (ending at 1350).

¹⁹ Le Goff, *Das Hochmittelalter*, 14; Bloch, *La société féodale*, 95-7, 111-5.

protagonist of medieval change. Centred on the year 1000 and the following decades, this narrative focused, on the one hand, on the crisis of ‘public’ power in the royal tradition as exercised by counts and their courts of justice; and on the other, on the rapid and often violent assertion of local and territorial (‘private’) powers embodied in the *seigneurie banale*, the castellan lords, and their knights.²⁰ The so-called ‘mutationist paradigm’ has pushed into the background the central centuries’ earlier unified periodisation, which Bloch – while introducing an internal distinction between a first and a second feudal age, separated by a phase of economic recovery – had nevertheless retained in 1939 by reconstructing a coherent ‘social structure’ spanning from the ninth to the mid-13th century, and situated at the heart of the Western Middle Ages.

In French historiography, the success of the feudal transformation model proved to be both complementary to and contemporary with ideas of an equally accelerated phase of economic take-off – indeed, in a process of mutual reinforcement – understood as a unified and comprehensive momentum affecting society as a whole. Building on an observation by Duby, this take-off was readily attributed to an increase in rural production which had been induced by the pressure exerted on peasants by the new banal lordship. In 1980, the influential synthesis by Poly and Bournazel elevated the *mutation féodale* to the status of a paradigm.²¹ Two years later, in the same PUF textbook series, Fossier’s synthesis devoted to *L’essor de l’Europe* appeared. It opened with Rodulfus Glaber’s description of the “radiant morning” and was structured around the concept of *encellulement*: the channelling of growing populations into the primary spatial frameworks of the *castrum*, the parish, and the village.²² The 1980s concluded with Guy Bois’s radical *Mutation de l’an Mil* (1989), a controversial experiment in microanalysis conducted on one of the villages of the Mâconnais. This work radicalised Duby’s thesis by arguing that ancient forms of slavery persisted until the end of the 10th century, and that feudal structures and serfdom emerged abruptly in the 11th century, following the “birth of the market” and ushering in an immediately feudal, commercial, and pre-capitalist Middle Ages.²³ Bois’s interpretation entailed the elimination of any meaningful notion of an early Middle Ages – or of an *alto medioevo* – and paradoxically, also of the very idea of *pieno medioevo*.

The impact of these historiographical developments, together with their generalising and universalising ambitions, was also promptly felt in Italian medieval studies. Until then, the field had largely been content with a broad notion of the High Middle Ages – *à la* Bloch – and in any case was less inclined to engage directly in major debates on periodisation pertaining to the central centuries, except those specific to the topic of Church reform. Significantly,

²⁰ Duby, *La société*.

²¹ Poly, et Bournazel, *La mutation féodale*.

²² Fossier, *Enfance de l’Europe*.

²³ Bois, *La mutation*. For the heated French debate surrounding Bois’ book, see Guerreau, “Lournand;” Guerreau, “L’an Mil. Rythmes.”

it was Cinzio Violante, a scholar of both ‘feudal’ society and ecclesiastical reform, who in 1990 (also the year of the Italian translation of Poly and Bour-nazel’s *Mutation féodale*) felt compelled to organise, together with Johannes Fried, a conference in Trento bringing together German and Italian scholars on *Il secolo XI: una svolta?* / *Das 11. Jahrhundert: Eine Wende?*, whose proceedings were published in 1993.²⁴ Fried did not personally contribute a paper to the published proceedings, but a few years earlier – again in Trento – he had spoken about his research on expectations of the end of time around the year 1000. He had just completed a *Handbuch* devoted to a *Formierung Europas* spanning the years 840 to 1046, and was at the time working on a long-term project on the origins of German history, as reconstructed up to the year 1024.²⁵ All of these studies had been preceded, in 1987, by a bibliographical review published in the *Historische Zeitschrift* in which he openly expressed his opposition to the fascination exerted by the metaphor of *Aufbruch* – whose creation he unequivocally attributed to the French scholars Duby and Le Goff – on much of the most recent historiographical work on the High Middle Ages by some of his own country’s leading medievalists, most prominently and unsurprisingly Bosl.²⁶ Violante, for his part was accustomed to interpreting the transformations of the 11th century as a dialectical tension between an old and a new order; and he had earlier and originally linked them to economic dynamism, feudal society, religious renewal, and ecclesiastical reform.²⁷ He was certainly motivated by having Bois’ work on the year 1000 before him, and he was in close dialogue with several leading European historians. He remained cautious about identifying sharp breaks or sudden accelerations in processes of economic growth and change, which – like Toubert (see below) – he tended to conceive as unfolding over longer chronological spans. At the same time, he was acquainted with Carlrichard Brühl’s ongoing research on the post-year 1000 birth not only of France and Germany, but of Europe itself. Given his long-standing personal acquaintance with Duby and his sustained interest in the work of Karl Bosl (who is not cited), he had long been aware of the major proposals within European historiography concerning a ‘turning point’ around the turn of the millennium – an idea for which he liked to invoke Gioacchino Volpe’s image of the 11th century as a period ‘rich in origins.’²⁸ Nor does it seem entirely coincidental that, just one year before the Trento conference, the turning point *par excellence* occurred unexpectedly in Germany and Europe: *die Wende*, which effectively brought the second millennium to a close and put an end to what would soon be termed the ‘short

²⁴ Violante, e Fried, a cura di, *Il secolo XI: una svolta?*

²⁵ Fried, “L’attesa della fine dei tempi,” Fried, *Der Weg*.

²⁶ Fried, “Deutsche Geschichte,” 645: *Die deutschen Historiker erfanden freilich die Aufbruchs-Metapher nicht: ihre Schöpfer heißen J. Le Goff und G. Duby.*

²⁷ See the concluding sentences of a famous report delivered at a 1958 conference on *spiritualità cluniacense*: Violante, “Il monachesimo cluniacense,” 67.

²⁸ Violante, “Il secolo XI,” 11.

century.²⁹ I will return later to Violante's position, insofar as it may still be relevant today, but it is worth noting from the outset that the Italian historian was at that time attempting – through a deliberately wide-ranging interpretative effort – to reopen the question and to extend it to every dimension of ecclesiastical and civil life, and thus of social life as a whole. He was dissatisfied with the proceedings of the 1986 Mendola conference on *novità e tradizione nella cultura dei secoli XI e XII*, because, in his view, they had concentrated primarily on the latter century, effectively limiting themselves to an updating – without much originality – of the theses advanced by Haskins, Ullmann, and Constable on the 12th-century Renaissance.³⁰

4. *The resilience of a 'Year 1000' turning point...*

The Trento conference took place just before the debate on the feudal revolution and the forceful challenge launched to the French paradigm of a sudden transformation in the 11th century. On the more strictly economic front, the holistic image of that change had already been undermined in the 1980s by Pierre Toubert – whose work on the structures of medieval Lazio and the *incastellamento* around the year 1000 is, moreover, rightly regarded as an essential articulation of the mutationist paradigm³¹. Toubert was a staunch advocate of a long and sustained phase of growth, albeit one marked by periods of lesser and greater intensity, beginning as early as the Carolingian age.³² It cannot, however, be said that his theses have displaced the model – still prevalent today – of an economic take-off situated beyond the threshold of the year 1000, between the 11th and 12th centuries. In particular, for central and northern Italy (long regarded as the forerunner of medieval economic development) there is now a tendency to push that starting point even further forward, bringing it closer – without in any way reviving older theories of direct causality – to the resumption of long-distance Mediterranean trade, now generally dated to the second half of the 12th century³³. The most serious challenge to the mutationist paradigm emerged in the 1990s from the political-institutional (and social) sphere, when Dominique Barthélemy and other scholars interpreted the image of a rapid (and violent) collapse of the old Carolingian order – derived from Duby's research on the Mâconnais – as little more than an illusion produced by a change in documentary language.³⁴ As

²⁹ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*. Curiously enough, on 3 June 1987, the University of Pisa awarded honorary degrees in history to both Gerd Tellenbach and Eric Hobsbawm.

³⁰ Violante, "Il secolo XI," 7-8, with reference to *L'Europa dei secoli XI e XII*.

³¹ Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*.

³² Toubert, *L'Europe dans sa première croissance*. The volume brings together studies spanning more than twenty years, some of which had already appeared in Italian a decade earlier: Toubert, *Dalla terra ai castelli*.

³³ Wickham, *The Donkey*. See also Saggiaro, e Varanini, "Una discussione."

³⁴ Barthélemy, "La mutation féodale."

was remarked during the ensuing debate (drawing on a brilliant and revealing expression by Duby himself), this would have been a feudal “revelation” rather than “revolution.”³⁵ Yet it is equally clear that, however extensive and heated the discussion proved to be, it – prior to the more recent signs of revival to which I will return shortly – soon lost momentum through a kind of natural exhaustion, without producing any unequivocal winners.

The impulse to locate the ‘making of the (High) Middle Ages’ after the year 1000, in the wake of an epoch-making rupture, has by no means abated; on the contrary. Building on the persistence of the notion of *Aufbruch*, an even more comprehensive formula has emerged: that of the “first European revolution”. The expression already appears in a short essay by Karl Leyser which was published posthumously in 1994 under a title of striking programmatic force: *Am Vorabend der ersten europäischen Revolution. Das 11. Jahrhundert als Umbruchszeit*. In a renewed version of the usual German historiographical focus on ecclesiastical reform, the “eve of the first European revolution” is presented as having been essentially determined by the mobilisation of all social strata – including *den bisher scheinbar passiven Unterschichten*, then forcefully brought onto the stage of grand history by the advance of *die materielle Expansion* – in the struggle for the *libertas ecclesie*.³⁶ The decisive actors were therefore those communities experiencing demographic and economic growth, with their political and religious zeal, and the struggle itself remained what Gerd Tellenbach had defined as *ein Ringen um die rechte Ordnung in der Welt*, with which he had opened his seminal 1936 book.³⁷ *The First European Revolution* then became the title and central theme of the book published in 2001 by Robert Ian Moore as part of the international series *Faire l'Europe* edited by Le Goff (at a moment when, from the *Wende* of 1989 to the adoption of the single currency, the advent of a new Europe seemed imminent). Within that series, Moore offered a programmatic synthesis that located the ‘true’ birth of Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries, between 970 and 1215 – almost exactly the same chronological framework earlier proposed by Southern (of whom Moore, like Bartlett, had been a student at Oxford). Updating his teacher’s perspective after half a century, and bringing to bear the full weight of the new social history – British as well as French – of the second half of the 20th century, Moore depicted

³⁵ Duby, *Les trois ordres*, 185–6, on which White, “Tenth-Century Courts,” 67. The basic bibliography is well known, and the secondary literature is vast. It may suffice here to refer to the *Past & Present*’s discussion: Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’”; Barthélemy, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’”; Reuter, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’”; White, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’”; Wickham, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’”; Bisson, “Reply.” But see also, for Italy: Barbero, “La polemica”; Carocci, “Signoria rurale;” and for a very recent revival, the essays in *After the feudal revolution*.

³⁶ Leyser, *Am Vorabend*, 6, 19–20.

³⁷ Tellenbach, *Libertas*, 1 (and 151, in the title of Chapter 5: “*Libertas ecclesiae*. Der Kampf um die rechte Ordnung in der cristlichen Welt”). A phrase taken from Leyser (cited by him as *der Kampf um die rechte Ordnung der Welt*) and since destined to be repeated with increasing frequency, until the most recent contributions that interpret the Gregorian reform as a general factor of transformation.

the birth of Europe as coinciding with the emergence of a world of entirely new forms across all domains of social life: a world that, even as any trace of antiquity was being swept away, constructed the narrative through which modern 'dwarfs' would claim the legacy of ancient 'giants' for centuries to come. The old order was swept away by a revolution capable of transforming every dimension of historical reality: social stratification, religion and culture, politics, and the economy.³⁸

In Moore's account, one of the principal pivots – if not *the* pivot – of the revolution of the 11th and 12th centuries is identified in the division of labour and the subsequent urban revolution.³⁹ The overarching and inescapable need to construct a new order – considerably more than in Leyser – appears to be fundamentally driven and sustained by economic change, in this case explicitly by the uninterrupted growth of surplus from the mid-10th to the mid-13th century.⁴⁰ As in every perspective in which the changes following the year 1000 are made functional to the 'birth of Europe' – understood as the incubator of the West's primacy over the modern world – in this insistence on the urban revolution, it is not difficult to recognise an older interpretative choice, one laden with strong teleological implications, which – since Henri Pirenne (and Max Weber) – has tended to closely associate economic change and the city. The "urban revolution" – the rebirth of the city in the 11th century – marks, in many classic syntheses of Western economic historiography, the beginning of Europe's (and thus the world's) pre-industrial economic development, as illustrated, among others, by Carlo M. Cipolla.⁴¹ Such outdated and ideologically charged interpretations of the turning point after the year 1000 – which are essentially framed in terms of the first appearance of the bourgeoisie and the market on the world stage – are difficult to sustain today. Abandoning them does not eliminate the need to define the scope and role of economic change within the intertwined transformations that shaped the High Middle Ages, however. Since Marc Bloch's distinction between a first and a second feudal age, economic and material rupture has remained a constant point of reference – if often only in the background – in virtually every discussion of change at the midpoint of the medieval millennium.⁴² In a per-

³⁸ Moore, *The First European Revolution*. Moore's tone is not entirely comparable to that of Leyser. In outlining the 'medieval modernisation' of the old order, Moore did not lose sight of the fact that he was also the historian of *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, in which the formalised violence of the powerful and the legally sanctioned violence of ecclesiastical and secular institutions extended from individuals to entire social categories. Moore thus gathered and amplified – within a framework already widely circulated in the debate – the connotations of the feudal revolution as a transition towards new forms of segmentation, exclusion, and coercion within the social body.

³⁹ Moore, 31: "the first European revolution – that is... Europe's first authentic and autonomous urbanization" (in northwestern Europe).

⁴⁰ Moore, 30-3: "the 'sustained increase in real income per head' which economists regard as the condition necessary for the transformation of social structure".

⁴¹ Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution*.

⁴² See note 20 above.

sonal assessment of half a century of French regional *thèses d'État* following Duby's *Mâconnais* – thus returning one last time to the 'feudal debate' – the mutationist Bisson insisted that 12th-century societies, despite any possible continuity with their Carolingian or even earlier past, were nonetheless "new", since "old traces [were] remodelled and overwhelmed" not only by seigneurial pressures, but also "by demographic growth".⁴³ This latter factor, together with the overall economic transformation, is indeed one aspect about which it is perhaps more difficult to harbour doubts. Although increasingly relegated to the background today by factors of change manifesting themselves at the political-institutional, social, and ideological levels – which are often easier to assess – the economic dimension acquires essential importance when we seek to revisit the medieval turning point from as broad a perspective as possible, within a panorama composed of multiple and overlapping areas of structural transformation. For this reason it occupies a place of no small significance among the contributions that make up this volume, even though no chapter is specifically devoted to demography.

5. ...and of a long Late Antiquity

Criticism of Guy Bois' *Mutation de l'an mil* focused primarily on his handling and interpretation of the sources. Medievalists devoted far less attention to the implications of his theses in terms of periodisation – specifically, the postulated continuity of ancient slavery, which implied a continuity of ancient modes of production, and by extension, of antiquity itself. In this respect, Bois' argument shared the fate of more extreme claims concerning the persistence throughout the Early Middle Ages of late Roman fiscal institutions and fiscal language as advanced (again in the lively early 1990s) by Jean Durliat, and later, by Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier.⁴⁴ The supposed thread of continuity of ancient slavery has since been decisively severed, reshaping the problem at its roots and leading to a thorough revision even of Bloch's own views on early medieval servitude.⁴⁵ By contrast, the research and arguments of Karl Ferdinand Werner – who during those same years was also a key figure in reassessing the degree of rupture between the late Roman and post-Roman worlds in the West – have met with greater acceptance with regard to elements of continuity in public functions and institutions, as well as in the self-perception and identity of early medieval Frankish aristocracies.⁴⁶

It is nevertheless neither necessary to pursue this aspect of the broader problem of medieval periodisation, nor to reopen old debates. The theme

⁴³ Bisson, "La terre et les hommes," 332.

⁴⁴ Durliat, *Les finances publiques* (against which see Wickham, "La chute de Rome"); Magnou-Nortier, *Aux origines de la fiscalité moderne*.

⁴⁵ Rio, *Slavery after Rome*.

⁴⁶ Werner, *Naissance de la noblesse*.

of continuity between the late empire and the successor kingdoms has re-emerged with a very different methodological awareness.⁴⁷ As a result, the obvious difficulties of a periodisation in which late antiquity and the Early Middle Ages end up overlapping have not deflected what appears to be the dominant mainstream. On the contrary, the overall sense of a persistence of Romanness beyond its political collapse in the West between the 5th and 6th centuries appears to have expanded rather than diminished. It follows that the renewed impetus to push the ‘original characteristics’ of the Middle Ages towards – and even beyond – the year 1000 rests not only on the enduring notion of a millennial turning point, one corresponding to a High Middle Ages inaugurated by the transformations of the 11th and 12th centuries, but also on a parallel and symmetrical historiographical movement: the expansion of research into the persistence of late antiquity.

Despite the caveats raised against the ‘explosion’ of late antiquity,⁴⁸ a historiographical fabric and a set of research practices have taken shape in which the sense of the prolonged survival – across time and at multiple levels – of the legacies of the late Roman age has become firmly established. This persistence has nevertheless been articulated more readily in terms of history understood in a broad cultural sense – within which political and institutional dimensions can converge – than in terms of social history conceived in a broadly material sense. As one of the leading historians of the early Middle Ages has long commented: *Heute hat man sich daran gewöhnt, dass eine bis ins 8. Jahrhundert reichende Spätantike ins Blickfeld der Altertumskunde geraten ist, während Mediävisten die Voraussetzungen des Mittelalters bis weit in die römische Kaiserzeit zurückverfolgen.*⁴⁹ Moreover, the temporal extension of the processes grouped under the rubric of the “transformation of the Roman world” – the title and intellectual core of a major European international research project – did not come to a halt with the Carolingian age.⁵⁰ The periodising significance once attributed to the age of Charlemagne has faded, and in historiographical approaches to the Carolingian era there is now an increasingly marked emphasis on the theme of the metamorphoses

⁴⁷ For a renewed focus on forms of continuity rather than on a clear break with respect to the complex institutional transition undergone by the Merovingian world and transmitted to the Carolingian one, see: Morsel, *L'aristocratie médiévale*, on the prominence of the nobility; Esders, “‘Öffentliche’ Abgaben und Leistungen”, for a refined analysis that also clarifies the relevance of recent research on public goods and the royal fisc for an understanding the turning point of the High Middle Ages with respect to the Carolingian reception and transformation of Roman instruments of government (see below, note 52). More generally, the *Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*.

⁴⁸ Giardina, “Esplosione;” Giardina, “Gli spazi del tardo antico;” Marcone, “A long Late Antiquity?”. See Bowersock, Brown and Graber, *Late Antiquity. A Guide*, ix, where the *terminus ad quem* of “a distinctive and quite decisive period of history that stands on its own” is fixed at 800 A.D., the same final chronological point used by Wickham in his *Framing the Early Middle Ages*.

⁴⁹ Pohl, “Die Anfänge,” 364-5. Now, the advantages and risks of this development are discussed by Patzold, “Der lange Schatten” (see also below, note 59).

⁵⁰ *Transformation of the Roman World*; Wood, “Report.”

and legacies of Romanness. In the *Penguin History of Europe*, which a dozen years ago replaced the Longman series of the 1970s, its second volume – by Chris Wickham – covers the period from 400 to 1000 and is entitled *The Inheritance of Rome*. At the same time, the third volume, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, opens with a prologue focusing on the journey to Rome undertaken in 1049 by the newly-elected Leo IX in the company of Hugh of Cluny and Hildebrand of Soana.⁵¹

The classic French association of the decline of the Carolingian legal order with the emergence of local seigneurial developments – a connection that Italian scholarship has progressively shifted towards around 1100 in recent decades – has more recently been complemented by the interpretive fruitfulness of the theme of the parallel persistence and resilience, up to the same chronological threshold, of traditional ‘public’ and Carolingian modes of managing royal and fiscal assets.⁵² The same academic divide – which is particularly rigid in the Italian milieu – between scholars of late antiquity and those of the Early Middle Ages has weakened, finally leading to a rapprochement between the two even in Italy. This convergence has been fostered by a succession of research projects that link the Carolingian and late imperial periods through the history of the post-Roman *regna*.⁵³ The Carolingian Empire, both in the phase of its construction as well as in that of the resilience of its political and social, ‘public’, structures – which is now increasingly prolonged to the 11th century – appears indeed to have assumed, as Robert Ian Moore already argued in 2001, the features of a “successor state, the greatest of many in the crumbling peripheries of the Roman Empire”.⁵⁴

The recurrence of various positions favouring a long Early Middle Ages – often extending to the threshold of the year 1000 and imbued with elements of a greatly expanded second, or late, Romanness – thus reinforces the need to re-examine the stages and ways in which the features of a break with that heritage, namely the legacy of distant centuries transmitted into the structures of a “long” Carolingian order, emerged. To search for this new High Middle Ages does not, of course, mean seeking to essentialise a historiographical construct. Rather, it involves examining – and at last en-

⁵¹ Wickham, *The Inheritance*; Jordan, *Europe*, where the High Middle Ages is extended into the early 14th century; and Anthony Grafton’s forthcoming *The Renaissance*, where it ends in 1517. See also the chronological framework, 500-1000, adopted by Smith, *Europe after Rome*.

⁵² Bougard, et Loré, *Biens publiques, biens du roi*; and see comments in Marazzi, “Beni pubblici;” Lazzari, e Tabarrini, “Beni del fisco regio;” Loré, “Dalla *Res privata*;” Collavini, “Mutazione signorile’ e trasformazioni economiche.” See also the essays by Simone Maria Collavini and Paolo Tomei in this volume.

⁵³ *Between Ostrogothic and Carolingian Italy*; Internullo, and Tomei, “Writings the structures;” Internullo, e Tomei “Le parole e il potere.”

⁵⁴ Moore, *The First European Revolution*, 4, and continuing further: “It had yet to develop permanent or characteristic forms of its own”. “Crumbling”, which is highly evaluative, emphasises the weight given in the interpretation to the judgement on economic simplification and the quality of life in the post-Roman era: see above.

couraging the joint discussion of – the principal factors of what appears to be an overall acceleration, the degree and intensity of which still need to be measured, within the normal historical dialectic of change and continuity. This acceleration generated new structures in which we recognise familiar historiographical objects, albeit now endowed with more clearly-defined contours and formed through compressed temporal frameworks and intensified processes of development and consolidation during the more or less extended 11th and 12th centuries. On the one hand, these objects coincide with much of what modern historiographical tradition initially identified as being peculiar and characteristic of the medieval era as a whole. On the other hand, they also encompass elements long regarded as essential factors in the internal overcoming of the Middle Ages itself. Hence, on the one side, the expansion of lordship and dependence, peasants and knights, castles and villages, churches and kingdoms, the papacy and the empire, fiefdoms and vassalage; on the other, new cities and communal movements, new forms of economic production and exchange, new law, and new culture. The crucial difference lies in the fact that these elements now appear – ever more clearly – interacting all together, within an overlapping and intersecting sequence of transformations: a veritable ‘traffic jam’ of competing and intertwined developments. In such a configuration, any attempt to distinguish neatly between progressive or ‘modernising’ structural elements and traditional or ‘medieval’ ones is bound to dissolve. Untangling this intertwining has become essential if we are to improve our understanding of a crucial phase of the European Middle Ages.

6. After two decades in low profile: the rising of a new debate

Other considerations relating to the organisation of research rather than to its strictly scholarly content likewise contributed to the event in Pisa from which this volume emerged. Unlike what has occurred over the past fifty years in studies on the transformation of the Roman world, historiographical debate on medieval transformation has never succeeded in establishing a consolidated arena – let alone stable (and perhaps even competing) forums – for structured and open discussion. This absence was strikingly evident from the outset of our departmental project, particularly in the Italian context. All the scholars represented in this volume (a group that also includes two non-Italian colleagues and friends who were invited) share – and already shared prior to the December 2022 seminar – a conviction that has been tested in their own research, and which was conducted across different fields and on diverse subjects: namely, that in the 11th and 12th centuries a fundamental turning point can and must be identified, irrespective of whether its premises may already be discerned in the 10th century (or even the 9th), or whether its fully realised outcomes are to be located only in the thirteenth. In short, regardless of their views on the degree of the turning point’s curvature or the

speed at which it was traversed, all these scholars have contributed to identifying turning points – or at least moments of renewed momentum and acceleration – within their respective fields of research. Most, if not all, regularly share not only the results of their investigations but also their work in progress, within a system of mutual and open exchange that is already functioning during the research process itself. Most of them willingly, productively, and freely circulate within one another's workshops and studies. To a large extent this exchange now also operates across generational lines, thanks above all to increasingly frequent collective projects that are funded through competitive schemes, initially at the national level and now also at the European one. Despite this, however, such evident professional solidarity and the wide and fruitful sharing of tools, techniques, and models have thus far struggled to generate a renewed, open, and public debate on the general problem of medieval transition considered in all its variety and complexity.

When our departmental project took shape eight years ago, in 2017, the lack of a general debate on the transition to the High Middle Ages did not only concern Italian historiography or research on Italy. The transformation of the High Middle Ages was generally far from becoming a multipolar scholarly and academic field in Europe, one capable of sustaining itself and developing in a lasting way. The very issue of the 'feudal transformation' had arisen in 1992 entirely within the French historiographical tradition. After the intense but brief period of international debate, however, it proved unable to give rise to a permanent forum for discussion. Such a forum would allow new research to be developed alongside the exchange of ideas while openly and programmatically involving an entire body of experts, a transnational scientific *koiné* of specialists in the High Middle Ages (or the early High Middle Ages). Not even the substantial convergence between the challenge to the paradigm of feudal (or more properly, seigneurial) transformation and the proposal to deconstruct the paradigm of the feudal-vassalic relationship advanced by Susan Reynolds in 1994⁵⁵ was sufficient to constitute such a scholarly community. Despite the participation of some of the leading European historians of the central centuries of the Middle Ages, not even the timely Spoleto study week of 1999 – which was again strongly supported by Cinzio Violante and devoted to *Il Feudalesimo nell'Alto Medioevo* – succeeded in bringing together a stable forum of discussion capable of systematically disentangling the complex of fundamental issues that had by then so clearly come into focus.⁵⁶ Perhaps what was lacking was the opportunity for a collective European project comparable to that on the *Transformation of the Roman World*, funded by the European Science Foundation – a powerful intergovernmental body that was active at a time of strong political interest among governments in the construction of a new European history, and which then ceased to exist in 2010.

⁵⁵ Reynolds, *Fief and vassals*. See Albertoni, *Vassalli, feudi, feudalesimo*.

⁵⁶ *Il feudalesimo nell'alto medioevo*.

This state of affairs has begun to change only in recent years, above all following the Pisa seminar of December 2022. The embers of the debate on the feudal (or seignorial) ‘revolution’ (or ‘transformation’) had already been rekindled in 2013 by Charles West’s reformulation of the problem. Focusing on the region between the Marne, Meuse, and Moselle – an area straddling the western and eastern parts of the Frankish kingdom – his research deliberately avoided opposing the emergence of the new banal lordship of the 11th century to the earlier Carolingian order. Instead, it interpreted the former as the development and outcome of processes of formalisation and redefinition of power that had been set in motion by the latter.⁵⁷ Other embers were stirred in 2017 with Alessio Fiore’s proposal to revive, for the space of the *Regnum italicum* and with a chronological shift of roughly a century, the original ‘mutationist’ perspective.⁵⁸ Not even this intervention did immediately ignite a renewed general debate on the “feudal revolution”, however, nor did it lead at once to a reopening of discussion on an overarching *Wende* in the 11th – or 12th – century.⁵⁹

Between 2016 and 2017, it was even possible to ask – at conferences later published in 2020 – whether the *Hochmittelalter*, and more broadly the period between the 11th and 13th centuries, had not become a neglected era (*eine vernachlässigte Epoche*) in historical research, to the advantage of growing interest in the phases of transition from late antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, and from the Late Middle Ages to the early modern period.⁶⁰ This was undoubtedly a case of excessive pessimism. A concrete indication of the changes already underway can be found in the volume edited by Thomas Kohl and published in Germany also in 2020: *Konflikte und Wandel um 1100. Europa im Zeitalter von Feudalgesellschaft und Investiturstreit*.⁶¹ The book’s principal merit lies in its comparative examination – aimed explicitly at exposing their heuristic limitations – of the three major paradigms that continue to be regarded as valid and even hegemonic within their respective national historiographies for interpreting medieval change: the narrative of feudal transformation in France, the *Investiturstreit* in Germany, and ‘communalism’ in Italy (whose actual predominance is, in truth, open to debate). Kohl was thus able to extend and disseminate the results of his earlier *Habilitationsschrift*, in which a comparative analysis of conflicts and processes of reconciliation in the counties of Anjou and Maine as well as in the south-western regions

⁵⁷ West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*.

⁵⁸ Fiore, *Il mutamento signorile*.

⁵⁹ Although see Tabarrini, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’ After All;” Barthélemy, “La mutation de l’an 1100.” As will become evident, our call for discussion – as the contributions to this volume also make clear – does not advocate any division between specialists of the 9th and 10th centuries, on the one hand, and specialists of the 11th and 12th centuries, on the other – a development legitimately feared by Patzold, “Der lange Schatten” (in Italy, moreover, the disciplinary unity of medieval history is to this day guaranteed by state university legislation).

⁶⁰ Lubich, “Einleitung,” 7.

⁶¹ Kohl, *Konflikte und Wandel*.

of present-day Germany, together with the identification of shared patterns of development in the ‘French’ and ‘German’ areas, had led him both to relativise the significance of the transition between the 11th and 12th centuries as *Wendepunkt* and to question the actual heuristic value of the two “grand national narratives” of ‘feudalisation’ and the ‘Investiture Controversy’.⁶² As in the case of West, some of the most substantial advances in research have thus emerged from studies that are, in a sense, borderline, both in terms of the regions examined – located at the heart of the Carolingian space – and in their deliberate effort to break free from the constraints of nationally bounded historiographical traditions.

Yet once again, the truly decisive occasion for a new, broad international discussion appears to have emerged within French historiography – almost as if to compensate, as has been observed, for the growing fatigue of the seigneurial/feudal paradigm.⁶³ In 2021, just over twenty years after the Moore’s synthesis, the need to address the scope and rationale of a mid-millennial turning point from a general perspective became particularly evident with the publication of the *Nouvelle Histoire du Moyen Âge*, edited by Florian Mazel. In Mazel’s periodisation, an Early Middle Ages – extending *jusqu’au XI^e siècle* and conceived as *héritier de l’Empire romain chrétien* (in terms of ideological rather than material or economic continuity) – is followed by a second Middle Ages. During the long 12th century, this latter phase structured the entire social order under the dominance of the new *Église-institution*, which emerged from the unprecedented differentiation between the secular and the sacred spheres which was introduced by ecclesiastical reform into the ancient unity of the Christian *ecclesia*.⁶⁴

Somewhat ironically, the new and more ambitious French paradigm of an epochal break situated in the middle of the Middle Ages was thus placed in the same framework as the so-called *Investiturstreit* – the phenomenon long privileged by German historiography as the marker of the beginning of the *Hochmittelalter*. In Italy as well, before the notion of a long and central *pieno medioevo* became firmly established, movements for the reform of the Church functioned as a prominent periodising criterion in the transition from *alto* to *basso medioevo*, especially from the 1950s onwards. This was due in large part to the influence exerted on the national community of medievalists by that generation of scholars who, in one way or another, had been associated with the school led in Rome by Raffaello Morghen.⁶⁵ That long ‘Gregorian moment’, extending from the mid-11th to the early 13th century (rather than the ‘Investiture Controversy’ in the strict sense), has now become the cornerstone of historical change in Mazel’s *Nouvelle Histoire*. This new explanatory model effectively supplants that of the ‘feudal revolution/transformation,’ which had

⁶² Kohl, *Streit, Erzählung und Epoche*.

⁶³ Boucheron, *Ce que peut l’histoire* (paragraph 31 of the online edition).

⁶⁴ Mazel, *Nouvelle histoire du Moyen Âge*; Mazel, “Introduction,” 8.

⁶⁵ Violante, *Letà della riforma*; Capitani, *L’Italia medievale nei secoli di trapasso*.

concentrated change within a relatively brief phase of seigneurial violence. Within this framework, even the development of banal lordship is relegated to a corollary of Gregorian transformation, and is presented as the outcome of processes of redefining local dominion which were brought about by the separation – within pre-existing forms of lordship – of those secular and ecclesiastical elements that had remained undifferentiated during the so-called “early feudal age”.⁶⁶ Charles West’s monograph, which likewise proposed a longer genesis for seigneurialisation, appears to have found little place in this reconstruction: the book does not appear among the explicit references in Mazel’s work, nor is it included in the bibliography. Instead, the process of transformation of the *ecclesia* is elevated to the status of a *fait social total* – with explicit reference to Marcel Mauss – and becomes the dominant vector of a change presented as a “révolution”, whose reconstruction is thus seen as the reopening *la voie d’un retour à l’histoire totale*.⁶⁷ The complex roots of this approach are both recognisable and, for the most part, explicitly acknowledged. They derive only in part from strands within French historiography: from the concept of total history – as theorised by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Toubert in 1980, and understood as accessible through regional analyses that reconstruct, by means of a *phénomène globalisant*, the links between coexisting structures – to the historical anthropology of Alain Guerreau, through the decisive contributions of Dominique Iogna-Prat and Michel Lauwers. They also recall foundational moments in German scholarship – not only the work of Gerd Tellenbach, but in fact also the discernible later influence of Otto Brunner – as well as in Italian research, ranging from the aforementioned school of Raffaello Morghen to Cinzio Violante.⁶⁸

Nouvelle Histoire du Moyen Âge elicited lively reactions in France, including outright rejection.⁶⁹ The attribution of periodising significance to the “Gregorian reform” in that country also found an immediate echo in German scholarship. In 2019, historians on both sides of the Rhine debated the question of *La réforme grégorienne, une ‘révolution totale’?*, a discussion that culminated in a volume which was published in 2021, one introduced by Florian Mazel and concluded by Gerhard Lubich – the same scholar who only a few years earlier had introduced the German anthology on the waning appeal of the *Hochmittelalter*.⁷⁰ The conclusion amounted in part to an acknowledgment of the difficulty of reconciling the two national historiographical traditions.⁷¹ Yet, the process is now underway. A little over a year after the Pisa

⁶⁶ Lauwers, et Mazel, “Le ‘premier âge féodal’.”

⁶⁷ Mazel, “Pour une redéfinition,” 25.

⁶⁸ Mazel, “Pour une redéfinition;” Mazel, “Introduction. Une ‘revolution totale’?;” Lauwers, “L’Eglise dans l’Occident;” Le Goff, et Toubert “Une histoire totale;” Guerreau, *Le féodalisme*; Guerreau, *L’avenir*; Iogna-Prat, *La maison Dieu*. On this complex trajectory, see now Michel Lauwers’ contribution and position in this volume.

⁶⁹ “Une question d’actualité;” Boucheron, *Ce que peut l’histoire*.

⁷⁰ Martin, et Winandy, *La Réforme grégorienne*.

⁷¹ Lubich, “Schlussbetrachtung,” 216–7.

seminar, in the spring of 2024, the Spoleto study week was devoted to *Profili del secolo XI*, and opened with a keynote lecture by Chris Wickham. Only a few months earlier, Wickham had completed his monumental volume on the economic history of the Mediterranean regions from the late 10th to the mid-12th century – a study that many of the contributors to this volume were already able to draw upon.⁷² In 2025 – when our book had finally entered the publication pipeline – the appearance of the Spoleto proceedings was accompanied by at least three other significant volumes. The first offers a radical reappraisal of the debate on the “feudal revolution” across the long span from the 10th to the 12th century, with close attention to the Investiture Controversy and – with origins in a research project based at the University of Tübingen – with a perspective that ultimately extends, as far as possible, to the whole of post-Carolingian Europe.⁷³ The second volume seeks to intertwine ongoing research on the German and Italian fronts *jenseits des Investiturstreit*, while also paying close attention to feudal transformation. It does so, however, on the basis of a relatively narrow periodisation – the mid-11th to the early 12th century – and through a renewed invocation of the concept of *Aufbruch*.⁷⁴ Finally, a Charles West’s very recent synthesis presents the 11th century as new starting point for a Europe conceived as extending beyond the post-Carolingian space, whose Latin regions experienced the “feudal revolution” and the “reform of the Church” as two sides of single process of transformation.⁷⁵

7. *Beyond the ‘grand national narratives’*

It is not possible to incorporate the results of this dense sequence of studies into the present introduction, though they can be productively addressed elsewhere. It may suffice to note that a process is now underway aimed at overcoming those paradigms of change that were originally constructed as hegemonic within national historiographies and that were subsequently perceived as mutually exclusive – particularly in France and Germany, which were long regarded as the core of what was once Carolingian Europe. The consolidation of French historiography’s interest in the so-called *Investiturstreit* corresponds to a growing inclination within German-speaking historiography to engage more fully with debates on the seigneurial transformation and to undertake a reassessment of feudalism; in short, to move beyond overly rigid and insufficiently nuanced conceptualisations of *Grundherrschaft* and *Lehnswesen*.⁷⁶

⁷² *Profili del secolo XI*; Wickham, “Nuovi approcci.”

⁷³ Haack, Grabowsky, and Patzold, *After the Feudal Revolution*.

⁷⁴ Doublier, und Faini, *Krise und Aufbruch*.

⁷⁵ West, *Europe in the Eleventh Century*.

⁷⁶ Pelz, “Signoria rurale-Grundherrschaft;” Goetz, “Frühmittelalterliche Grundherrschaften;” Reuter, “Forms of Lordship;” Kuchenbuch, “Abschied;” Patzold, *Das Lehnswesen*; Kasten, “Zum

In the recent 2022 miscellany edited by Thomas Kohl – in which *mutation féodale* and the *Investiturstreit* are respectively mobilised as interpretative paradigms for France and Germany – Italian historiography is instead subsumed under the hegemony of a national paradigm of “communalism”.⁷⁷ This attribution is not without justification given the enduring weight accorded to medieval cities and to the “communal age” in mid- to late 20th-century Italian historiography, which is shaped by a long tradition rooted in the cultural legacy of the Risorgimento and reinforced by the success of a celebrated essay by one of its leading figures.⁷⁸ ‘Communalism’ can no longer be regarded as a genuinely dominant paradigm in narratives of change and transformation in the 11th and 12th centuries, however, even in the case of central and northern Italy. Over recent decades, medieval Italy has instead functioned as a privileged field for the reception, comparison, and testing of multiple – and often competing – models and paradigms of change. In particular, the contemporaneity, shared matrix, and mutual interdependence of ‘feudal’ (seigneurial and feudal-vassalic) and ‘communal’ developments now constitute a well-established historiographical acquisition for the peninsula, one closely linked to the consolidation of interpretations that view the 11th and 12th centuries as an era marked by the localisation of power.⁷⁹ A recent essay by Chris Wickham which examined in parallel the feudal transformation in France and the emergence of the communes in Italy should have contributed decisively to overcoming the residual influence of older conceptual frameworks at an international level.⁸⁰ The issue is not merely to underscore similarities between two paradigmatic national narratives of change – once considered polar opposites – or between two unquestionably distinct macro-regional experiences. Rather, ‘seigneurialisation’ and ‘communalisation’ – neither predominant nor mutually exclusive – unfolded simultaneously within the Italian kingdom, taking shape through the same underlying processes of transformation. Beyond the specific communal forms that took shape in the central and northern regions, of course, as well as those regional and local variations through which trajectories of change manifested themselves, Italy as a whole was simultaneously the setting for both – indeed, by definition – the movements of ecclesiastical reform on the one hand; and seigneurial transformations, economic growth, and political development centred on urban areas on the other.

It is therefore unsurprising that, as Kohl has suggested, national paradigms tend to break down in the context of renewed European comparison. Aristocratic and/or feudal transformations, ecclesiastical and papal reform or

Deutungsstreit;” Dendorfer, *Das Lehnswesen*; Patzold, “Die Kontroverse.”

⁷⁷ Kohl, “Einleitung,” 2.

⁷⁸ Cattaneo, *La città considerata come principio*; on the reception, influence and Sismondian roots of which see Gamberini, *Oltre le città*, 9-12; and most recently, on Sismondi and Cattaneo: Bizzocchi, “Introduzione,” 58-9.

⁷⁹ Provero, *L'Italia dei poteri locali*; Milani, *I comuni italiani*, 5-7.

⁸⁰ Wickham, The ‘Feudal Revolution’ and the Origins.”

revolution, and the development of new political forms in cities (not necessarily communal in the Italian sense): the processes that gave substance to each of the so-called grand national narratives – and underpinned their claims to historiographical dominance – affected, albeit in different ways and according to differing chronologies, all the regions of Carolingian Europe during the 11th and 12th centuries, as well as those areas into which it was expanding in those same centuries. These regions naturally included central and northern Italy, but also southern Italy, which together constitute the principal geographical points of reference for this volume. The trajectories and timing of change varied from case to case. However, within the local and regional worlds shaped by the Carolingian legacy, turning points and broader trends were to a large extent shared. Even in areas adjacent to the Carolingian space – where, as in southern Italy, processes of transformation unfolded simultaneously with movements of expansion, conquest, and colonisation – comparison is not only legitimate and necessary, but should be conceived as open to the possibility of unified syntheses, those capable at last of dismantling the rigid compartments inherited from the long era of nationally-bounded historiographical construction.

This volume thus constitutes an expression of a new historiographical conjuncture and of a renewed wave of attention to the 11th and 12th centuries, whose emergence it now appears to have almost anticipated. The transformations that unfolded during these centuries may well become a lasting focus of supranational research and scholarly debate. Accordingly, alongside the customary analysis of political, ecclesiastical, social, and institutional developments, we considered it essential to address not only economic growth and material transformations, but also changes in the sphere of law – without confining them to a separate “cultural” sector (as in Spoleto in 2024). We were nonetheless obliged to forgo an exhaustive investigation of change on the more broadly cultural and ideological plane – once understood, in the manner of Charles Homer Haskins or Giles Constable, in terms of *geistlich* or spiritual rebirths – but which today ought to be approached in the newer and more comprehensive terms of a transformation of mental frameworks, within a renewed cultural history that is deeper and broader than the traditional history of ideas.⁸¹

A collective discussion of these issues would nonetheless be highly desirable, taking into account the overall results of each scholar’s research and their specific proposals in order to assess and explain convergences and divergences of interpretation – not only with regard to the underlying dynamics of change, but above all to the interrelationships between the processes identified and the chronological frameworks reconstructed within their respective fields of inquiry.

⁸¹ The issue, however, naturally arises especially in the essays by Conte and Loschiavo on the legal “revolution”, in Lauwers’ pages on the “Gregorian reform”, and in Internullo’s contribution on the documentary revolution.

8. *The present and the past of a historiographical agenda*

Within the department's broader project, the theme of the acceleration of historical time was also defined in relation to its opposite: permanence and resistance to change. Hence the recourse to the notion of 'resilience,' a term that has since become ubiquitous. In its original sense, resilience is a property of materials, one expressing their capacity to return to an initial state after being subjected to external stress. Metaphorically extended to historical analysis, it can be applied to structures which – when exposed to destabilising pressures – either revert to prior configurations or fracture, thereby giving rise to new ones. Tensions might arise from the very functioning of structures, however. Structural change does not necessarily entail the sudden rupture of pre-existing arrangements; rather, the movement of structures may generate tensions that, over time, produce lasting transformations, with new general configurations emerging through the accumulation of such changes. One of the most radical methodological critiques of the feudal transformation model was articulated by Stephen White and Fredric Cheyette, who directly challenged Duby's use of the concept of structure in his research on the Mâconnais. These pages are clearly far removed from the scepticism expressed by Stephen White and Fredric Cheyette regarding the possibility of introducing structural breaks and further periodisations into the European past beyond the undeniably fundamental divide between the pre-modern and the modern.⁸² In line with the quotation from Antoine Prost cited in the epigraph, periodisation and the identification of structures are, on the contrary, understood here as inseparable operations; indeed, as being consubstantial with historiographical practice itself. From this perspective, we can readily concur with White's critique of Duby's difficulty in substantiating the thesis of an absolute staticity and continuity of Carolingian judicial structures and institutions up to the feudal – or seigneurial – break at the end of the 10th century. Yet, refuting Duby's interpretation of the functioning of the Carolingian *mallus publicus* does not require abandoning structures as a conceptual tool for reconstructing historical change. On the contrary, it is essential to conceive of structures as being in motion, and to proceed from the assumption that they evolve, transform, and change through their own internal dynamics, without always having to invoke external factors. In this sense, one may legitimately extrapolate from its original context a striking formulation by Charles West: *Nous voyons non seulement des structures mais également des dynamiques à l'oeuvre*.⁸³

Other pivotal periods – on a different, though still broad and extensive scale – can also be reconstructed in addition to the one that ushered

⁸² White, "Tenth-Century at Mâcon," and Cheyette, "Some reflection on Violence" (see comments in Fouracre, "Review," 696 and West, *Reframing*, 4).

⁸³ West, "Le saint," 245. Ultimately, it is not unreasonable to read West's monograph as an illustration of a complex structural dynamic that, between the 9th and the 12th centuries, culminated in a revolution – understood as the fulfilment of a profound structural transformation (West, *Reframing*, 255-63, 257).

in modernity in the 18th century. The dynamics that marked the transition to a ‘central’ Middle Ages did not operate upon a single structure, but rather upon a plurality of structures, each characterised by distinct trajectories and chronologies of change which in turn manifested themselves differently across local contexts. It follows that the task is not to identify a single ‘turning point’ from the outset, but rather, first and foremost, to trace – in diverse social and spatial settings – the asynchronous movements of different structures. Then, we must examine whether, to what extent, and in what ways these various structures and movements interacted with one another; whether such interactions generated an acceleration of change; and finally, we must assess to what degree these transformations can be reconstructed as an overarching process whose outcome produced a new order and a new world. In short, what were the changes that occurred across the various domains in which the social reality of the 11th and 12th centuries unfolded, and how did they intertwine – political and ecclesiastical institutions, both at the apex and at the grassroots; religiosity and cultural models; law; the economy; settlement patterns; and material life? In the 11th and 12th centuries, can we discern an abrupt rupture, a sharp turning point, or rather a phase of more or less rapid acceleration in processes which were already under way – and if so, which processes, and from when? So were all three modes of change plausibly at work, depending on the processes involved? Furthermore, whether we are dealing with sharp breaks or accelerations of existing transformations, can we identify particular domains in which turning points originated and spread to other dimensions of social life? Finally, given the plurality of structures involved, to what extent is it possible – or indeed necessary – to speak of driving structures, and/or of ‘systems’ of structures?

These are questions to which this book does not claim to provide definitive answers. Yet, they are questions that confront us nonetheless. At the same time, they are by no means new. It is no coincidence that the need to address these issues – without privileging *ex ante* any of the currently prevailing paradigms of change – emerged in Italy beginning in Pisa, where Cinzio Violante taught and left a profound intellectual legacy. Violante was, like few others in his country, a medievalist who conceived of the past in terms of structures in motion; throughout his scholarly life, he sought to forge organic connections between transformations in ecclesiastical and lay life as well as institutions, and he was consistently drawn to the ambition of a *histoire totale*. In 1980, he engaged in a heated debate with Toubert (and Le Goff) over their proposal for a *histoire totale* based on the reconstruction of the *liasons essentielles existants à un moment donné et dans un milieu donné entre toutes les structures qui coexistent et interfèrent*, organised around a *phénomène globalisant*, which was then identified with the process of *incastellamento*.⁸⁴ Violante then debated the possibility of a “system of structures” (or “structure

⁸⁴ Le Goff, et Toubert, “Une histoire totale.”

of structures”), conceived as a system endowed with its own temporality, one distinct from the temporalities of the individual structures that composed it.⁸⁵ In the same months, Giovanni Tabacco also reflected on the proposal advanced by Le Goff and Toubert – and perhaps also on Violante’s remarks – and offered his own response, one marked by an absolute distrust of any perspective of *histoire totale* that struck him as Volpian in flavour, and above all Brunnerian: that is, one that delineated an organic, compact, and self-contained social structure, and which was totalising in scope. The defining characteristic of the Middle Ages, conceived as an age distinct from both antiquity and modernity, was instead to be recognised in its existence and functioning as a *cosmo di strutture instabili* within which no organic coherence could be presupposed among social and economic, political, and cultural forms. On the contrary, the defining feature – and indeed the driving force – of the period lay precisely in the asynchrony of movements, the constant evolutionary misalignment, and the resulting tensions among the structures themselves: Christianity, the aristocracy, the socio-economic system, and communalism (understood as a foundational phenomenon common to all European cities).⁸⁶ The call to temper the impulse towards all-encompassing views could hardly have been more decisive, and was made in the name of multiple temporalities and of evolutionary logics internal to different planes of reality. Distinct periodisations may coexist without being mutually exclusive, but they must then be made explicit and examined in order to reconcile them without producing overtly contradictory dissonances. From Tabacco we may also legitimately retain a reluctance to subordinate all other structures to the primacy of a single structure or a single dominant dimension of social reality. Yet this caution does not absolve us – given the evident concurrence of multiple, parallel structural transformations – from the task of addressing questions concerning the alignment of these temporalities and the interactions among different structural levels; that is, the interplay of the ‘layers of time.’⁸⁷

While setting aside the questions surrounding ‘systems of structures’ and ‘globalising phenomena,’ Cinzio Violante continued to reflect on this problem in the years that followed. The results of his thinking found expression in the aforementioned Trento study week on the 11th century, and can today be read as insights that remain strikingly relevant. Seeking the cornerstones of a synthesis between feudal transformation and ecclesiastical reform, Violante invited the participants to undertake what he called an *operazione di annodamento* [i.e. knotting], [*del*]le novità più o meno incisive e [*del*]le mutazioni rapide e nette o lente e gradualì, to underscore le analogie e i parallelismi, le coincidenze, le

⁸⁵ Violante, “Presentazione,” Petralia, “Storie di strutture.”

⁸⁶ Tabacco, “Il cosmo.” The very notion of asynchronies reveals plausible echoes of Pomian’s 1978 essays: Pomian, “Periodisation” and Pomian, “Histoires des structures” (this, an essay that discussed the concept of structures starting precisely from Toubert’s research on *incastellamento* in medieval Lazio: 529–34).

⁸⁷ Koselleck, *Zeitschichten*.

*intersezioni e gli intrecci tra [le] linee di svolgimento of the vasti e complessi ambiti della storia religiosa ed ecclesiastica e della storia civile.*⁸⁸

Once the ecclesiastical and civil spheres have been disentangled into their many components, the invitation at the origin of this volume is essentially the same. By establishing differences and discrepancies, the interplay between what changes and what endures – the dialectic between change and ‘resilience’ – shapes historical time and thus characterises the interpretative process that each author carries out in dialogue with the past and with colleagues and readers. Both our seminar and this book were born of a desire to begin highlighting plausible connections between discourses that already intersect. The metaphor of *nodi* (knots) remains especially apt: *annodare* (knotting) has recently re-emerged precisely within the same constellation of problems. I quote from a discussion on periodisation: *Les passages d’une période à une autre sont davantage pensés comme des moments où se nouent des dynamiques complexes aux temporalités multiples, constituant ainsi des temps d’accélération où se créent les conditions du basculement.*⁸⁹ Even more interesting is the fact that Violante then went on to seek *elementi unificatori* between these two planes – the civil and the ecclesiastical – and identified them in the functioning of two general ideal principles capable of impressing the same direction upon otherwise *tendenze pur contrapposte*. One of these was the *principio della territorialità*, by which Violante sought to capture the idea of a complex transition in the 11th century towards territorial conceptions of law and power (rather than personal ones, as would have been the case since the crisis of the Roman world). This transition, he argued, occurred across institutions both ecclesiastical and civil, in rural lordships as well as in the emerging communes. The other principle was *il principio della distinzione* which is to say the tendency towards increasingly formal distinctions. This was transmitted especially – but not only – *attraverso un processo di definizione giuridica*, and became increasingly established in all fields.⁹⁰ In this case, one cannot help but think of the category of distinction underlying the entire model constructed by Mazel, or of West’s category of formalisation. We are thus not far from the “conceptual turn” recently discussed by Kohl, which aims to bring together feudal change and transformations in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere “in the decades on either side of 1100”: namely, a heightened capacity for abstraction, distinction, and separation between concepts and categories that had hitherto remained “ambiguous”.⁹¹ Chris Wickham likewise opened his 2024 lecture in Spoleto on the 11th century by invoking Violante’s principles of *territorialità* and *distinzione*.⁹²

⁸⁸ Violante, “Introduzione,” 35.

⁸⁹ Gibert, “Avant-propos,” 30.

⁹⁰ Violante, “Introduzione,” 37–9.

⁹¹ Kohl, “The Seigneurial Turn,” 97–8.

⁹² Wickham, “Nuovi approcci,” 1.

There are therefore historiographical premises within the best Italian medieval studies of the 20th century that it would not be productive to erase or disregard entirely. Of course, between those years and our own lie periods that have left other indelible marks: the linguistic turn, postmodernism, and the emergence of a new cultural history. Periodisation and structures can no longer be treated as if nothing had happened – as if they were still objective reflections of essential realities, or aseptic tools for neutral operations of progressive approximation to an ultimate truth. They are rather tools through which we project our interpretative choices onto the past, enabling us to grasp how the various spheres of reality are ordinarily structured and function, and the logic of their change. As early as the Trento week of 1997, Mario Nobili warned that, although the 11th century had indeed been treated by many leading scholars of European medieval history as a threshold marking a *trapasso da un'epoca all'altra*, the historiographical steps involved were far from homogeneous. Authors such as Bloch and Duby, in different ways, sought to identify an internal rupture within the Middle Ages themselves. By contrast, figures such as Bosl, Volpe, and – each in his own way – Pirenne, and even more decisively Brunner, interpreted the 11th century as the moment in which what he called the *dinamica decisiva della storia europea* first emerged. On their reading, the period inaugurates the long trajectory leading towards modernity: first, through the new relationship between the Church and the secular order; second, through the rise of the city – generated by agricultural expansion and differentiated from the countryside – the development of trade, and the emergence of merchants.⁹³ Shortly after the Trento meeting, a broadly similar interpretative framework was adopted by R. I. Moore in *The First European Revolution*. Today, however, we should be even more attentive to the preliminary question that such examples raise: namely, the need to ask, before proposing any periodisation scheme, within which hermeneutical framework and at what scale we intend to situate it.⁹⁴

Compared with those who came before us, the profound transformation that has taken place in historical scholarship should, in short, have freed us not only from national narratives, but also – once and for all – from the risk of allowing the new High Middle Ages we are attempting to construct to fall back into older, polarising interpretative frameworks. One such interpretation is that centred on an absolutely irreducible otherness, one defined by the reduction of the Middle Ages to an absolute anti-modernity – an approach that perhaps has, on the whole, played only a marginal role in recent representations of the High Middle Ages. The more pervasive and subtler trap, however, appears to be the opposite one: the tendency to construe the period in terms of proto- or pre-modernity, driven by an obsessive search for the original ma-

⁹³ Nobili, “Le trasformazioni,” 157-9, especially n. 2 (with reference to Brunner, *Vita nobiliare e cultura europea*, 60-2).

⁹⁴ Gibert, “Avant-propos.”

trices through which Western modernity might be explained. What is at stake today is no longer the history of Europe or the West – still less a history of their primacy, their more or less effective domination of the world, or the early or foretold advent of modernity. What is at stake is simply the history of those centuries themselves. We can now work free from the ideological baggage that weighed so heavily on many – but not all – of the eminent voices (our “giants”) reviewed here in connection with the “making of the High Middle Ages” and the nature of the “turning point” of the 11th and/or 12th centuries.

9. *This book*

The table of contents faithfully reflects the organisation of the works selected for the Pisa seminar in December 2022. The essays are grouped into six sections: *Church and Law*, *Forms of Political Power*, *Forms of Lordships*, *Urban Change*, *Archaeology*, and *Economy*. Their ordering was not – and is not – intended as a reflection on their importance, but rather was a response to practical considerations. Within each session, the authors largely agreed on the division of themes and topics.

Opening the section on *Church and Law*, and in stark contrast to proponents of an organic compactness and substantial immobility of the medieval legal order – most notably Paolo Grossi – Emanuele Conte and Luca Loschiavo, in their joint contribution, clearly endorse the thesis of a genuine revolution in the field of law and its uses. This transformation, they argue, took shape over the course of a few generations, between the mid-11th and 12th centuries – if not within the narrower span from 1075 to 1125; that is, during the so-called Investiture Controversy – and its protagonists may still be counted among figures such as Hildebrand of Soana and Irnerius. Their position represents a conscious revival of the perspective advanced by Harold Berman, who was the first to introduce the idea of a “revolution” into the history of medieval law by associating it with the 11th-century “papal revolution,” drawing in particular on Paul Fournier’s work on the repercussions of the “Gregorian” rupture for the collection and transmission of ecclesiastical law. Opposing recent attempts to downplay the novelty of these developments, Conte and Loschiavo analyse a series of exemplary cases. These include the debate at Gerstungen in 1085, contrasting the account offered by the partisans of Henry IV with that of Cardinal Otto of Ostia, the future Pope Urban II; a floor mosaic from the early decades of the 12th century which was recently discovered in the church of San Savino of Piacenza; and the fundamental – and by now famous – *placitum* of 1076 concerning the Tuscan abbey of Marturi, in which the first attested use of the *Digest* in a judicial context is found. Through these analyses, the authors show that the new canonists operated according to profoundly innovative intellectual principles: the search for an authentic textual tradition, the critique of custom and its normative value, and the adoption of dialectical and rational methods of source interpretation. By introducing

a deep rupture in the medieval millennium's legal unity, the science of these new jurists – and their relationship with legislators and rulers – would go on to exert a decisive influence on the subsequent history of law in Europe.

Mauro Ronzani, by contrast, focuses directly on the issue of the investiture of bishops – who have long been regarded as lying at the very heart of the 'Gregorian reform' and of the rift between pope and emperor, and which, under the label *Investiturstreit*, has been treated as a fundamental factor in the periodisation of the Holy Roman Empire's history. Ronzani begins by acknowledging that, following a complex process of revision initiated by Roland Schieffer in 1981, the most up-to-date German historiography has come, with Thomas Kohl, to define the *Investiturstreit* as an "invention" (*Erfindung*) of the 12th century. It was only with Henry V and Pope Paschal II that the question of investiture was isolated as the focal point of the broader political conflict between papacy and empire that had erupted earlier between Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII. In a close analysis of the sources, Ronzani shows that neither the Gregorian decree of late 1075 nor subsequent papal interventions were in fact intended to proclaim an absolute – abstract and ultimately unrealistic – prohibition of imperial investiture, however. Rather, Hildebrand demanded strict compliance, prior to any possible royal or imperial investiture, with the procedures laid down by late antique canons governing the election and consecration of bishops. For Henry IV, this entailed the loss of the security of full and effective control over episcopal appointments, a control that had been guaranteed by a long-established imperial practice and had hitherto encountered no papal objection. The standoff moved towards a formal resolution only through additions to, and reinterpretations of, the late antique canons – introduced as early as 1111 by Callixtus II – that ultimately paved the way for the Concordat of 1122. Thus, the *Investiturstreit* proves to be not only an "invention" of the 12th century, but also, at this point, a misleading "invention" of modern historiography. Indeed, according to Ronzani the term should be definitively abandoned as a periodising label. In its place, he proposes a more accurate characterisation of what those fifty years of conflict actually entailed: a period of "dispute over the procedures governing the promotion of bishops".

Michel Lauwers' contribution is central to many of the discussions that both our seminar and this book seek to stimulate. Lauwers unhesitatingly adopts Jacques Le Goff's notion of the "long Middle Ages" in Western Europe, a perspective that Guerreau subsequently reinforced through a social and cultural reading grounded in two conceptual cornerstones. The first is *dominium*: the domination exercised by the powerful – in its various forms – over land and those men who cultivated it. The second is *ecclesia*, understood in the range of its medieval meanings: the spiritual community of the faithful, encompassing both dominants and dominated; the consecrated place that functions as the community's centre of gravity; and the body of clerics. In this sense, *ecclesia* is not to be confused with the modern concept of the Church. Lauwers also shares the view that, in the current historiographical debate in

France – in which he himself is a leading figure – the paradigm of the seigneurial or feudal revolution has been superseded by that of a different kind of revolution: one understood not as a sudden rupture, but as a series of slow and cumulative changes unfolding from the mid-11th to the early 13th century, and brought about by the so-called “Gregorian reform”. From this perspective, phenomena traditionally regarded as characteristic of the 11th and 12th centuries – *encellulement*, parochialisation, *incastellamento*, and territorialisation (as analysed by Fossier, Duby, Toubert, and Violante) – do not appear to Lauwers as the result of a “sudden break”. Rather, they emerge as the final outcome of a long process of social and spatial construction of local communities under aristocratic rule. This process unfolded through the growing “polarisation” of human groups around local sacred places – churches and cemeteries – rather than around castles, and Lauwers sketches its main stages before turning to a more detailed analysis of the high medieval period. In this sense, these transformations are best understood as the result of a long dynamic specific to what he terms *dominium ecclésiastical*: a notion that does not denote ecclesiastical or clerical domination, but instead captures the *ecclesiastical* – that is, communal and Christian – logic structuring relations between rulers and ruled, as well as the fundamental role played by the *ecclesia* in sustaining the social order. The link with the processes of change that traditional Catholic historiography in France subsumed under the formula of the “Gregorian reform” (and in Germany, under the label *Investiturstreit*) remains decisive – provided that those processes are understood, as they were in Italy by Capitani and above all by Cinzio Violante, not as the outcome of a conscious programme culminating in Gregory VII, but rather as the product of a multiplicity of reformist ideas and practices, some of them mutually contradictory. On this view, what took place was not a “Gregorian” revolution, but an “ecclesiastical” one – yet a “revolution” nonetheless. What remains genuinely revolutionary, in fact, is that at the height of these processes – and with the support of the rediscovery of law and the development of new legal practices – the new Church was able to effectively establish the monopoly of all ecclesiastical forms of social organization. This was achieved through a clear separation between the ecclesiastical and secular elites, as well as between their respective, increasingly “territorialised” spheres of domination, a separation that also helped to shape phenomena such as seigneurialisation and feudalisation. It was the “ecclesiastical” dimension of the social organization that conferred upon the transformation its universal and revolutionary scope. In this sense, the so-called “Gregorian reform” retains, as it does for Mazel, the status of a “total social fact”. Michel Lauwers, however, explicitly rejects a periodisation according to which the advent of an institutionalised Church would divide a first from a second Middle Ages. In his view, these developments should instead be understood as manifestations of a long-term dynamic of ecclesiastical domination that did not disrupt the period’s overall coherence. Moreover, this dynamic continued to unfold in later forms and stages – most notably in the Protestant Reformation – without even then possessing the force required to break the

underlying ecclesial logic that would continue to structure European society until the revolutionary upheavals of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The essays by Giuseppe Albertoni and Luigi Provero – which are included, together with Vito Loré's contribution on southern Italy, in the section *Forms of Political Power* – are devoted to the tensions and transformations that affected aristocratic society and political relations with the sovereign in the Italian kingdom. Albertoni takes his point of departure from the oft-overlooked final pages of *La Société féodale*, in which Bloch identified the affirmation of a right of resistance – first of vassals against lords acting unlawfully, and by extension of subjects against the king – as one of the principal corollaries of the formalisation of vassalage and the consequent assimilation of the relationship between aristocracy and king to a bilateral contract. Susan Reynolds' reassessment, which shifts the formalisation of the feudal–vassalic relationship to the mid-12th century, poses an obvious challenge to any straightforward revision or endorsement of Bloch's suggestions. Albertoni addresses this issue by focusing on the social group of the *milites* and on their relationships with royal and imperial power, as well as with the high office-holding aristocracy, in the period spanning from the second half of the 10th century to the 1030s. In doing so, he also recovers the category of 'informal feudalism' which was developed by Cinzo Violante in collaboration with Amleto Spicciari. Above all, however, Albertoni explicitly embraces Susan Reynolds' invitation to distinguish carefully between "phenomenon", "concept", and "word". He thus presents the intricate and largely spontaneous network of relationships – which were horizontal rather than vertical – in which the *milites* of the Italian kingdom were embedded at the time as the expression of a dense web of loyalties and personal ties that predated both their conceptualisation and their verbal articulation as feudal-vassalic relationships. The *Edictum* promulgated by Conrad II in 1037 responded to the needs of the *milites* not so much by establishing the principle of the hereditary nature of their *beneficia* – as Lombard jurists would later assume and argue in the 12th century – but rather by securing their right not to have those assets taken away without a concrete and formally declared fault, and to avail themselves, in such cases, of the judgement of their peers. The right of resistance was thus not merely the product of political action well before the formalisation and emergence of legal feudalism; rather, the very written definition of feudal customs can be understood as the final outcome of the efforts of first- and second-rank *milites* to obtain guarantees that would transcend the oral character of practices and the unwritten rules governing the granting and revocation of the essentially fiscal and ecclesiastical assets assigned to them.

Provero's essay is devoted to the radical transformation of the very nature of royal and imperial power in the Kingdom of Italy following the *Edictum* of 1037, over the little more than one hundred years separating the accession of Henry III in 1039 from that of Frederick Barbarossa in 1152. Provero identifies an initial phase of change unfolding during the 11th century, followed by a final phase of marked acceleration in the last decades of the period under

consideration. The first phase manifested itself through a series of developments beginning with the failure to rebuild the royal palace which had been destroyed by the inhabitants of Pavia following Henry II's death in 1024. The kings renounced the appointment of marquises and counts outside established family lines of office-holders, and were forced to contend with growing disruptions in the traditional system for managing fiscal lands. Royal control over sites devoted to specialised production came to an end, while the high office-holding aristocracy removed large estates from the fiscal patrimony, either through sales to their followers or by transferring them to privately-founded monasteries. By weakening the great lords' power over the intermediate military aristocracy, the *Edictum* of 1037 itself had already begun to undermine the system that enabled sovereigns to rule the kingdom through the mediation exercised by the great office-holding aristocracy over the Italian elites' lower ranks. This aristocracy increasingly found itself excluded from the procedures and conflicts surrounding the election of sovereigns, in part because it no longer sought to influence or participate in the political game of the kingdom, but rather to emancipate itself from it. The empire thus became one element – albeit one of particular importance – within a broader constellation of local power relations. By deposing Marchioness Matilda of Tuscany in 1081 and failing to resolve the crisis of the Arduinic March following the death of Marchioness Adelaide in 1091, the emperor himself effectively acknowledged the exhaustion of the great political structures on which royal power had traditionally rested. By the mid-12th century, Frederick Barbarossa was compelled to base his political action on the restoration of his role in public ceremonies and on efforts to reclaim jurisdictions and assets whose accurate inventory had been lost in the meantime. Provero concludes by stating explicitly that the reform of the Church – which severed the ties between the empire and the bishops, who had been the traditional mediators with the cities – together with the civil wars of those years constituted decisive factors in the final acceleration of broader political change. Yet – and this is the crucial point – these conflicts must still be situated “within a broader context, encompassing a multiplicity of processes”.

Reconstructing the common thread linking the central political powers and local forces is also an essential tool for interpreting southern Italy, if we wish to grasp the nature of change and to propose effective periodisations. There can be little doubt that, in continental southern Italy – the subject of Vito Loré's contribution – the 11th and 12th centuries marked a sharp turning point, nor that the interplay between change and continuity unfolded there along highly distinctive lines. By other routes, but even more so than in Carolingian Italy, political power there retained a pronounced public character. In the three Lombard principalities – in Capua and Benevento, and somewhat later in Salerno – between the end of the 10th and the mid-11th century (on the eve of its conquest by Norman knights and mercenaries), there was a clear increase in the counts' role. These figures controlled territorial districts as well as public lands and prerogatives, were frequently able to transmit their

offices to their heirs, and at times – especially where Normans were already present in the region – also acted as castle-builders. These developments nevertheless did not amount to a ‘privatisation of power’, nor did they give rise to vassal-like relationships. In the Byzantine areas, on the other hand, the transfer of tax revenues to local powerful figures cannot be interpreted in terms of lordship, nor can the pursuit of autonomy by cities be taken as evidence of communal development. Between 1050 and 1070, the Norman rupture constituted a genuine “systemic change”: military conquest brought into being a new aristocracy and a mosaic of lordships across the continental South, which remained largely autonomous during the period of weak political primacy exercised by the Dukes of Apulia. No less profound was the new rupture that, between 1127 and 1142, led Roger II of Sicily to found the kingdom and establish a strong form of public sovereignty – one that did not assume the characteristics of feudal domination over the territorial aristocracy until the end of the century. Vito Loré’s assessment of the dialectic between “change and resilience” is therefore ambivalent. With the *Regnum Siciliae*, the political system of southern Italy recovered – by projecting it onto a newly unified space – its ancient tendency, which was already present in Lombard and Byzantine times, to gravitate towards a stable and clearly-defined centre. At the same time, however, Norman success brought about a sudden acceleration in the seigneurialisation of local power. By immediately structuring this power in territorial form, it foreclosed the possibility of alternative internal developments based on patrimonial accumulation and landownership – developments that remained largely confined to monastic lordships.

Seigneurial power is the central focus of the essays by Alessio Fiore, Sandro Carocci, and Maria Elena Cortese in the section *Forms of Lordship*. With his 2017 monograph on the “seigneurial transformation” in the Kingdom of Italy between 1080 and 1130 – a period marked by civil wars stemming from the dispute over the promotion of bishops, and roughly coinciding with the brief chronological span that saw the abrupt introduction of territorial lordship by the Normans further south – Fiore transposed to central and northern Italy the ‘French’ paradigm of the contemporaneity between the breakdown of the Carolingian-derived public order and the emergence of new forms of territorial lordship, and in the Italian case, also of powers exercised over the countryside by urban communities. Central to the transformation described by Fiore is the remodelling of the language of violence. This is so precisely because the lords accompanied these changes with an intensification of acts of violence against their subjects and their bodies, practices aimed at extending their dominion over men and women who were not serfs. This transformation is examined here with reference to two aspects that have received little attention in the historiography until now. The first concerns variations in the language and practice of violence as the identity of the political actors exercising it changed. It thus emerges that the violence exercised by urban communities – which positioned themselves as collective territorial lords over rural communities they sought to acquire or retain – cannot be assumed, in practice

and when circumstances demanded it, to have been substantially different from or less brutal than that practised by non-citizen lords. What differed was rather the way in which this violence was represented. Urban communities tended to offer a self-representation that was less complacent and less openly acknowledged than that of rural lords who, conversely, were interested in cultivating an image of arrogance closely tied to their aristocratic and military identity. The second issue concerns the link between aristocratic power and instances of sexual violence against dependant women. Alessio Fiore removes this practice from the prevailing historiographical view, which has tended to present it as an extraordinary or exceptional phenomenon. His hypothesis is that the lord's claim to dominion over women's bodies was one of the implications of the new language of violence that accompanied the transformation of lordship. If this aspect of domination appears only sporadically in the sources, it is because it was obscured and silenced – effectively censored – by the community's own men who, in cases of rape committed by the lord or his agents, had been unable either to defend or to compensate for a form of honour which had been violated on three levels: that of the women who were assaulted, that of the men, and that of the community meant to protect or avenge them. It should therefore not be regarded as coincidental that this phenomenon emerges in the sources only when the subjects themselves are not the ones speaking – as in the *querimoniae* – but rather when it is reported by observers external to the community.

The contributions of Cortese and Carocci tend, in many respects, to broaden the problematic framework within which the processes of seigneurialisation in Italy have been analysed, while also complicating their effects as well as their chronological and spatial scope. Both authors – albeit to different degrees, and with Carocci addressing the issue directly and at length in his concluding remarks – accord renewed prominence to the *milites*. In Albertoni's essay, these figures appeared as a central element of crisis within the political order which had been inherited from the Carolingian and Ottonian traditions; they may also be seen more broadly as one of the factors underlying the transformation of relations between the great office-holding aristocracy and royal power as discussed by Provero. In the first part of his essay, Cortese revisits the relationship between aristocratic structures and public and royal authority, highlighting what may well be the most significant development to emerge from recent research. In the 10th century, and well into the 11th, the Kingdom of Italy's aristocracy – far from benefiting from a privatisation of public property that had already deeply undermined royal power – remained strongly dependent on the royal court's capacity to deploy its vast fiscal resources so as to sustain an informal and unwritten circulation of land, wealth, and honours. The resilience of public fiscal assets, together with the continuity of this structure of political relations, also tended to preserve a traditionally open configuration of kinship. Within this framework, individuals pursued their fortunes within largely horizontal networks of relationships which were oriented as closely as possible towards the central court, without giving rise

to processes of dynasticisation, either among the higher aristocracy of margraves and counts or within the middle aristocracy. This pattern has been studied primarily in the Tuscan area, but it also finds significant parallels in the Milanese and, beyond the kingdom, in Ravenna. Consistent with this picture, the crisis of 'public' powers and the emergence of local 'private' powers in the Kingdom of Italy – when viewed both in relation to the mutationist paradigm initiated by Duby and to the national historiographical tradition – appear to have been clearly displaced by roughly a century, unfolding instead in the decades around the year 1100. With regard to this point, and to the model that is thereby emerging, Cortese nevertheless introduces important qualifications. In many areas of northern Italy, such as the bishopric of Trento and the patriarchate of Aquileia, continuity with Carolingian-derived socio-institutional structures remained uninterrupted, and no development of territorial lordships took place. Territorial lordships were likewise very weak in major areas of Umbria and Tuscany – around Perugia, Lucca, and Pisa – or, more clearly still, in Romagna. In many rural areas they did not take shape until the end of the 12th century or even later, including parts of Lazio, Tuscany, and the Po Valley. Even in the territory of Milan, an area of relative weakness in the development of lordship is now being identified. The second part of the essay examines the implications of this revised state of the research and chronology in relation to the classic thesis linking the rise of territorial lordship to economic growth driven by the intensified pressures exerted by lords on peasant production – one of the fundamental corollaries of the mutationist paradigm. Archaeology has suggested that evidence for this connection may be found in a transition: namely, in the material structures of feudal castles, which would have shifted from wood to stone between the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century. Cortese considers this hypothesis to rest on fragile empirical foundations, however, not least because such a transition does not in fact appear to have occurred before the second half of the 12th century. A significant temporal discrepancy therefore remains with respect to the currently accepted dating of the *mutamento signorile*. According to Cortese, an earlier *pietrificazione* of castles would not even be compatible with the later chronology for the economic take-off of central-northern Italy which was recently proposed by Chris Wickham in *The Donkey and the Boat*. The territories of Pisa and Milan, by contrast, display a capacity for growth that appears to be independent of territorial lordship. Cortese – like Sandro Carocci more fully in the following essay – ultimately argues for shifting the correlation between increased seigneurial exactions and increased growth to lower levels of the social hierarchy, locating it in the relationship between peasants and the domination exercised by *milites* of more modest social standing.

In an essay that moves with particular originality between documentary evidence and contexts drawn from both southern and central-northern Italy, Carocci decisively shifts the focus from the seigneurial powers of the upper and middle aristocracy to those exercised by the several thousand *milites* who held dominion over the produce, land, or even the persons of fewer

than a dozen – or at most two or three dozen – men in Italy. These knightly ‘micro-lordships’ are examined through a specific analytical lens: that of the pervasiveness of seigneurial power, a conceptual tool which is already foregrounded in other important and innovative studies by Carocci. In southern Italy – Norman and later Swabian – such micro-lordships were particularly numerous. There, royal taxation and the relatively light exactions imposed by territorial lords left ample space for the undoubtedly heavier levies and greater intrusiveness exercised by the knights. Their numbers and intrusiveness had increased as a result of the disorder and militarisation associated with the period of conquest, and were further sustained by subsequent royal concessions and protections, which came to an end only with Frederick II’s new legislation on the militia and the vassalage of the lower strata. Micro-lordship, however, unlike territorial lordship, was also present in the pre-Norman period, taking the form of the transfer of taxpayers along with their fiscal obligations, or the assignment of immigrants and foreigners subject to payments in exchange for protection. According to Carocci, the relative neglect of micro-lordships in central and northern Italy is largely the result of delays in research rather than of their historical marginality. There can nevertheless be no doubt about the widespread presence, from at least the mid-11th century onwards, of lower-ranking *milites* within the upper strata of local societies. Throughout the 12th century, these figures were key protagonists of processes of upward social mobility, processes that only partially – and at a later stage – derived from service rendered to medium and large territorial lords. Both micro-lordship and pervasiveness appear to Carocci to be long-lasting phenomena that extend beyond the relatively ‘narrow’ chronology assigned to the emergence of territorial lordship, which currently functions as a historiographical benchmark in Italy. Given that, in general – without implying a strict correlation – pervasiveness tends to be more characteristic of minor than of major lords, it is not easy to argue that it increased in parallel with the rise of new and violent territorial lordships between the 11th and 12th centuries. In many regional contexts, the sheer number and pervasiveness of micro-lords – who were often present precisely in those areas where new territorial lordship had failed to take root – also require us to reconsider their overall power of extraction, which may well have exceeded that of territorial lords. Echoing observations advanced in Cortese’s essay, Carocci thus asks “whether the sharp acceleration of exactions revealed by many material indicators in the mid-12th century depended less on the violence of territorial lords than on the pervasive local presence of *milites*,” and consequently, whether historiography has in this respect overestimated the significance of the emergence of territorial lordships. Moreover, from a chronological standpoint, and as in the South, the expansion of knightly micro-lordships in central–northern Italy may likewise be traced back to the mid-11th century as the outcome of processes of increasing violence, a growing number of knights, and what Carocci terms the “militarisation of pre-eminence”.

All three essays in the section *Urban Change* move well beyond classic local investigations of urban history aimed at reconstructing ‘communalisation’ processes. Instead, they deploy their case studies to advance broader methodological proposals. Alberto Cotza traces in parallel – drawing on the most recent historiography – the divergent trajectories of Genoa and Pisa from the late 11th century onwards. In the 1130s and 1140s he identifies an area of interaction among the respective urban elites, Pope Innocent II, and even the empire – an interaction capable of embedding urban political dynamics within a papal project of pacification following three decades of inter-city conflict. A specific political space took shape through this process, one detached from the geographical and even institutional – or geopolitical – frameworks usually privileged by historians. In both cities, though according to different modalities rooted in their distinct local histories, this moment marked a crucial turning point and a significant qualitative leap in the definition of urban consuls’ power. Two parallel yet distinct political trajectories – and which were destined to remain so – thus experienced a shared acceleration in the formation of communal structures, an acceleration that cannot be attributed to endogenous factors of change alone. Cotza thus shows that, in the new world of the High Middle Ages, change – communal development in this case – cannot be understood by analysing it solely within a local dimension, nor by relying on simple models of circulation and imitation, here in their political-institutional form. The transformation of the High Middle Ages cannot be reduced to the localisation of power alone; it also generated supra-local spheres of action that became decisive arenas of change. From this perspective, comparative approaches aimed merely at typological differentiation along geographical, regional, or sub-regional lines prove inadequate for grasping processes of communal development. The emergence of new inter-local and supra-local spatial configurations – the “connected arenas” in which the individual urban political elites interacted – rather calls for the construction of a genuinely “connected history of communal developments”.

Dario Internullo draws attention to the “documentary revolution” that swept across Europe in the High Middle Ages alongside many other contemporary transformations, and which may be understood as part of a broader “writing revolution”. The 12th century marks an absolute watershed: the number of surviving documents increases tenfold beyond this point, and the documents themselves also become qualitatively new. In terms of script, density, and organisation of writing, they are more legally standardised, more abstract and increasingly shaped by Roman law, more socially inclusive, more easily manageable, and often organised into registers. In Rome, the chronological curve of documentary production rises until the mid-11th century, then declines until the 1120s before entering a phase of renewed and more rapid growth. Internullo explains the initial phase of growth by pointing to the transition from papyrus to the more resistant and durable medium of parchment, but also to a genuine increase in the number of documents through which members of the papal clientele received Church lands in emphyteusis

and other forms of long-term leasing. The subsequent decline, between 1050 and 1124, can therefore be more plausibly attributed above all to the direct effects of Church reform and to its reaction against the alienation of *res ecclesie*. The final phase, extending to the end of the 12th century, represents a genuine explosion, and in quantitative terms is the true beginning of the documentary revolution. More interesting and significant are the qualitative ruptures and innovations, however. From this perspective, the decisive break in fact occurred during the period of quantitative decline, roughly between 1050 and 1150, and was initiated and sustained by the city's need to respond to the crisis of the earlier political and judicial system. That system had been based on the public power exercised by the pope and his officials, on the *placita*, and on the circulation of ecclesiastical goods among those laypeople who were closely connected to the churches and the papacy. From the mid-12th century onwards, with the completion of the transition to a phase of economic take-off and social growth, the demand for documents expanded dramatically, allowing quantitative and qualitative transformation to converge. The Roman case thus reflects changes that can be extended to the broader Italian and European context, as shown by a comparison with Florence – though on a slightly later chronology – and with Barcelona, which presents a largely corresponding trajectory. Everywhere, the revolution in types of documents can be linked to the crisis of the earlier public systems of the early Middle Ages. At the same time, the similarities observed – such as the end of early medieval “graphic particularism” – may be traced back to the emergence of new supra-regional interactions and connections which, according to Wickham's recent research mentioned above, finally took shape across the Latin Mediterranean from the mid-12th century onwards. With regard to the broader problem of periodisation between the Early and High Middle Ages, Dario Internullo emphasises the “real break” represented by the documentary revolution. In his view, this break severs any direct and specific link with a general growth in the needs of the “state” (as proposed in the pioneering work of Michael Clanchy), and thus also with communal development as such. Instead, it marks a fundamental stage – though perhaps not the final one – in the transition from a culture in which social events themselves acquired the status of “texts” or “documents,” binding individuals even through records entrusted solely to oral memory, to a culture in which documentality and textuality came to rest essentially on writing.

Paolo Tomei's essay on Lucca is devoted to the emergence of new family structures – the aristocratic *domus* – which shaped the city's political development well beyond the advent of the *Popolo* in the early 14th century. The fact that Tomei himself presents his study as a contribution to debates on “seigneurial transformation” clearly demonstrates the impossibility of understanding medieval change in the central-northern Italian cities in isolation from the broader transformations which affected the aristocratic world and the forms of power in which those cities were embedded. A first group of *domus* crystallised around the year 1100, in conjunction with the seigneur-

ial transformation. These lineages became institutionalised, each coalescing around a material and symbolic heritage composed of “dignity, origin, kinship, names, symbols, power, and wealth”. With few exceptions, they were ruled by *milites* and *domini* who – following the definitive crisis of the March of Tuscany and the Marquisate of Lucca – withdrew to the mountains of Garfagnana and the Versilia coast between 1080 and 1120, residing in towers which were erected at the centre of their fortified *curtes* while surrounded by their peasant dependants. A second group of *domus* emerged between 1170 and 1220, in conjunction with the definitive consolidation of communal institutions. These new lineages coalesced around *milites* who were largely *homines novi*, enriched by the “commercial revolution”, while the powerful and well-established *domus* of the first phase returned to the city and assumed key positions within the urban political system. At the same time, the militia became a closed corps whose dominance over the city – and with it, that of the *domus* – would be broken only by the laws against *casastici et potentes* enacted by the *Popolo* in 1308. The principal strength of Tomei’s argument lies in his ability to highlight, with clear periodising intent, the structural rupture represented by the formation of the first *domus* at the time of the crisis of marquisal power and its end with the death of Matilda of Canossa (1115). In the earlier structure there was only a single ‘house,’ consisting of the marquis’ palace – which was destroyed around 1081 during the civil wars triggered by the conflict between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. This palace functioned as both a political and physical focus of centralisation and of the continuous distribution of honours, wealth, and justice. Orbiting around it was an aristocracy composed of individuals without stable kinship ties or constraints which historiography has at times mistakenly reconstructed in terms of family histories and genealogies. In doing so, it projected onto this earlier aristocracy the same distorting and manipulative, self-celebratory gaze later adopted by the *domus* with respect to their own past – a gaze that accompanied the replacement of the centripetal “court society” with a localised and initially centrifugal “house society”.

The texts in the *Archaeology* section – following the introduction to the theme in the essays by Cortese and Carocci – engage more directly with issues of economic and material transformation. These transformations largely supported, and at times actively shaped, the broader processes of change that characterised the period under consideration. Alessandra Molinari analyses and discusses the Italian peninsula’s economy, situating it within a wide-ranging and systematic comparison with data and current knowledge relating to Egypt, Sicily, and Tunisia, regions that were once united under Fatimid rule. Like most of the contributions on archaeology and economics collected in this volume, her study takes into account Chris Wickham’s impressive work on Mediterranean economies between 950 and 1180, which was published shortly after the Pisa seminar. Molinari confirms several of the main conclusions of *The Donkey and the Boat*: the relative economic backwardness of the Italian area – while nonetheless emphasising the “gradual transition from systems

based on redistribution to the growth of cities and independent, specialized crafts”; and the greater economic complexity of the Islamic regions, for which it is nevertheless possible to hypothesize an earlier development that became more rapid and visible in the 11th and 12th centuries. Her analysis significantly broadens and deepens the perspective from an archaeological standpoint, revisiting and updating data on settlements and trade networks, and extending the discussion beyond ceramics to other forms of evidence, including organic remains, paper, and textiles. In particular, Molinari emphasizes what material evidence reveals about creativity, knowledge, and technological innovation in manufacturing and agriculture, all of which are essential for interpreting economic complexity. One of her central arguments is that trade between “culturally and politically distinct regions”, beyond its quantitative volume (the primary focus of Wickham’s analysis), significantly fostered internal growth and specialisation by circulating “ideas, knowledge, and tastes”. This was clearly the case in Sicily and Egypt under Fatimid rule. Moreover, for the late 12th and 13th centuries, evidence from Sicily and the Crusader states calls into question Wickham’s thesis concerning the continued external – and therefore non-decisive – role of Italian merchants in regional Mediterranean societies, even after the economic take-off of the Italian peninsula.

Federico Cantini discusses the transformations that affected the “landscapes, economies, and societies” of central and northern Italy between the 10th and 12th centuries in an essay that focuses primarily on the influence of local and supra-local factors on processes of change. His point of departure is the 10th century, when urban centres still incorporated elements of the rural landscape and the use of stone – both newly quarried and reused – was relatively limited, except in the towers of bishops’ palaces and in the restoration and reconstruction of urban religious buildings that began in the 970s and 980s. The resources required for these still modest investments were drawn mainly from regional and sub-regional economies. The use of stone was similarly limited in the countryside, to castles built on public initiative and in those constructed by bishops, monasteries, and the large and medium-sized secular aristocracy. Nevertheless, the number of such structures – together with the broader intensification of new settlements between the late 10th and early 11th centuries, including in lowland areas – points to ongoing demographic and productive growth. This growth nevertheless took place within a system based on the transfer of goods and services from peasant holdings to manorial centres, and from there to cities and major monasteries, in a context marked by the near absence of minted coinage. During the 11th century, while the countryside experienced a renewed wave of investment by the higher aristocracy in the construction of monasteries and the renovation of parish buildings, clear signs of a new urbanisation of space and a progressive petrification of urban landscapes began to emerge. The phase of growth continued, albeit at a low intensity. It was not until the 12th century that a period of more substantial economic development took shape, intensifying in particular after the 1150s and leading to the expansion of regional markets and the

consolidation of Mediterranean ones, accompanied by more pronounced demographic growth. In urban contexts, this development manifested itself in new stone constructions and in the erection of towers and tower houses which were characteristic of the new aristocracy that was organised into patrilineal lineages (the *domus* analysed by Tomei), as well as in the construction of walls and public and private buildings, and in a renewed use of brick. These processes unfolded against a backdrop of expansion in the property market and rising real-estate values. From the mid-12th century onwards, currency also became widespread within networks of rural settlements, where new villages and urban-type centres were founded, towers proliferated, and seigneurial residences modelled on urban architecture were built within castles – not only by the high and middle aristocracy, but also by upwardly mobile *milites* eager to distinguish themselves from the rest of rural society.

Andrea Augenti's essay helps to clarify the significance of the 10th-12th-century threshold in the long-term history of urban centres in central and northern Italy. First, it recalls that this period – which was preceded by important developments in the 9th century and followed by further ramifications in the 13th – coincided with the most profound transformation and the most significant reconfiguration in the urban network's density and geography. This occurred within a context marked by the enduring persistence of ancient urban centres, with relatively few abandonments and only a limited number of new foundations in the Early Middle Ages. During the same period, the urban topography of power underwent significant change: ancient public buildings were abandoned and the seats and palaces of authority shifted location and form, marking a break in architectural language that was already taking shape in the 10th century. Augenti also invites us, however, to consider evidence drawn from other aspects and tools of archaeological analysis that have either been neglected until recently or have only lately become available. The final decades of the 11th century especially correspond to major transformations in urban epigraphy, which since the fifth century had been characterised by a process of increasing "ecclesialisation". A "new flourishing of public inscriptions", together with the marked expansion of their forms, responded to emerging needs for public communication, including civil communication, and served to ensure political control over a newly-constructed civic memory. Alongside church façades, this memory made use of walls, bridges, and city gates, and – from the 12th century, if not earlier – also of the surfaces of houses and family towers, enabling the epigraphic self-celebration of private individuals and lay elites. Recent research highlights the importance of the artificial levelling and infilling of land during the 11th and 12th centuries, which can be interpreted – and not only in Rome – as evidence of deliberate and carefully-planned urban interventions. Finally, the histories of those cities which were abandoned in the early Middle Ages and subsequently replaced by ecclesiastical or monastic foundations – genuine "relay stations of memory" and sites of cultural investment in links with antiquity (all of which reached the height of their development, including economic growth, during this pe-

riod) – constitute a significant marker of the transformations that characterised the 11th and 12th centuries.

In the four contributions that make up the final section – *Economy* – economic change is examined in relation to other decisive junctures in ongoing transformations, such as political change in the cities and the emerging issue of the dissolution of public fiscal assets. It is also addressed through more readily measurable indicators, such as prices and monetary circulation – topics that are now often neglected in historiography. Alessia Rovelli surveys the production and circulation of silver coinage in central and northern Italy from the Ottonian period – when in the *Regnum italicum* minting was confined to the four imperial mints, which were already active in the Carolingian age, of Pavia, Milan, Lucca, and Verona – to the late 12th and early 13th centuries, when coinage passed to some twenty autonomous urban mints. Evidence from coin finds in Tuscany, together with archaeometric analyses of the provenance of their silver, suggests that until the early decades of the 11th century coinage was used primarily to finance military campaigns and imperial travel. The necessary metal flowed from the Harz to the mint in Pavia – by far the most productive one – not through trade, but through the “fiscal redistribution circuit”, which both Simone Collavini and Giovanna Bianchi have described as characteristic of the broader management of public assets in the kingdom. The picture in the subsequent period, which was marked by the depletion of the Saxon mines and the crisis of the imperial presence in Italy – transformations discussed in Luigi Provero’s essay – is far less clear and reveals pronounced local variation, including in the use of minted coinage, for which demand exceeded supply. Areas in which coins continued to circulate, and where *res valentes* and substitute currencies were rare, thus contrasted sharply with those regions in which such alternatives clearly prevailed. The four imperial mints operated irregularly, and the predominantly sub-regional scale of exchange – which is attested by the archaeological evidence – within a context of still limited economic growth did little to encourage monetary circulation. This situation changed radically around the middle of the 12th century. The proliferation of transfers of minting rights to cities was accompanied by a corresponding increase in coin production, as evidenced by archaeological finds. The reduction in the silver content of *denarii* coincided with the introduction of higher denominations, culminating in the minting of *grossi*. At the same time, the use of substitute currencies declined, coinage increasingly came to respond to economic interests, and local tax systems became monetised. Currency thus became an integral component of the new economic complexity.

Lorenzo Tabarrini undertakes the demanding task of revisiting classic issues – price inflation, currency debasement, and exchange rates – which a longstanding mistrust from economic anthropology has contributed to marginalising in recent research, despite the fact that, as late as the end of the 20th century, they remained a central component of studies on medieval economic change. Tabarrini reviews and succeeds in rendering methodologically

comparable the series of land prices which were developed in the research of Violante, Herlihy, Bonnassie, Racine, Jarnut, and Feller, and later synthesised in a recent study by Paolo Cammarosano. These series show an increase in nominal prices from the second half of the 10th century onward, which slowed during the first quarter of the following century before diverging into different trajectories in the second half of the 12th century. Various explanations have been proposed for this rise in prices; however, for the *Regnum italicum* – given the contemporaneity of monetary debasement and the peak of Saxon mining exploitation – Tabarrini suggests that one of the factors behind the duration, and perhaps even the initial trigger, of the inflationary phase can be traced to the “expansion of state demand”. This refers to the growth of ‘public’ investment in large-scale royal enterprises aimed at sustaining the long-distance circulation of fiscal resources and financing the remuneration of both royal officials and the army. In a structurally different economic context, it nonetheless appears possible to identify a role for the ‘state’ in the renewed emergence of inflationary dynamics in the late 12th century, when cities – having acquired their own mints – began to experiment with forms of fiscal deficit to finance military expenditure, thereby adding public demand to existing private demand for consumption and investment. The essay’s concluding section addresses another crucial issue, one that also carries significant theoretical implications for the preceding discussion: whether exchange rates between different currencies in the 12th century reflected, in whole or in part – and if so, to what extent – the intrinsic value of the coinage or the legal rates imposed by rulers. Tabarrini leaves the question open, rightly concluding that, as with all the complex problems his essay has the merit of bringing into focus, “closer collaboration between historians and archaeologists” is required – clearly including numismatists among the latter, and perhaps implicitly calling for a broader and more open engagement by historians working on economic history.

With his 2023 book, Chris Wickham has complemented his 2015 monographic study on political change in central and northern Italian cities between 1050 and 1150 with an in-depth discussion of contemporary economic developments. With frequent reference to Genoa, he examines – largely in order to refute – the hypothesis that a correlation existed between these two processes of transformation (or more precisely, between their respective outcomes): on the one hand, the formation of the Italian communes, and on the other, the economic take-off of the macro-region corresponding to the *Regnum italicum*. First and foremost, Wickham argues that these were not contemporaneous phenomena. The former took shape in the first half of the 12th century, whereas the latter occurred after 1150, if not after 1180, and in some cases even later. Even the subsequent political developments of the second half of the century were responses to political and military challenges rather than the result of economic change. Wickham encapsulates this position in an effective opening formulation: while “large-scale processes are rarely entirely independent of other broad contexts”, the “basic causal elements of each were

different". He nevertheless points to a shared causal factor – in a very brief passage that is nonetheless consistent with most of the essays in this volume – for communal developments and for the other fundamental political transformation that can be considered their prerequisite: namely, the collapse of the Kingdom of Italy. Both processes are traced back to the civil wars that erupted in 1080 and are therefore – at least in part – consequences of the dynamics which were set in motion by the so-called "Gregorian reform". The disintegration of the kingdom and the formation of communes did not facilitate economic development, but instead initially slowed it down, since political and institutional fragmentation hindered the integration of local and sub-regional economies. Autonomy translated into a positive economic stimulus only in the 13th century, when communes began to invest systematically in public infrastructure. There were exceptions to this general separation between political and economic development, however. Owing to the growth of its textile manufacturing sector, Piacenza established close commercial ties with Genoa as early as the first half of the 12th century. In this case economic connections fostered similarities and simultaneity in the development of the two cities, partly through the imitation of political models. Taken as a whole, the essay thus marks a clear break with a long-standing tradition of scholarship – a cornerstone of the national 'communalist' narrative – which traced the roots of the Italian communes' distinctive autonomy to their exceptional economic dynamism and precocity, and held that communal institutions emerged primarily to regulate economic activity and sustain the so-called 'commercial revolution.'

While this 'knotting' between the level of political-institutional change and economic transformation is denied in the case of communal history, it becomes plausible again in Simone Collavini's work. The abrupt collapse of royal and marquisal power, which gave rise to lordships and communes, "also brought an end to an economic structure – the 'fiscal system' – that had long been central to the Tuscan economy". Royal landholdings were particularly extensive in Tuscany, and in some areas were predominant. As elsewhere, these assets circulated widely and rapidly through concessions that were often temporary and granted orally within the aristocracy gravitating around public power – namely, within the "court society" here described by Tomei. Because continuity in the management of the *curtes* involved in this network was ensured by local elites of *gastalds* and *actores*, the system engaged not only the higher office-holding aristocracy but also the middle and lower aristocracy, extending down to local notables. Collavini's dense essay – one rich in clarifications that revise, among other things, several significant aspects of the regional model of seigneurial transformation – thus constitutes a fundamental contribution to understanding the Tuscan public fiscal system's functioning. The fiscal authorities organised and controlled the *manentes'* agricultural and craft production, channelling it into non-commercial forms and sustaining a large and efficient economic network which was separate from the 'private' one. This network ensured the city a form of 'centrality' linked to

the spending and consumption of regional elites. The system dissolved within a few decades around 1100, when the conflict between the papacy and the empire triggered a political and civil crisis whose irreversibility, according to Collavini – here pointing to another, inverted plane of interaction between economic and political dynamics – should also be connected to the earliest forms of economic growth and transformation that emerged in the 11th century. For the first time, these developments offered both the opportunity and the incentive to exit the ‘public’ political system governed by the fiscal authorities, thus making its crisis irreversible. It was a true “revolution” in political structures, from which emerged “a society that we can regard as fully post-Carolingian – i.e. as belonging to the High Middle Ages”. As a result, the regional economy was profoundly reshaped. The wealth of the churches and aristocratic elites – which had already been expanding for demographic reasons, and owing to the rise of the *milites* as well – grew steadily and significantly, while their ‘private’ demand expressed by them also increased following the cessation of gifts from the court. With the collapse of the public network, aristocratic landholdings and the resources that remained ‘fiscal’ were absorbed into a single integrated system which was opened to the market, and which now became the sole source of prestigious goods and of the money required to acquire them through the sale of peasant surpluses extracted as rent. Urban centrality was thus rapidly re-established on new productive and commercial foundations. The new freedom of economic action available to fiscal *manentes*, together with peasant initiatives which were capable of withstanding intensified lordly pressure, continued to fuel population growth and productive specialisation. From this perspective, the rupture represented by the collapse of the *Regnum italicum* appears as an “accelerator” of the Tuscan economy’s long-term cumulative growth, which had begun in the Early Middle Ages, and as one of the causes of its take-off – a take-off clearly visible only in the second half of the 12th century.

10. *Some concluding remarks*

The panorama of studies and reflections offered in this volume, which is situated at the heart of the current investigations into Italian spaces and sources, thus constitutes a significant contribution to research on a new High Middle Ages – one more finely articulated chronologically, more clearly differentiated spatially, and therefore more deeply and accurately understood. Viewed from a broader perspective, it becomes evident that certain key themes recur, together with a series of proposals linking different levels of historical change. Among the most prominent is the acceleration - operating at multiple levels and across a plurality of ongoing processes – triggered in central and northern Italy by the final crisis of the Carolingian and Ottonian political and institutional structures of ‘public’ origin, as well as by the simultaneous collapse of Byzantine and Lombard power structures in southern

Italy. In the South, this rapid rupture gave rise to the radically new phenomenon of territorial lordships. At the same time, however, it can be argued that a degree of continuity in local practices – which were long anchored to a central power typologically marked by a form of ‘resilience’ of ancient state-like features – favoured, within a not much longer timeframe, the formation of a kingdom that was in many respects equally new (in the southern context, as in the broader European one). By contrast, in central and northern Italy the collapse of the *Regnum italicum* and the profound transformation of imperial power are confirmed as decisive factors: on the one hand, in the completion of the process of seigneurialisation; on the other, in the emergence of new forms of communal government. For both processes, more precise lines of enquiry are envisaged. It is nevertheless above all in the case of the latter – “communalisation” – that it seems necessary to further temper the claim, present in long-standing narratives, that certain developments essentially occurred independently and swiftly as the expression of peculiarly original social forces.

Although they do not necessarily mark the contours of a single, sudden rupture, and there is still room for interpretations inspired by broader time frames, these transformations are nonetheless widely understood to have crystallised within a relatively short span of time: namely, those few decades bridging the 11th and 12th centuries. In central and northern Italy this period corresponds to the so-called ‘civil wars,’ while in the South it coincided with a turbulent phase of conflict that culminated in the establishment of Norman seigneurial rule. The role played by the reforming papacy and its Church within the context of instability in southern Italy may need to be rethought and rewritten; there is nevertheless little doubt that in the centre-north of the peninsula, the ‘civil wars’ that accompanied the collapse of the Kingdom of Italy were closely linked to the conflict that erupted between the papacy and the empire over the appointment of bishops. Equally undeniably, the intersection between the dispute over episcopal appointments and the political structure of the kingdom thus emerges as a powerful driver of change in the Italian context. One may nonetheless ask to what extent these ‘civil wars,’ and indeed the very possibility of the papacy entering into conflict with the empire, were themselves ‘preconditioned’ by tensions already affecting the kingdom’s structures at multiple levels – social and institutional, and perhaps even economic. What does appear genuinely new, however, is the importance attributed in several contributions to the movement and rise of the *milites* as a group, here understood as both an indicator and an agent of transformation across multiple spheres: political, aristocratic, and economic. The dynamism and transformations within the Church – which in this volume ultimately appear as a long-term process, especially where they are interpreted in terms of a *révolution ecclésiale* – are also connected, once again in what may be described as a two-way interaction, to changes in the field of law, which are here unequivocally characterised as a ‘revolution.’ The Roman ‘crisis’ of the Papacy, which was triggered by the reform of the Church – and thus, ultimately, by the breakdown of the legal and institutional functioning of a traditional po-

litical and 'public' order – was in turn linked to the 'documentary revolution,' one of the most prominent thematic innovations highlighted in the volume. Church, law, writing: the question of a cultural, and even anthropological, rupture is thereby reopened.

Finally, many essays across several sections emphasise the periodising significance of ongoing research into the relatively recent field of the management of fiscal and royal resources. After all, this sphere constituted the deepest layer – the very core – of continuity within the so-called public system, a continuity that Duby highlighted in his seminal monograph on the Mâconnais mainly in relation to the administration of justice. We can now provide a concrete, anachronism-free point of reference for the distinctions between 'public' and 'private', distinctions often criticized as projections of modern conceptualizations. The management of fiscal assets becomes the key to understanding the structural changes in kinship underpinning the choices made by the elites, but it also proves to have a fundamental influence on the economy, on currency circulation systems, and on surpluses. While an overly tight correlation between economic growth and a rapid seigneurial transformation around the turn of the 12th century now appears less convincing, the collapse of royal 'public' power and its fisc takes the form of a powerful accelerator of ongoing economic processes leading towards greater complexity. Without abandoning the perspective of a long-term and profound material and economic transformation, one which unfolded according to its own rhythms, there is nonetheless broad agreement in locating its peak – at least for central and northern Italy – in the second half of the 12th century.

The interweaving of topics, together with the overall picture that emerges from the individual contributions to this volume, ultimately points to the need for broader and more multidimensional representations of the new 'High Middle Ages' we are seeking to define. It is nevertheless clear that differing approaches to the complex historiographical problem of the 11th and 12th centuries persist. Differences persist, both with regard to the pace of the processes of change as well as their 'revolutionary' character – whether conceived as a sudden rupture or as an acceleration of ongoing processes – and with regard to the ways in which, and the extent to which, such changes can be articulated by linking different structural levels, which in turn has consequences for longer-term historical periodisation. Nevertheless, the coexistence of diverse perspectives constitutes the best guarantee for the continuation of a debate that has finally been set in motion, and one that need not reproduce sterile oppositions between mutually exclusive paradigms.

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Giuseppe Petralia
 Università di Pisa
 giuseppe.petralia@unipi.it
 ORCID: 0000-0003-2817-8014

I

Church and Law

The turning point in half a century. The legal revolution of Gregory VII, Irnerius, and his followers

by Emanuele Conte, Luca Loschiavo

The authors aim to challenge the prevailing view among legal historians that the medieval legal tradition was characterized by fundamental uniformity. Instead, we argue that the medieval millennium witnessed at least one moment of profound rupture – one that decisively shaped the trajectory of European legal history. This critical moment can be located in the century spanning from the mid-eleventh to the mid-12th century. The first section (Loschiavo) examines how this historiographical perspective has evolved over recent decades. The second section (Conte), likewise beginning with a reassessment of both older and more recent interpretations, focuses on the field of canon law. The Gregorian Reform introduced decisive innovations, particularly a renewed emphasis on the authority and reliability of texts – especially normative texts, which were now placed above, rather than alongside, the many and often highly diverse customary laws. These developments significantly affected both the compilation and systematic organization of the Church's vast body of norms, as well as the techniques of legal interpretation. To illustrate the practical repercussions of this new intellectual approach, two exemplary cases will be analyzed: the debate at Gerstungen (1085) and the recently rediscovered mosaic in the Church of San Savino in Piacenza, datable to the early decades of the twelfth century. Attention will also be devoted to the famous case of Marturi (1076), which represents the first practical application of the *Digest* after centuries of absence from the courts. The third and final part of the essay (Loschiavo) elucidate the pivotal role played by Irnerius at the turn of the twelfth century. His work was characterized, first and foremost, by the decision to focus his teaching exclusively on the rediscovered texts of Justinian's law, setting aside particularistic legal traditions. More importantly, as both a philologist and a jurist, Irnerius proposed a new approach to ancient legal texts, introducing a conception of legal order based on the autonomy of juridical knowledge – an

Emanuele Conte, Roma Tre University, Italy, emanuele.conte@uniroma3.it, 0000-0002-3042-9452
Luca Loschiavo, University of Teramo, Italy, lloschiavo@unite.it, 0000-0002-5251-8974

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unprecedented innovation compared to the theological and wisdom-based legal framework that had dominated up to that point.

Gli autori intendono mettere in discussione l'opinione prevalente nella storiografia giuridica, secondo cui la tradizione giuridica medievale sarebbe stata caratterizzata da una sostanziale uniformità. Essi sostengono invece che il millennio medievale conobbe almeno un momento di profonda cesura, destinato a orientare in modo decisivo la traiettoria della storia giuridica europea. Tale momento critico può essere collocato nel secolo compreso tra la metà del secolo XI e la metà del XII. Il primo paragrafo (Lo Schiavo) analizza l'evoluzione di questa prospettiva storiografica nel corso degli ultimi decenni. Il secondo paragrafo (Conte), che prende anch'esso avvio da una rilettura delle interpretazioni più risalenti e di quelle più recenti, è dedicato al diritto canonico. La riforma gregoriana introdusse innovazioni decisive, in particolare un rinnovato accento sull'autorità e sull'affidabilità dei testi – soprattutto dei testi normativi – che vennero ormai collocati al di sopra, e non più accanto, delle molteplici e spesso assai eterogenee consuetudini giuridiche. Tali sviluppi ebbero effetti rilevanti sia sulla compilazione e sull'organizzazione sistematica dell'ingente patrimonio normativo della Chiesa, sia sulle tecniche dell'interpretazione giuridica. Per illustrare le ricadute concrete di questo nuovo atteggiamento intellettuale, vengono analizzati due casi esemplari: il dibattito di Gerstungen (1085) e il mosaico recentemente riscoperto nella chiesa di San Savino a Piacenza, databile ai primi decenni del XII secolo. Particolare attenzione è inoltre riservata al celebre caso di Marturi (1076), che rappresenta la prima applicazione pratica del *Digesto* dopo secoli di assenza dalle aule giudiziarie. I paragrafi terzo e quarto (Lo Schiavo) chiariscono il ruolo cruciale svolto da Irnerio tra la fine del secolo XI e l'inizio del XII. La sua attività si caratterizzò anzitutto per la scelta di concentrare l'insegnamento esclusivamente sui testi riscoperti del diritto giustiniano, accantonando le tradizioni giuridiche particolaristiche. Ancora più rilevante fu il fatto che Irnerio, in quanto al tempo stesso filologo e giurista, propose un nuovo modo di accostarsi ai testi giuridici antichi, introducendo una concezione dell'ordine giuridico fondata sull'autonomia del sapere giuridico: un'innovazione senza precedenti rispetto al quadro giuridico di matrice teologica e sapienziale che aveva sino ad allora prevalso.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, legal history, Irnerius, Justinian's law.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, storia del diritto, Irnerio, diritto giustiniano.

1. *On the periodization of medieval legal history*

As one might expect, the issue of periodization has long been debated among legal historians. The discussion was particularly lively during the 19th century, when the discipline itself was taking shape. At that time, the central question concerned the precise moment when, following the decline of Roman legal experience in the West and its imperial order, a new historical phase began. Under the influence of Friedrich Carl von Savigny, European scholars were especially concerned with identifying the origins of what the founder of the historical school had termed “legal literature”.

These matters are, however, familiar even to non-legal historians. At the beginning of this millennium (2002), Patrick Geary analyzed them with great insight and effectiveness.¹ The issue received particular attention in Germany and Italy, where, as is well known, the modern nation-state took shape much later than in other European countries.

¹ Geary, *Il mito delle nazioni*, especially 31 ff.

At a time when even the humanities were pervaded by the ‘spirit of positivism’, it was argued that the ancient origins of Germanic and Italian law had to be acknowledged, as the Germanic and Roman-Italian elements were pitted against one another in a kind of ‘final duel’. These interpretations – or, if you prefer, ‘narratives’ – were, as is easy to understand, strongly conditioned by their respective nationalisms. Only after the Second World War did scholars begin to see matters differently.² At the same time, the historiographical category of ‘Late Antiquity’ was emerging with striking force in the field of ancient history, to the point of inspiring Andrea Giardina to speak of a veritable ‘explosion of Late Antiquity’.³ Much credit in this regard goes to the now-classic work of Arnold Hugh Jones,⁴ without overlooking the valuable contributions of André Piganiol (1883-1968), Franz Dölger (1891-1968), Arnaldo Momigliano (1908-87), Hans Georg Beck (1910-99), Santo Mazzarino (1916-87), and Peter Brown (1935-).

On the other side, it was largely through the initiative of medievalists – especially Anglo-Saxon scholars – that, in the 1980s, the ‘continuationist’ theory of *transformation* came to be set against the *clash* or *crash* theory traditionally used to characterize the end of the ancient world.⁵ This shift in perspective – this new approach to the study of the period from the end of the third to the late 6th century – is now well established, albeit with different nuances, among medievalists. There is, however, one striking exception: legal historians, and especially Italian legal historians, have generally remained impermeable to this new vision.

Italian legal historians – who, for the most part, have long since abandoned the study of the early Middle Ages – do not seem willing to acknowledge the importance of the period that I propose to call the ‘Age of Passage’.⁶ Yet, this was precisely the era in which the established structures on which the old Roman empire had rested wavered dramatically, and first the Roman emperors and then the new Romano-Barbaric *reges* sought to replace them with new foundations. In this context, new legal figures were tested in the search for solutions more functional to a social, economic, and geopolitical reality that had definitively changed. It was also the moment when Christianity moved beyond its earlier phase of primarily contesting and replacing the old values of Roman-Hellenic civilization, ceasing to exist only as a spiritual movement and taking its first important steps toward a more fully developed

² See, e.g., in Italy, Sestan, *Stato e nazione* and, more recently, Gasparri, *Prima delle nazioni*.

³ In his insightful and widely read essay, Giardina, “Esplosione di tardoantico” also addresses the difficult problem of periodization. Other important contributions can be found in the volumes Lanata, *Il tardoantico*, and Criscuolo, e De Giovanni, *Trent’anni di studi*.

⁴ Reference is to the three volumes of Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*.

⁵ See the pioneering essays collected in the volumes edited respectively by Bossy, *Disputes and Settlements* (especially James, “*Beati pacifici*”) and Davies, and Fouracre, *The Settlement of Disputes*. The historiographical debate on this topic is now summarized in Murray, “The Law,” especially at 73-87.

⁶ Loschiavo, *L’età del passaggio*.

institutional configuration. Precisely in these same centuries, Christians also began to devote increasing attention to the legal dimension. along this path of the new faith's decisive social penetration and the introduction of a new ethic into civil life – with progressive occupation of political spaces and decision-making centers – the Church Fathers resolved, though not without tensions and difficulties, to adopt Roman law and make it their own. This process of appropriation unfolded gradually and was accompanied by a careful intrinsic evaluation of all positive law, from which Roman law emerged heavily transformed and almost stripped of its original character.

Nevertheless, legal historians have not only forgotten Late Antiquity and the wealth of innovations it brought to the world of law. They may have done something even worse by effectively denying the richness of the Middle Ages – its fruitful variety and even the value of its study for future jurists. Perhaps not yet in words, but certainly in practice, they have deserted the study of the Middle Ages, and in doing so have made it a desert.⁷ I shall try to explain.

With some exceptions, the interpretation that Paolo Grossi advanced in 1994 in his highly successful book *L'ordine giuridico medievale* with regard to the mediaeval age and its divisions, appears to be the dominant view among legal historians today.⁸ Already in the opening pages of the volume, Grossi clearly signals his intention to present a vision of “perfect compactness” (*perfetta compattezza*) of the medieval legal experience, explicitly declaring his opposition to dividing the Middle Ages into ‘early’ and ‘late’ phases.⁹ Such a partition, he argues, should be rejected first because it creates confusion – particularly for non-Italian scholars) – and above all because it implies “the erroneous idea that these are two autonomous moments that can be separated and evaluated independently”. This is not to say that Grossi denies the existence of a change between the beginning and the end of the medieval age. To characterize this change more precisely – such is his invitation and suggestion – he proposes to distinguish a moment of ‘foundation’ from a moment of ‘construction’. In still more evocative language, Grossi also speaks of an *officina della prassi* (“workshop of practice”), which took shape in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, and of a *laboratorio sapienziale* (“laboratory of wisdom”), which characterized the centuries leading up to the modern age. Incidentally, Grossi seems to have little appreciation for the modern era, at least insofar

⁷ It will suffice here to compare the introductions of two works that – almost a century apart – address essentially the same theme. De Ruggiero, *Storia del liberalismo europeo* (1-94) frequently returns to the Middle Ages and its many laws and legal systems, partly in order to highlight more clearly the novelties of the subsequent era. By contrast, the recent Fioravanti, *Lezioni di storia costituzionale* – an authoritative legal historian – dismisses the entire continental Middle Ages with a single reference, associating it with the idea of ‘immovability’ (here 15).

⁸ Grossi, *L'ordine giuridico medievale*. Critical reactions to Grossi's ‘reading’ of the legal Middle Ages in Ascheri, *Un ordine giuridico medievale*; Conte, *Un débat historiographique* and Conte, *Storicità del diritto*. A multi-voiced reconsideration – unsurprisingly laudatory terms – of the Middle Ages according to Paolo Grossi is offered in *Il diritto come forma*, 299-423 (with contributions by C. Storti, F. Migliorino, G. Pace Gravina, C. Petit, and M. Pifferi).

⁹ Grossi, *L'ordine giuridico medievale*, 27-8.

as it produced the much-deplored legal absolutism and secularism that ultimately destroyed the pluralistic legal paradigm of the Middle Ages.

Specifically referring to the second part of the Middle Ages, Grossi then invites us to avoid using the widespread expression ‘juristic revival’ since it risks suggesting “an overly sharp qualitative separation between the two moments before and after the eleventh century”. For Grossi, what is often labeled a “juridical renaissance” was nothing more than “a moment of more intense social, economic, and cultural circulation”. Hence, as already mentioned, the late Florentine legal historian maintained that the legal Middle Ages should be understood as an “unified legal experience, highly compact in its unity”.¹⁰

To the illustrious jurist – and to the many who readily embraced his interpretation – one might immediately object that a ‘compactness’ that remains absolutely ‘unitary’ over the course of ten centuries is a very strange thing for anyone concerned with studying and understanding human affairs. For this reason, it would need not only to be elegantly affirmed but also, more prosaically, demonstrated.

Emanuele Conte and I – like our common teacher, Ennio Cortese – find it difficult to accept this interpretation. In these pages, we seek once more to show that, on the contrary, between the 11th and 12th centuries the world of law underwent a new and genuine change of register – a change so evident and significant as to suggest the idea of a ‘revolution’. This is, for instance, the case of Harold Berman, the American jurist and legal historian, who tellingly entitled his most important book, published in 1983 and devoted to the birth of the Western legal tradition, *Law and Revolution*.¹¹

Here too, in essence, we may speak of a ‘passage’, a genuine ‘turning point’,¹² one that makes it possible to distinguish quite clearly the world that came before from that which followed. This passage can aptly be described as a ‘renaissance’ or ‘revival’, especially if this term is understood not as the revival of a corpse, but as a new birth: the birth of a new *scientia*, such as medieval *iuris prudentia*. In other words, it is the birth of something that, while drawing upon antiquity, was nonetheless essentially original and capable of profoundly shaping the social and political realities of its time.

Nobody, of course, believes that such a transition – this epochal change – occurred suddenly, in the blink of an eye. It unfolded over several generations of scholars and practitioners who, in the first phase, can hardly be called ‘ju-

¹⁰ Grossi, 29. It is striking – to give just two examples – to contrast Grossi’s perspective with that of Kuttner, *The Revival of Jurisprudence*, and Cortese, *Il rinascimento*.

¹¹ Berman, *Law and Revolution*. Like Grossi, Berman also raised the problem of periodization and sought to suggest one more fitting for legal history. Whereas Grossi contested the conventional partition within the Middle Ages, Berman instead targeted the even more general one that traditionally distinguishes antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the modern age. According to the Harvard professor, modern legal history begins in the West precisely with the reform of the Church championed by Gregory – what Berman terms the ‘Papal Revolution’. The image of a ‘revolution’ is also taken up by Errera, *Lineamenti di epistemologia giuridica*.

¹² The reference here is to the classic essay by Fournier, “Un tournant.” See § 2 and note 13.

rists' in the proper sense. The phenomenon, especially in the beginning, had the Italian peninsula as its epicenter and was fully realized within a century, roughly between 1050 and 1150. With some caution, it may even be possible to circumscribe the transition more narrowly to the decades straddling the 11th and 12th centuries (say, between 1075 and 1125).

It was, in any case, a long process. Nevertheless, certain nodal moments can be identified, linked to particular figures and occasions. One could say, in short, that even this story has its eponymous 'heroes'. And eponymous heroes – as is well known – are very useful when one wishes to exemplify the emergence of a novelty worth noting. Among these 'heroes of change' are certainly Hildebrand of Soana (d. 1085), i.e. Pope Gregory VII, and Wernerius/Irnerius (d. 1125?), whom an ancient tradition describes as the *primus illuminator* of medieval juristic *scientia*.

2. Recent criticism of Fournier and Berman: is a history without heroes a history without events?

It is clear that Harold Berman was greatly influenced by the interpretation boldly proposed by Paul Fournier in 1917.¹³ In his classic article on the Gregorian Reform as a turning point (*un tournant*) in the history of law, Fournier highlighted certain key developments in the intellectual history of the late 11th century – developments that would also form the backbone of Berman's 'revolution'. Let us briefly recall some of these key points.

The first point concerns the history of canonical collections, a subject to which Fournier devoted his most important book, *Histoire des collections canoniques en Occident*, published in collaboration with Gabriel Le Bras. To emphasize the innovative character of the Gregorian age, Fournier begins by noting that the earlier collections – particularly the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms – were ill-suited to the needs of the new vision promoted by the Gregorian Reformation. Burchard did not accord sufficient importance to the primacy of the Holy See, and he continued to allow the use of divine judgment, the ordalic procedure that the new reformers fiercely opposed.

The second point is the new awareness of the purity of textual tradition and the connection between normative texts with the authority of their authors. Fournier cites particularly telling passages from the *Liber Gomorrhani* of Pier Damiani and from the *Capitulare* of Atto da Vercelli: both declare that texts whose origin cannot be attributed with certainty to ecumenical councils or popes are utterly useless. Both likewise call for a thorough revision of the existing canonical collections, which were filled with erroneous or doubtful texts that could not be regarded as canonical norms.

¹³ Fournier.

The third point is an explicit critique of customs and, more generally, of the normative power of custom. For the Gregorian reformers, the mere antiquity of a custom was not sufficient to establish a legal norm. Gregory's position is made clear in a famous passage: <Dominus> non dixit: ego sum consuetudo.¹⁴ What determines the force of a binding norm – what distinguishes it from any other expression of wisdom or even truth – is the authority of the lawgiver, the force impressed upon the normative text by its author.

As a result of these three points, extensive research was undertaken by scholars in search of genuine normative texts issued by canonical legislators and long forgotten in ecclesiastical libraries and archives. This activity led, on the one hand, to the compilation of new and innovative collections of canon law and, on the other, to the rediscovery of Justinian's Digest.

The fourth major innovation introduced during the pontificate of Urban II, according to Fournier, was the development of a new method of interpreting normative sources. In examining the writings of Ivo of Chartres and Bernard of Constance, Fournier traced the origins of a dialectical method that would shape legal doctrine from the early 12th century onward. The establishment of 'harmony from dissonance', as Stephan Kuttner famously described the monumental achievement of medieval canon law scholarship,¹⁵ thus had its roots in the writings of the mature champions of the Gregorian Reform on the eve of Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum*.

Paul Fournier's clear historical vision anticipated by a few years the publication of Augustin Fliche's major study, which established once and for all the term "Gregorian Reform" as a key historical concept.¹⁶ As a legal historian, Fournier's chief concern was to highlight the main novelties introduced by the Gregorian party in the fields of law, the definition of legal norms, and their interpretation. Fliche's scope was much broader, encompassing all aspects of ecclesiastical history. Both Fournier and Fliche stood as heirs to an important historiographical tradition, which has been thoroughly described in a recent and valuable article by Charles de Miramont.¹⁷

This tradition had its roots in French liberal and German Romantic historiography.¹⁸ Breaking with the conventions of earlier ecclesiastical history, 19th-century European historians developed a more complex understanding of historical turning points. They valued upheavals and revolutions as fundamental moments of evolution and tended to exalt the role of towering individuals – great men, heroes, intellectual innovators, and leaders who bore the responsibility of guiding European societies toward a new and better world.

¹⁴ Gouron, "Non dixit: ego sum consuetudo."

¹⁵ Kuttner, "Harmony from Dissonance."

¹⁶ Fliche, *La réforme grégorienne*. A shorter one-volume version was published in Fliche, et Martin, *La réforme grégorienne et la reconquête*.

¹⁷ De Miramont, "L'invention de la Réforme grégorienne."

¹⁸ Even though significant divergences between French and German historiography have been highlighted in Martin, and Winandy, *La réforme grégorienne*.

In recent years, both historians and legal historians have expressed dissatisfaction with the historiographical category of the Gregorian Reform. Let us consider briefly only the technical criticisms advanced by legal historians.

Luca Loschiavo recalls the powerful image offered by Paolo Grossi in his *Ordine giuridico medievale* and elsewhere – an image that has been particularly influential in Italy, Spain, and Latin America. It is a vision in which continuity largely prevails over rupture. French neo-Catholic thought¹⁹ and the German tendency to emphasize the popular character of national law both contributed to constructing this denial of the creative role of the late 11th-century turning point in the formation of modern European law.²⁰

In recent years, however, independent critiques have been developed by scholars based on the contemporary need to renew historiographical categories.

In an essay published in 2019,²¹ Greta Austin explicitly challenges the key assumptions underlying the model of renewal and change proposed by Fournier and Berman. Long before the age of Gregory VII, Austin argues, canon law already occupied a vital place in the life of the Church. Recent scholarship has examined the origins and development of canon law collections in far greater detail than Fournier and Le Bras's classic 1931 study, and the results point to a reassessment of the role played by canon law already in the Carolingian era. This scholarship reveals a genuine systematization of canon law long before the fateful period of the Gregorian reformers.

The rediscovery of Roman law, particularly the *Digest*, was not clearly linked to the shift in outlook introduced by the Reform. Recent research has drastically downgraded the role of Roman law in the creation of new canon law collections in the early 12th century, including the first recensions of Gratian's *Decretum*.

Thus, the 'new narrative' proposed by Austin depicts a shift during the age of Gregory that emphasizes existing tendencies:

The reformers might have capitalized on a general demand for law, which the Church, as one of the dominant institutions in the social field of the period, could carry out. But I do not think the papal reformers (nor Roman law) invented that legal interest, nor jurisprudential methods in the West. That interest and those methods pre-dated the Reforming period of the eleventh century. This narrative of horizontal to vertical differs from Berman or Fournier, because the Gregorian Reform plays a relatively minor role. The story is that of continuity, rather than of sharp disjunctures (Fournier) or beginnings (Berman).²²

One reason for this shift in general historiographical interpretations of how perceptions of law changed may be growing impatience with histories based on great men and fundamental texts. This kind of 'historiographical

¹⁹ On Grossi's Catholic ideological background, see now Fantappiè, "Le influenze."

²⁰ To the references cited *supra*, note 8, add Conte, "The Order and the Volk."

²¹ Austin, "New Narratives."

²² Austin, 56.

heroism' characterized the history of law in Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries and has become quite annoying in the 21st century.

John Wei has gone even further.²³ He questions the role of 'great theologians' such as Abelard, whose *Sic et Non* may have been completely unknown to the author of the first version of Gratian's *Decretum*. Similarly, for Wei, the emphasis on 'great jurists' and 'great ideas' appears to be a weary repetition of outdated interpretative paradigms.

While it is clear that Grossi's image of the Middle Ages – one in which the principles of law were anchored in unchanging stability – must finally be set aside, the more nuanced observations of current historiography on canon law deserve to be taken seriously. Recent scholarship has brought new perspectives to the debate, describing the juridification of the European Church as a multifaceted phenomenon that extends far beyond the simple rediscovery of Roman law and the compilation of new canon laws. Charles de Miramon's excellent book, published in 2025,²⁴ merits serious attention from historians of medieval law.

All in all, then, even while taking into account the many features of stability and continuity highlighted by recent studies, I continue to regard the transition from the eleventh to the 12th century as a genuine turning point: the ideas expressed and practiced during these crucial years placed a new stamp on what Europe understood as law. I would like to recall two episodes whose significance for our subject has only recently been fully recognized. Together with a number of similar sources, they provide a picture of the new legal principles in action. These principles were, in fact, at the heart of a profound change in mentality, promoted by the strong and determined efforts of the so-called Gregorian party.

The first episode provides evidence confirming at least three of the four points of Fournier mentioned earlier. I am referring to the debate held at Gerstungen, Germany, in January 1085,²⁵ during the crisis triggered by Henry IV's second excommunication in 1080, which would continue until after the pope's death on 25 May 1085.²⁶

The Gerstungen debate is documented by two sources from opposing sides, offering a vivid insight into the controversy. On the imperial side, we have the *Liber de unitate Ecclesiae conservanda*, written in Germany, probably in the early 1090s,²⁷ by an unknown author. This source reports that during the debate Henry's defenders argued that the excommunication pronounced by Gregory VII against Henry IV was null and void because it violated the prohibition against taking action against those deprived of social status or

²³ Wei, "Of Scholasticism and Canon Law."

²⁴ De Miramon, *La juridicisation*.

²⁵ I have already suggested an interpretation of this set of sources in Conte, "Gewere, vestitura, spolium."

²⁶ Fuhrmann, "Pseudoisidor."

²⁷ Schmale-Ott, *Quellen zum Investiturstreit*, 28-39.

property, a principle established in the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals. The scene described in the *Liber* is striking: Conrad of the Church of Utrecht (*Traiectensis*) claimed that Henry had not been condemned or excommunicated, for even if the privileges enjoyed by the imperial sovereign did not apply to him, he should at least receive the kind of protection that canon law granted even to the lowest ecclesiastics. At this point, the prelate asked Wezelinus of Mainz to stand and read a chapter *ex decretis Romanorum pontificum*. Wezelinus then read the words of the pseudo-Isidorian introduction:

*legit quomodo rebus suis aliquis spoliatus aut a sede propria vi aut terrore pulsus non potest accusari, vocari, iudicari aut damnari antequam omnia sibi ablata ex integro*²⁸ *restituantur.*²⁹

Wezelinus continued by noting the positive effect of his words on the pope's defenders, adding that the principle even applied to women, as attested in Isidore's collection.³⁰ The imperial source concludes that the argument was so effective that Gregory's supporters could oppose it only by force: the debate degenerated, and a couple of German nobles were killed.

The account of the debate offered by this pro-imperial source must be set against another, remarkable for its polemical sharpness and the depth of its argumentation: the account of Eudes de Châtillon – then Cardinal Otto of Ostia,³¹ soon to be elevated to the papal throne as Urban II, the pope who, according to Paul Fournier's narrative, made a decisive contribution to the legal turn imposed on the European Church by the Gregorian Reform.

Although he does not address the falsity of the texts collected by pseudo-Isidore, Eudes-Otto nevertheless reveals his concern for the integrity of legal sources when he accuses Henry's defenders of betraying even the authentic text of the forgery (pardon the contradiction), since in reading it they disregarded its context and unduly summarized it:

Isidorus in prefatione libri, quem ipse collegit ex decretis pontificum, tractans de oppressione episcoporum, capitulum de quo agitur his verbis depromit: "Nullus, qui suis est rebus expoliatus aut a sede propria vi aut terrore pulsus, antequam omnia sibi ablata legibus ei restituantur et ipse pacifice diu suis fruatur honoribus sedique proprie regulariter restitutus eius multo tempore libere potiatur honore, iuxta cano-

²⁸ Hinschius, *Decretales Pseudo-Isidorianae*, 18 presents an interesting variant: *ex integro legibus*. He also reads *legibus* in the epistle of Otto of Ostia (Erdmann, und Fickermann, *Briefsammlungen*, 375-80); but the variant attests to a very early connection with *restitutio in integrum* and reinforces the impression of a Roman derivation of the remedy.

²⁹ Schwenkenbecher, *Liber de unitate Ecclesiae*, 234-5.

³⁰ Schwenkenbecher, 234-5: *Ad haec cum obmutuisset Gebehardus Salzburgensis ecclesiae archiepiscopus, qui causam adversae partis erat acturus, utpote apud suos maxime vel ipsa senectute sua vel scientia scripturarum sive eloquentia reverendus, tum quidem intulit Werhimerius Merseburgensis ecclesiae episcopus, ubi in canonibus scriptum esset aliquid eiusmodi de mulieribus? Et Wezelinus archiepiscopus porrigens eis librum: 'ecce, inquit, ipsi legite consequens huius rei testimonium, quomodo huius quoque sexui oporteat iustum iudicium fieri, et quomodo ne mulier quidem debeat obiectis respondere, donec permittatur ei rem familiarem libere diutius ordinare'.*

³¹ Erdmann, und Fickermann, *Briefsammlungen*, 375-80.

nicam accusari, vocari, iudicari aut dampnari institutionem potest". Quam laudabilem scripturam scripturarum subversores pro sui negotii qualitate viciatam atque precipuis et honestioribus membris suis inhoneste mutilatam hoc modo protulerunt: "Nullus, qui suis rebus expoliatus est, vocari, accusari, iudicari, dampnari potest". Sperabant autem illud furtum eorum ideo ad presens non posse deprehendi, quod illa Isidori dicta non de excellentioribus illis auctoritatibus sunt ac proinde minus usitata et magis ignota.³²

The future pope Urban II thus displays a thoroughly Gregorian sensibility: on the one hand, a commitment to interpretation that respects the integrity of the norms and their context; on the other, a strict distinction between lay and ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and finally, the recognition of the clerical state as enjoying privileged status over the lay state.

The second source I wish to highlight, in order to show that the early 12th century was indeed an age of radical change for the European legal experience, is an image.³³

It is a bichromatic mosaic discovered in 1902 on the floor under the high altar of the church of San Savino in Piacenza. Similar in style to the larger mosaic preserved in the church's crypt, it bears no date. Art historians have proposed various dates, ranging from 1107, when the church was consecrated, to the middle or end of the same century.³⁴

The mosaic centers on the figure of Atlas, who is seated at the fulcrum of a wheel of fortune. On either side of the central wheel are four panels depicting contrasting scenes.

The two upper panels contrast a trial by combat, a violent process, with a higher justice, a reasonable process delegated by a ruler to a judge. The judge kneels before the king and looks at the book containing the law. The lower panels contrast two games. The dice game corresponds to the trial by combat, while the chess game parallels the king's justice.

The viewer of this mosaic might therefore conclude that the rational, predictable outcome of a chess game stands in contrast to the unpredictable and uncertain outcome of a dice game.

This contrast between the two games was presented by 12th-century theologians as a metaphor for two different approaches to social life: chess was described as a noble game, while dice was regarded as a source of corruption, sin, and ruin for the players.

Some decades later, in the 13th century, chess emerged as a powerful metaphor for an orderly political society, in contrast to the perceived randomness of dice games, which were condemned as mere gambling. The chess pieces, embodying a well-ordered society, served as an allegory for the structured roles within medieval social systems.

³² Erdmann, und Fickermann, 378.

³³ The following lines summarize what has already been published in Conte, and Mayali, "Introduction."

³⁴ Vaccaro, "La scacchiera."



Fig. 1. Mosaic in the presbytery of the church of S. Savino, Piacenza (12th century). Licence: wikimedia commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaico_del_presbiterio_di_san_Savino_\(Piacenza\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaico_del_presbiterio_di_san_Savino_(Piacenza).jpg)

But the game of chess also carried important symbolic meaning. It was considered to be a highly rational exercise that required the combination of a clear understanding of the rules with sound strategy and effective action. Accordingly, in the eyes of jurists, chess differed markedly from dice and gambling: it relied on intelligence rather than luck, as noted in Accursius' *glossa ordinaria* on the Justinian's *Codex* around the middle of the 13th century.

As noted above, the dating of the Piacenza mosaic remains uncertain. Art historians generally consider its style compatible with other 12th-century artworks, while the literary sources on chess and dice games date from the 13th century. However, if the juxtaposition of the two upper panels indeed represents a choice between chaos and violence on the one hand and rationality and justice on the other, as the panels of the two games would suggest, then a 12th-century dating accords well with the overall meaning conveyed by the composition.

The panels do not merely contrast violence and order; they also parallel this opposition with the juridical alternatives of trial by combat – an ordeal particularly common in Lombardy – and the rational trial based on procedure and legal actions. In the 12th century, the reformed Church promoted a new attitude toward customary procedures that had entrusted God with the task of determining innocence or guilt in uncertain disputes. Robert Bartlett connects this shift in ecclesiastical thought to changes in the theology of the

sacraments, particularly to the reinvigoration of the practice of lay confession.³⁵ After several centuries of ambiguity – during which the official prohibitions of the duel (*monomachia*)³⁶ failed to eradicate its widespread use³⁷ – things began to change significantly. 12th-century canonists and theologians consistently emphasized the illegitimacy of any judicial practice not based on the careful review and evaluation of proofs. This principle gained increasing acceptance within the Church, culminating in the famous canon of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that prohibited clerics from participating in ordeals.³⁸ Peter the Chanter, for example, observed that in a trial by combat each champion relies either on his force or skill, or – if innocent – on God's intervention to prevent injustice. In the first case, he added, the decision rests on force rather than justice; in the second, it constitutes a *diabolica temptatio*, a temptation of the Devil intended to compel God to intervene supernaturally.

There are good reasons to believe that the mosaic on the floor of the Basilica of San Savino in Piacenza reflected the campaign for the abolition of the judicial duel. It supported the introduction of a radically different judicial process – one based on the wisdom and knowledge of the judge, who exercised power delegated by the sovereign in accordance with the law. Removed from the violence of the battlefield, the rational and learned procedure of this new form of trial was symbolized by reference to the game of chess and to the book of law, which should constitute the proper focus of the judge's attention.

Let us observe, however, that within a period of fifty years – from the Assize of Clarendon (1166) to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) – the significance of the reforms in the judicial process extended beyond the strictly legal field. These legal developments reflected broader cultural changes that influenced political practices, religious beliefs, and social attitudes toward justice and its role in the formation of a well-ordered Christian society. The deliberate opposition, in our mosaic, between trial by combat and a learned decision-making process also underscored the contrast between force and legal reason – a contrast that was redefining the legitimacy of political authority within the feudal system.

The two episodes I have mentioned are only examples among many. Let me add another, in which a further essential element of the legal transformation of the 12th century comes to the fore: the rediscovery of the *Digest*, invoked as the primary authority in support of a new, rationally grounded conception of justice.

Among the documents that bear witnesses to this great legal renewal is the famous *Placitum* of Marturi (1076), the first document in which the *Digest* is quoted in a court of law.³⁹

³⁵ Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*.

³⁶ Fiori, "La prima condanna."

³⁷ Bougard, "Rationalité et irrationalité."

³⁸ Baldwin, "The Intellectual Preparation."

³⁹ The Marturi case report is probably the most frequently quoted and commented-on document in medieval legal historiography. The interpretation of its legal significance has been con-

Legal historians and diplomatists are still debating the case of Marturi. It may be noted here that the plaintiff, the Monastery of Marturi, sued the holder of a piece of land that it claimed had been unlawfully taken from it some sixty years earlier. The defendant responded by invoking the lapse of forty years, using the expression *quadraginta annorum curricula*, taken from Justinian's *Novel* 111 (Auth. 106; Jul. Ep. 119,6),⁴⁰ a formulation adopted in both canon law collections and certain Carolingian lawbooks.⁴¹

The defendant's argument was possible because of the straightforward automatism of the Lombard law in force in Tuscany. Had the court not admitted the argument taken from the *Digest*, the monks' action would have been hopeless. After thirty years, the defendant could refuse the plaintiff's request. The formula to be used by the defendant was very clear in the *Expositio ad librum Papiensem*, a commentary on Lombard law from around the same period: *non tibi respondeo, quia eam possedi per 30 annos*.⁴² However, in 1076, a reaction to the oversimplified Lombard law was applied in practice for the first time by quoting a short passage from the *Digest* (D. 4.6.26.4), which was difficult to find but absolutely appropriate for the case. Indeed, the monastery's advocate argued that if a magistrate to receive the plaintiff's request was absent, *praescriptio* could not be invoked and the disputed item should be returned to its owner.⁴³

The practical use of the *Digest* in a Tuscan context confirms the Lombard jurists' interest in Roman law,⁴⁴ particularly in procedural matters. The Roman Church also recognised the need for a more developed and complex form of trial, and around 1135, its chancellor Aymericus asked Bulgarus, the famous glossator of Bologna, to write a short tract on the Roman trial. Some years later, the revived Roman Senate delivered a judgment that already considered the highly sophisticated interplay between *possessio* (with its Roman features) and acquisitive prescription.⁴⁵

siderably enhanced by the publication of the complete roll prepared for the trial, which allows us to reconstruct the unfolding of the events: see Kurze, "Die «Gründung»." The case has been reinterpreted in light of these new findings by Padoa Schioppa, "Il ruolo della cultura giuridica." On the use of *praescriptio* by the defendant, Cortese, *Il rinascimento giuridico*, 10-13; Birr, "Die Urkunde von Marturi (1076)," who cites Cortese only through the summaries in his handbooks: Cortese, *Il diritto nella storia medievale*, 382-4, and Cortese, *Le grandi linee*, 218-9. The documents have now been edited in Cambi Schmitter, *Carte della Badia di Marturi*, and have been interpreted from a historical perspective by Ronzani, "Un monastero valdelsano."

⁴⁰ On the rediscovery of the *Authenticum*, see Loschiavo, "La riscoperta dell'Authenticum."

⁴¹ Boretius, *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, 219. This text is also included in the *Decretum Gratiani*, C.16 q.4 c.3.

⁴² Boretius, *Liber legis Langobardorum*, 456.

⁴³ Cortese, *Il diritto nella storia medievale*, 383-5; Radding, and Ciaralli, *The Corpus Iuris Civilis*, 183-4.

⁴⁴ Radding, *The Origins of Medieval Jurisprudence*.

⁴⁵ Conte, *Diritto comune*, 106-7: case of 1151.

3. *Matilda of Canossa, the 'woman of government', and Irnerius, 'the philologist'*

The *placitum* of Marturi provides the earliest evidence of a 'return' to the *Digest* in practice, offering clear confirmation that an effective and intense search for Justinian texts was underway in Italy in the last decades of the 11th century.⁴⁶ However, the same *placitum* tell us other things, too.

One of these concerns Beatrice, the Marquise of Canossa, in whose name the judges administer justice in Marturi. It should not be forgotten that Beatrice was a woman alone in government for a long time. It was certainly the awareness of the precariousness of her power that made her realize that if she wanted to maintain her position, she would have to rely on 'good governance' rather than force. This would require her to administer justice well, as only by doing so could she gain the recognition of her authority from her vassals – and in Marturi, she was seeking to redress an injustice committed long ago by her late husband, the tyrannical Marquis Boniface. This was precisely the teaching and example that Beatrice left to her only surviving daughter, Matilda, who was likewise destined to rule alone (from 1076) and to play a decisive role in the conflict between papacy and empire. Matilda would not forget that lesson; indeed, she adhered to it throughout the nearly forty years during which she governed a strategically vital territory on the continent's chessboard amid the tumultuous years of the so-called 'Investiture Controversy'.

In light of this last consideration, we can better understand the meaning of the account found in a well-known passage of the *Chronicon*, written around 1220 by Burchard, prior of the important monastery of Ursperg in Bavaria. In that passage, Burchard mentions a request (*petitio*) allegedly made by Countess Matilda of Canossa to *dominus Wernerius*, inviting him to "renew the books of laws" (*renovare libros legum*).⁴⁷ This is the only source that provides us with this significant piece of information, which links Countess Matilda to the revival of *scientia iuris*. Even if we cannot, in any sense, speak of an 'official assignment' that Matilda might have given to Irnerius – let alone of the founding act of the University of Bologna – Burchard's words certainly merit close attention. To lend greater credibility to his account, it should be noted that in 1113, at Baviana near Ferrara, Matilda did in fact meet with the *causidicus* 'Varnerio of Bologna'. It is also quite plausible that two of the most eminent judges in Matilda's circle⁴⁸ – Ubaldo di Carpineti and Bono di Nonantola, both present at Baviana – acted as intermediaries.

Ennio Cortese has explained the probable content of Matilda's request to Irnerius: it likely concerned what we would today describe as a 'critical edi-

⁴⁶ On the timing and uncertain circumstances of the arrival of the Justinian texts in Italy see Loschiavo, "Le leggi di Giustiniano."

⁴⁷ Padovani, "Matilde e Irnerio."

⁴⁸ See Roversi Monaco, "Il 'circolo' giuridico di Matilde," with an extensive bibliography from which, surprisingly, Cortese, "Intorno agli antichi *iudices*" is missing.

tion' of the Justinian legal text.⁴⁹ It is easy to understand why Matilda would have turned to Irnerius himself, since the learned Bolognese was already renowned for skills we would now associate with a 'philologist' – and it is, of course, to the philologist that one turns for a textual reconstruction (I will return to this point later).

One question remains open: what interest prompted the 'Grand Countess' to address such a request to Irnerius and to sponsor that major effort of textual reconstruction? The first answer that springs to mind is that Matilda held Roman law in great regard. However, an episode fifteen years earlier demonstrates that this is not the explanation. We are in Garfagnolo, in the Apennines near Reggio Emilia, and the year is 1098. Matilda, responding to a petition from the losing party in an earlier trial, ordered her judges to repeat the proceedings, since the case had been decided according to Roman law rather than by the Lombard rite of proof by duel. The Countess' firm and precise directive puzzled those who – precisely on the basis of the passage from Burchard mentioned earlier – had regarded Matilda as a champion of the revival of *ius romanum*. However, an objective reading makes it clear that the Grand Countess was fully aware that Justinian's rules could not be applied directly and immediately. Above all, she was well aware that the law in force in her territory was Lombard-Frankish law.⁵⁰ Thus, the Garfagnolo episode shows that just like Beatrice, Matilda was not primarily concerned with the mere re-proposal of Roman law as a law endowed with superior authority. Rather, she was interested in concretely administering justice in her territories. While a secure and reliable text of Justinian's law was certainly important, it was only valuable insofar as it could guarantee legal certainty, which is the true cornerstone of 'just' justice.

The uncertainty of the law – that is, the difficulty of determining which rule should be applied to a concrete case – had become, in those turbulent decades, the paramount problem. To grasp the urgency of this issue, it is useful to recall another, equally famous episode that preceded the *petitio* by a few years and took place, one might say, just beyond Matilda's jurisdiction. In this instance, our source is not a practical document, but the rather circumstantial account of the English moralist and theologian Radulfus Niger:

Cum enim coram imperatore in Lombardia convenissent iudices tocius regni, occiso servo a quodam quesitum est iudicium de homicida. [...] Cum igitur multiplici allegatione iuris sui inebriarentur [...] pravi iudices dictaverunt sententiam in homicidam solam mulctam pecuniariam. Surrexit autem magister Peppo in medium tantum Codicis Iustiniani et Institutionum baiulus, utpote Pandecte nullam habens

⁴⁹ Different reading by Spagnesi, "Irnerio," and Spagnesi, *Libros legum renovavit*, especially 57 ff.

⁵⁰ In particular, the norms of Otto I, in Boretius, *Liber legis Langobardorum*, 570 [1.3.(2)] and 580 [1.9(10)] were to be applied here: the former imposes the duel as the means of providing evidence in cases *de investitura predii*; the latter stipulates that the Romans should also be subject to the same procedure in similar cases. See Nicolaj, *Cultura e prassi dei notai*, 73-4; Cortese, *Il rinascimento*, 15; Santoni, "Tra 'lex' e 'pugna'," 21.

noticiam, [...] enervans sententiam priorum iudicum. Quippe allegavit eum, qui exemisset hominem de grege hominum, universitati fore iniurium adeo, ut qui hominem ademisset universitati hominum, quia violasset naturale communionis consortium, ipse pariter de medio tolleretur et homicida occideretur. Sive enim servus sive liber foret, idem ait esse iudicium, quoniam addictio servitutis delere non poterat communionem nature humane conditionis. Legibus igitur et sacris constitutionibus imperatorum firmato iudicio optinuit magister Peppo coram imperatore aliis iudicibus in confusione recedentibus.

With enthusiasm and equal admiration, Radulfus recounts how, on the occasion of a judgment held – presumably around 1090 – in the presence of Emperor Henry IV, somewhere in the Lombard Kingdom, the learned Pepo, an expert ‘Romanist’, fiercely opposed the other judges present, who had agreed on monetary compensation as the punishment for the slayer of a servant (a case, moreover, amply regulated in the *Edict of Rothari*, which was certainly the law in force in those regions at the time). It is possible, though not demonstrable, that this Pepo is the same individual mentioned in Marturi as *legis doctor*, and perhaps also the one whose name – though nothing more than the name – was recalled by the Bolognese masters a century later as that of their ancient predecessor. According to Radulfus, Pepo lashed out at the other judges, invoking capital punishment instead. He did so on the basis of an argument that rather loosely combined principles drawn from divine law – particularly from the Old Testament, which, however, had been superseded on this point by the New – along with perhaps a few passages from Isidore of Seville and some unspecified Roman norms (difficult, in any case, to identify). On this basis, Pepo argued that the order upon which natural society is founded had been violated. Therefore, the murderer should be punished with the penalty proscribed by the divine order itself – the *talion* – overriding any human law to the contrary. This line of reasoning closely reflected certain Gregorian positions of the period, and it is thus somewhat surprising to learn that it apparently convinced the emperor himself.

Our sensibility certainly allows us to understand Pepo’s and Radulfus’ aversion to the idea that murder – even the murder of a servant – could be punished by the mere payment of a sum. Our sense of justice – though not an inner disposition, but rather the product of the education and traditions within which we are raised – would incline us to agree with at least part of Pepo’s arguments. Nevertheless, we cannot help but be struck – and struck in a negative sense – by the fact that in this case the sentence is not reached through the usual syllogism, whereby the comparison between the facts and an applicable rule of law leads to judgment. Here, the penalty imposed – indeed, the supreme penalty – rests on a construct with rather uncertain legal contours and one largely inspired by moral principles. In other words, it is as if someone were to park their car in a second row, fully aware that it is prohibited, but also that the sanction is merely administrative, and were nonetheless subjected to a severe custodial or even afflictive punishment. Rather than the work of those ‘artisans’ in that famous *workshop of praxis* of which Grossi speaks, what we see here, it seems to me, is the affirmation of a genuine ideological stance.

Indeed, beyond his possible immediate sources, Pepo was evidently operating within a tradition – or, rather, an ideology – whose origins can be traced back to the 4th century, and most notably to the writings of Ambrose of Milan. This orientation was, to a certain extent, taken up by Justinian,⁵¹ and within theologian and canonical circles it continued to endure for a long time (as Radulfus, writing at the beginning of the 13th century, attests). This is the tradition of the *utraque lex*,⁵² founded on the conviction that the Christian's actions must be guided by both human and divine law, and that where a conflict arises, the latter must always prevail over the former – whether the latter be Lombard-Frankish or Roman law.

The functioning of this system is described very clearly, and in nostalgic tones, at the end of the 9th century (882) by Hincmar of Reims in his *De ordine palatii*, where he explicitly defines the role of a sovereign who wishes to be just – that is, respectful of God's will – and that of the priests who stand beside him and must advise him.⁵³ As late as the mid-11th century, that system was still clearly present to Emperor Henry III, who was called upon by the judges of the *Regnum Italiae* to resolve a doubt concerning the interpretation of a constitution in Justinian's *Code*. It was revived again not only by Gratian in his *Decretum*,⁵⁴ but also by the anonymous authors of those remarkable legal compilations known as the *Liber Tubingensis* and the *Brachylogus iuris civilis*: works that are difficult to date or locate, but certainly of extra-Bolognese origin, and perhaps belonging to the Irnerian age or slightly later.⁵⁵ The former in particular (in its prologue, later taken up in the *Exceptiones legum romanarum Petri*) employs vivid language that leaves no doubt as to whether they belong to the same ideological strand: if in collecting the ancient norms – says the anonymous author – we find something useless, outdated, or con-

⁵¹ Calasso, *Medioevo del diritto*, 332-3, who recalls Paul's "certainly interpolated" passage inserted as D. 39.3.2.5, as well as D. 1.1.11, where *ius naturale* is described as "the purest and most immediate implementation of *aequitas*" and, therefore, as the law *quod semper aequum ac bonum est*, which, precisely for this reason, presents itself as "a normative system that goes beyond both *ius civile* and *ius gentium*". No less important is the content of Nov. 6.1.8, which states that ecclesiastical canons have at least equal authority to *leges*.

⁵² According to the name that Calasso, *Medioevo del diritto*, 332-3, drew from medieval documentation.

⁵³ See already Calasso, 335. Hincmarus Remensis, *De ordine palatii*, 70-2: *Comites autem palatii inter caetera paene innumerabilia in hoc maxime sollicitudo erat, ut omnes contentiones legales, quae alibi ortae propter aequitatis iudicium palatium aggrediebantur, iuste ac rationabiliter determinaret seu perverse iudicata ad aequitatis tramitem reduceret, ut et coram Deo propter iustitiam et coram hominibus propter legum observationem cunctis placeret. Si quid vero tale esset, quod leges mundanae hoc in suis diffinitionibus statutum non haberent aut secundum gentiliū consuetudinem crudelius sancitum esset quam christianitatis rectitudo vel sancta auctoritas merito non consentiret, hoc ad regis moderationem perduceretur, ut ipse cum his qui utramque legem nossent et Dei magis quam humanarum legum statuta metuerent, ita decerneret, ita statueret, ut, ubi utrumque servari posset, utrumque servaretur, sin autem, lex saeculi merito comprimeretur, iustitia Dei conservaretur.*

⁵⁴ In the *Dictum* to part II of dist. IV where is told that the laws which *naturali iuri fuerint adversa, vana et irrita sunt habenda*.

⁵⁵ Gouron, "L'auteur du 'Brachylogus'" and Gouron, "Sur la patrie et la datation."

trary to *aequitas*, we will put it ‘under our feet’ (*si quid inutile, ruptum equitative contrarium in legibus reperitur nostri pedibus subcalcamus*).⁵⁶

Returning now to the problem from which we began, we can understand how Matilda felt the pressing difficulty of administering justice within a regulatory framework whose boundaries were so uncertain. This was all the more true in a socio-economic context that was rapidly changing with the revival of manufacturing and commercial activities and the emergence of demands that would soon culminate in the rise of the communes. While the Countess – unlike Henry IV, who had been persuaded by Pepo’s arguments – had succeeded in compelling her judges to respect the law fully, despite their tendency to favor Roman law, much greater difficulties arose when the applicable law itself was Roman law. This was particularly the case when the litigants, or even just the resisting party, lived according to Roman law, as was the case with ecclesiastical bodies.

It had long been clear that the old collection known as *Lex romana canonice compta*, which had served its purpose until then, had now become inadequate. Recourse to compilations – even to more up-to-date and better-structured collections such as the *Liber* of Tübingen and the *Brachylogus* mentioned above – was no longer sustainable.⁵⁷ What moved the Countess, therefore, was the desire to attain, and to guarantee her people, fuller legal certainty.

And Wernerius/Irnerius did not shirk. It is, in truth, difficult to determine – beyond what Bolognese tradition suggests – what his actual contribution was to the enterprise of recovering Justinian’s authentic text. Much had already been accomplished in the preceding decades. The reconstruction of the *Codex Iustinianus* had certainly advanced considerably, and the *Digest* had probably already been ‘rediscovered’, if not in its entirety, at least to a significant extent, as both the Marturi episode and, even more clearly, the canonical collection known as *Britannica* demonstrate.⁵⁸ There is, however, definite evidence of Irnerius’ ‘philological’ engagement with Justinian’s texts. As I have noted in a previous work, the glosses documenting the recovery of the proemial constitutions to the *Codex* and the treatment of the *Novellae constitutiones* in the collection of the *Authenticum* certainly confirm his commitment and his philological expertise.⁵⁹

Even regarding the idea that Justinian’s laws constituted not merely a collection of norms but a harmonious corpus – what we would today call a ‘legal system’, in which the individual parts complemented and interacted with one another – it is difficult to determine whether this was Irnerius’ original in-

⁵⁶ This passage is included in the prologue, which Mor edits as an integral element of the *Exceptiones legum rom. Petri* (Mor, *Scritti giuridici*, II, 47). See, however, Cortese, *Il diritto nella storia*, II, 51, fn. 113.

⁵⁷ See Ascheri, “Spunti sulla certezza,” 4-6 and Conte, “Il Digesto,” especially 282.

⁵⁸ On the whole issue, see now Conte, *Diritto comune*, 43-84.

⁵⁹ Loschiavo, “Irnerius,” 375-82. See also Pennington, “Per un corpus,” 33-40.

sight or whether he merely continued some predecessor's theory. What really matters, in any case, is that the so-called 'four doctors' – i.e. those pupils of Irnerius who continued his *magisterium* in Bologna – already by the 1130s and 1140s possessed a textual 'canon' endowed with *auctoritas* and organized into several books, conceived as parts of a coherent whole. On this basis, in the schools that quickly sprang up in Bologna and beyond, it became possible to refer rapidly and precisely to parallel passages, and thus to apply refined hermeneutic techniques such as the *coniunctio similium* and *oppositio contrariorum*.⁶⁰ It was precisely these schools that became the driving force behind a form of scientific progress that was both remarkably rapid and remained a lasting achievement for centuries.

4. Irnerius 'the jurist'

Irnerius, however, was not only a master of the *artes liberales* and 'an excellent philologist'. He was also – and above all – a jurist, and one quite different from those *legum doctores* or *legum periti* of Pepo's kind, who, without too much thought, mixed legal arguments (perhaps drawn from different legal systems) with rhetorical-grammatical rules and religious and moral principles taken from the Scriptures and patristic writings, as we have seen in the Lombard *placitum*.

To better understand how Irnerius differed from his predecessors and from the world of the *utraque lex* – to discern the line that clearly separates the pre-Irnerian world from the world that which followed, and to appreciate the 'revolution', to use Berman's expression, of which he was the bearer – the best approach is undoubtedly to consider the content of his teaching. One need only read the glosses in which are condensed the teachings that Irnerius delivered to students beginning the study of Justinian's *Codex*.

Commenting on the three proemial constitutions – those constitutions that, as mentioned above, Irnerius sought to recover and include in the textual canon of Justinian's law-books – the Bolognese master first explains how and why Justinian's *Codex* and the constitutions collected within it (and only those) merit the titles of 'code' and 'constitutions', respectively. For this reason, he adds, they also deserve to be studied (*inspectionem*): they are, in fact, endowed with full legal validity, both in the formal sense (*quantum ad auctoritatem*) and in the substantive sense (*ad materiam*). All the rules collected in the *Code* – once the reconstruction of the text has been completed – thus possess the full force of law and, as such – this is the sense of the comment – can and must be considered and applied in legal practice.⁶¹ In Irnerius' teach-

⁶⁰ See Errera, *Forme letterarie e metodologie didattiche*, 55-60 and 77-90; Loschiavo, *Lo studio e l'insegnamento*, especially 106-15.

⁶¹ Edition of the glosses in Loschiavo, "Irnerius," 377-8: '*De novo codice componendo*' (*ad rubricam*): § *Sicut iste liber nomen, aliis commune, sibi per excellentiam vindicat proprium, ita*

ing, we may conclude, the reconstruction and ‘canonization’ of the text went hand in hand with a strong reaffirmation of the authority of that ancient imperial corpus. But there is more.

When beginning to read the *Codex* itself, and in accordance with a well-established scholastic custom, Irnerius takes care to clarify for the students the nature of the work they are about to study. This sort of introduction was called the *materia* and followed a very precise rhetorical scheme: it was to explain the meaning of the title, the division of the work, its objective content – i.e. the *materia* in the proper sense – the *intentio* and the *causa finalis*, i.e. the author’s motive and the purpose he had set for himself, and finally the sphere of knowledge to which the work belonged.

In Irnerius’ introduction to the *Codex*, particular attention should be given to the passage in which Irnerius clarifies the subject of the work – that is, the *materia Codicis* itself.⁶²

Huius operis materia est negotiorum gestorum equitas et iustitia sive nondum sit constituta, sive constituta sit set contempta; alias ipsum ius; alias id quod pro iure habetur, ut hominum voluntas: sive viventium, ut contractus, sive morientium, ut testamenta. Et ita materia est tripartita. Intentio quoque trifaria est. Intendunt enim iustitiam ipsam rudem et informem constituere et sic ius efficere. Intendit etiam imperator ipsum ius simpliciter exponere vel, si obscurum est, interpretari [...] Finalis causa ex occasione constituendi potest perspicui. Si enim videris quare hoc opus sit constitutum, poteris videre quis sit eius finis. [...] Ius erat constituendum ut eo astringerentur et ut illi qui erant ignorantes vel errantes deinceps docti essent. Et hoc fecit imperator iiii^m modis: imperando, permittendo, vetando, puniendo [...].

et constitutiones. Cum enim omne ius vocetur constitutio, sola imperialis constitutio hoc sibi proprium nomen vendicat. Set in hac prima loquitur Iustinianus ‘de codice novo componendo’, imperando scilicet suis satellitibus ut ex tribus illis codicibus – Hermogenianus scilicet Theodosianus, Gregorianus – ad quorum differentiam iste vocatur novus, ut quod melius (in) eis videretur acciperent. Et si quid ibi minus videret adesse, hoc supplerent. Si quid superfluum detrahere conarentur et si quid male fuerit dictum, hoc emendare festinarent. Et ita novum addendo, mutando vel detrahendo componerent Codicem. § Ex constitutionibus id quod optimum est Iustinianus opere sue diligentia decerpit; hoc quoque emendatum et ex suo proprio suppletum in unum redegit sub ordine congruo volumen. Harum omnium constitutionum tenor et principalis censura quantum ad auctoritatem potest pars iuris dici. Quod autem ad materiam, cum de omni pene iuris articulo disserat, totius iuris meretur vel nomen vel inspectionem. The manuscript tradition allows both of these glosses to be attributed to Irnerius’ magisterium. A third gloss, although without the siglum, in commenting on the rubrics of the other two proemial constitutions, repeats and confirms Irnerius’ thought: § Post compositionem vero libri, fecit Iustinianus aliam compositionem (sed constitutionem) que loquitur ‘de iustiniano codice confirmando’. In qua constitutione huic codici suam attribuit auctoritatem suum quoque ei nomen accommodavit et eum confirmavit. Set quia postea multe emergerant constitutiones, fecit suas decisiones quibus deciduntur veterum altercationes. Cumque iste decisiones extra predictum vagabantur volumen, istud resolvit easque sub competentibus titulis ordinavit et in secundo eum emendavit. Et hoc est quod dicit ‘de emendatione Iustiniani Codicis et de secunda eius editione’. ... iste liber his constitutionibus prebet materiam qui aliunde sua propria indiget natura.

⁶² Continuing the work begun by Kantorowicz (*Studies*, 37-50 and 233-9), I have argued (Lo-schiavo, *Summa Codicis*, 26-32) that the true *Materia Codicis* of Irnerius is to be recognized in this gloss, preserved in two manuscripts datable to the early 12th century (Stuttgart, WLB, jur. fol. 71 and Paris, BN, lat. 4517). I reproduce here the text, which corresponds to parts 3-5 (*operis materia, intentio and causa finalis*) of the scheme reconstructed by the German scholar.

Departing from earlier teachings, Irnerius explains that the *Code* contains three fundamental elements (*materia est tripertita*). The first is the *ipsum ius*, that is, the law in the strict sense. The second is *id quod pro iure habetur*, i.e. all those obligations that individuals undertake and to which the legal order grants protection, imposing compliance as if they were rules (referring primarily to contracts and wills). Preceding these two, however, on an ideal scale, the *Code* also contains a third element, expressed by the hendiadys *aequitas* and *iustitia*. By this expression, Irnerius refers to the creative process of law itself – anticipating, in brief, what he will later explain in greater detail.

By way of example, the process of setting norms may be compared to the extraction, refining, and working of gold. In nature, gold has no shape of its own and is often found mixed with ore (as a nugget). Once refined, it appears in its pure essence, as an ingot (or bar), but still requires the goldsmith's craftsmanship to give it a distinctive shape – i.e. to transform it into objects such as jewelry or coins, thereby giving it a function and making it usable. Similarly, *aequitas*, as long as it remains *rudis* – as it belongs to the objectivity of the created world – can only be intuited by the human mind, but not yet fully expressed. *Iustitia*, by contrast, is the transposition into subjective terms of an equitable principle that *quiescit in mentibus iustorum*. Finally, *iustitia* is converted into a norm in the proper sense (and thus becomes *ius*) when that subjectively determined principle is given form and sanction by the legislator, who invests it with the *auctoritas* of which it is the bearer.⁶³

The most interesting passage of the gloss, however, is the reference to that particular *aequitas constituta* yet *contempta* which – continuing the example of gold – corresponds to a product that has come from the goldsmith's hands imperfectly (e.g. a bracelet with a clasp that does not close) and must therefore be returned to the goldsmith (i.e. the legislator) so that he may make the necessary alterations or corrections. This is by no means a secondary issue, if we consider that Irnerius and his disciples upheld the idea of treating as valid and operative rules that had been written down six centuries earlier and often referred to things that had long since ceased to exist or had been replaced by others.

It is here, in recognizing the presence of *aequitas* within the *Corpus iuris*, that Irnerius enacts his 'revolution'.⁶⁴ For Pepo and the supporters of the *utraque lex*, *aequitas* belonged to a higher, meta-legal dimension and thus served

⁶³ In a further gloss, Irnerius explains that while *aequitas* merely proposes a datum of justice, the law (*ius*) repropose that same principle by enriching it through an authoritative act (Cortese, *La norma*, II, 30). The same teaching recurs in the proem to the *Summa Trecensis* (c. 1135) and in the *Exordium Institutionum Iuris operam daturum* (edition in Fitting, *Juristische Schriften*, 146 § 3), where we read that *aequitas [...] redacta in voluntatem dicitur iustitia*, while *iustitia redacta in preceptionem dicitur ius*.

⁶⁴ On the revolutionary role of Irnerius' teaching, see Padovani, "Abelardo e Irnerio", 61 ff.; see also 64 for the different solution proposed by Irnerius to the same case discussed in the Lombard *placitum* (the ill-treatment of servants) considered above.

as an instrument through which ecclesiastical authority could intervene and prevail over human law whenever necessary.⁶⁵ Thanks to Irnerius, however, the sovereign-legislator regained the right not only to issue new norms, but also to correct the old ones – and, even more importantly, to interpret them. It is therefore the task of the sovereign – assisted, it must be remembered, by jurists who are acquainted with the entire body of Justinian's laws and who know how to make it function as a coherent system – to undertake the delicate operation of evaluating the existing order and, when necessary, to return to the equitable principles from which new and better solutions may be drawn. Thus was born a new legal system, in which the legislator (with his *auctoritas*) and the jurists (with their knowledge and skills) once again played the leading role. And it may well be said, then, that Irnerius was the first jurist in the 'modern' sense – and that with him our world, our tradition, begins.

In this sense, we can say that Irnerius – and his school – may truly be regarded as a watershed.

⁶⁵ This is the ultimate effect of Hincmar of Reims' discourse.

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Emanuele Conte
Università degli Studi Roma Tre
emanuele.conte@uniroma3.it
ORCID: 0000-0002-3042-9452

Luca Loschiavo
Università degli Studi di Teramo
lloschiavo@unite.it
ORCID: 0000-0002-5251-8974

***Investiturverbot* or definition of the canonical procedure for promoting bishops? The Gregorian turn of February 1075 and its consequences until 1122-3**

by Mauro Ronzani

This essay aims to shift attention from the alleged existence of a “prohibition of investiture” issued by Gregory VII in 1075, to the strictly canonical approach he, at the Lateran Synod of that year, chose to give to the process of promoting bishops. Referring to the canons of Leo I, the pope established that the sequence of election, confirmation, and consecration could not be interrupted by external intervention, although he was willing to leave to King Henry IV (as with any other Christian king) the task of overseeing the regularity of the election and, once the canonical procedure was completed, of confirming the bishop's royal property and rights. Henry IV, however, refused to give up the right to freely choose bishops and then invest them with the pastoral staff, even before they were consecrated. The Investiture Controversy was therefore above all a procedural dispute: after two solutions put forward in 1111 but not accepted by both sides, the final agreement was reached at Worms (1122).

Il saggio si propone di spostare l'attenzione dalla presunta esistenza di un “divieto di investitura” emanato da Gregorio VII nel 1075, all'impostazione prettamente canonistica che egli, nel sinodo lateranense di quell'anno, volle dare alla procedura di promozione dei vescovi. Richiamandosi a canoni di Leone I, il papa stabilì che la sequenza elezione-conferma-consacrazione non poteva essere interrotta da interventi esterni, anche se fu disponibile a lasciare al re Enrico IV (come ad ogni altro re cristiano) il compito di sorvegliare la regolarità dell'elezione e, una volta completata la procedura canonica, di confermare al vescovo i beni e diritti di origine regia. Enrico IV, tuttavia, non volle rinunciare al diritto di scegliere liberamente i vescovi e poi inve-

Mauro Ronzani, University of Pisa, Italy, ronzamau@gmail.com, 0000-0002-2089-4190

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stirli con il pastorale, prima ancora che fossero consacrati. La lotta per le investiture fu quindi soprattutto una controversia sulla procedura: dopo le due soluzioni prospettate nel 1111 ma non accettate da entrambe le parti, l'accordo arrivò a Worms nel 1122.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Gregory VII, Henry IV, Papacy, Empire, Investiture Controversy.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Gregorio VII, Enrico IV, Papato, Impero, Lotta per le Investiture.

1. *Introduction: the historiographical question*

The expression ‘Investiture Controversy’ – in which the first term refers to the practice whereby kings or emperors appointed bishops and conferred the corresponding sees – is still commonly used today, especially in German historiography, to designate the period in the constitutional history of the Holy Roman Empire corresponding to the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V, as well as the pontificates of Gregory VII and his successors up to Callixtus II and the Treaty of Worms (1073-1122).¹ For some time, however, scholars have tended not to regard the papal prohibition of investiture as the cause of the conflict that broke out between Henry IV and Gregory VII in the early months of 1076. This shift is largely due to the broad consensus established by Rudolf Schieffer’s deservedly famous and genuinely innovative volume, published in 1981.² His central thesis is that no explicit ‘prohibition of investiture’ by Gregory VII is attested before 1078, although the pope immediately renewed it at the time of the definitive rupture in 1080. The ban on aspiring bishops receiving investiture from the emperor (or from any other secular ruler or prince) would therefore have been only a corollary of a much broader conflict, so to speak, and it became its central issue only under Henry V and Paschal II, culminating in the Treaty of Worms in September 1122 between the emperor and the cardinals delegated by the new Pope Callixtus II. Indeed, in a recent and stimulating contribution Thomas Kohl has even gone so far as to describe the Investiture Controversy as a 12th-century “invention” unsuited to characterising the initial stages of the conflict, which he prefers to refer to as “the time of schisms”, on the grounds that the rift between Henry IV and Gregory VII – which was made irreversible by the enthronement of Clement III – resulted in the emergence of two opposing hierarchies, both at the top and within many dioceses.³

In reality, it was already evident from the manifestos issued by Henry IV and the bishops loyal to him between January and March 1076 that Gregory

¹ We will limit ourselves to mentioning the most recent survey monographs: Hartmann, *Der Investiturstreit*; Zey, *Der Investiturstreit*; Johrendt, *Der Investiturstreit*. Italian historiography has returned to the topic with D’Acunto, *La lotta per le investiture*.

² Schieffer, *Die Entstehung*. See also the most recent reflections by Schieffer, “Deutungen des Investiturstreits.”

³ Kohl, “Die Erfindung des Investiturstreits.”

VII was no longer regarded as a legitimate pope. Yet, this represented a sudden and drastic turn of events given that the pope and the king had continued to correspond throughout 1075, and that the last – and famous – letter sent by the former to the latter on 8 December⁴ was firm and severe in tone and admonitions, but did not close off all avenues of dialogue.

This letter has been analysed in detail by several generations of distinguished scholars, of course, partly because it refers to a decision taken at the Roman Lenten synod of February in that year – one that was to be “accepted and observed” not only by Henry and those “in his kingdom”, but “by all the princes and peoples of the earth who confessed and worshipped Christ.”⁵ From the text of the letter, it appears that this decision – taken “by resorting to the decrees and doctrine of the holy fathers, without establishing or adding anything new” – concerned the power of Henry (and of any other king) to dispose of the bishoprics within his realm. Until 1981, it was generally assumed that the pope was alluding to a straightforward prohibition of investiture, so that the Lenten synod of 1075 was regarded as the clear starting point of the ensuing “struggle” (*Investiturstreit*). Schieffer, however, sought to demonstrate that this passage of the letter depended on what had been stated immediately beforehand concerning Henry’s canonical status – he was accused of “knowingly communicating with excommunicated persons” – and that it meant that, until he repented, the king was temporarily incapable of conferring episcopal investiture, which aspiring prelates could neither request nor accept.⁶ Subsequent events, notably Gregory VII’s excommunication of Henry in March 1076, only confirmed this condition of incapacity, which was not lifted even by the absolution at Canossa in January 1077. Finally, at the autumn synod of 1078 Gregory VII decided to transform the interdict from temporary to permanent, issuing a decree which, doing away with the earlier ambiguity, explicitly declared that “the investiture of churches by laypersons contravened the statutes of the holy fathers and gave rise to numerous disturbances in the Church”, and therefore forbade all “clerics from receiving the

⁴ Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 10, 263-7; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11658, 61.

⁵ Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 10, 265-6: *Congregata namque hoc in anno apud sedem apostolicam synodo, cui nos divina dispensatio presidere voluit (...), concussi periculo et manifesta perditione Dominici gregis ad sanctorum patrum decreta doctrinamque recurrimus nichil novi, nichil adinventione nostra statuentes, sed primam et unicam ecclesiastice discipline regulam et tritam sanctorum viam relicto errore repetendam et sectandam esse censuimus. (...) Huius autem decreti, quod quidam dicunt humanos divinis honoribus preponentes importabile pondus et immensam gravitudinem, nos autem magis proprio vocabulo recuperande salutis necessariam veritatem et lucem, non solum a te vel ab his, qui in regno tuo sunt, sed ab omnibus terrarum principibus et populis, qui Christum confitentur et colunt, devote suscipiendam et observandam adiudicavimus.*

⁶ Schieffer, *Die Entstehung*, 148-9.

investiture of a bishopric or abbacy or church from the hands of the emperor or king or any layperson, man or woman”⁷.

As already mentioned, Schieffer’s approach – which was based on recognising the existence of an effective *Investiturverbot* only where it was explicitly stated – was accepted and further developed by other scholars. Stefan Beulertz in particular examined all the available sources, verifying that even after the two synodal decrees of 1078 and 1080, actual “prohibitions of investiture” were sporadic and repetitive, as if the issue did not warrant more decisive measures.⁸ A few years later Johann Englberger tightened Schieffer’s argument still further, categorically denying that Gregory VII had addressed the issue before 1078.⁹

It seems to us, however, that Schieffer’s volume has ended up – certainly beyond the intentions of that distinguished and now late scholar – placing excessive emphasis on the “prohibition of investiture”, isolating it from the context in which, in Gregory VII’s view, it ought to be situated and understood: namely, the process of the “canonical” designation and installation of bishops. Johannes Laudage had already put forward a similar view, drawing attention to the fact that Gregory’s criticism of the investiture practice was accompanied by a renewed sensitivity to the issue of “canonical election” by the clergy and the people. This issue was not new, but the widespread practice of direct appointment by the king, followed immediately (or almost immediately) by the conferral of investiture, had come to undermine it in an increasingly unacceptable way.¹⁰ In our opinion, this line of argument still requires further refinement.

2. Gregory VII’s new approach: enhancing the late-antique procedure of ordinatio

The need to assess the role and admissibility of investiture within the broader process of selecting and promoting bishops seems to us to be underscored by the fact that, at the autumn synod of 1078, a canon was promulgated alongside the first explicit prohibition against accepting or receiving investiture specifying the three essential and indispensable stages of episcopal *ordinationes*: election *communi consensu cleri et populi secundum canonicas sanctiones*, approval or “confirmation” by the person or persons responsible for conferring episcopal consecration, and finally, consecration itself – the

⁷ Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, VI, 5b, no. 3 (8), 403; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11903, 108-9.

⁸ Beulertz, *Das Verbot der Laieninvestitur*.

⁹ Englberger, *Gregor VII. und die Investiturfrage*.

¹⁰ Laudage, “Gregor VII. und die electio canonica;” Laudage, “Wann erging das erste päpstliche Investiturverbot?” The topic of ‘canonical election’ was highlighted by Schmid, *Der Begriff der Kanonischen Wahl*.

concluding and culminating act of the procedure.¹¹ In our view, this canon takes up the substance of the “decree” issued at the Lenten synod of 1075, the text of which has not survived – perhaps because, as we shall explain more fully below, it was conceived as a reaffirmation of late-antique canons that were already well known. At the same time, the canon of 1078, with its prohibition on “receiving” investiture, likewise reiterates – though in a clearer form – something that had already been affirmed on that earlier occasion.

One can certainly agree with Schieffer that, before 1075 (if not before 1077-8), royal or imperial investiture was also regarded by the popes as a necessary step towards becoming a bishop. This is shown in the words of Peter Damian in his well-known Letter 140 of the Reindel edition, which was addressed to Alexander II at the beginning of 1066, in which he condemned the idea (*nova heresis*) that “it was not simoniacal heresy to obtain a bishopric from the king or any secular prince by means of payment, provided that at least the consecration was received free of charge”. As Avellanita has pointed out, when handing over the crosier, the king explicitly said: “Receive the Church!” (*accipe aecclesiam*). Thus, the investiture did not concern only the “lands and riches” attached to the bishopric, but was an essential precondition for the next step, namely episcopal consecration: “If the king had not first conferred the ‘title’ of the priesthood that was to follow, the one responsible for ordination would never transmit the sacrament of that same priesthood through the laying on of hands”. This point is made even more clearly in Peter Damian’s words to the chaplain of Godfrey the Bearded, Marquis of Tuscany: *per hoc enim quod venaliter accepisti, consequenter ad sacerdotium promoveris*.¹² Equally well known, at the beginning of Gregory VII’s pontificate, is the letter of 1 September 1073 to Anselm (II), Bishop-Elect of Lucca, whom the pope urged to refrain “from (receiving) the investiture of the bishopric from the king’s hands” until he resolved the issue of his continued association with the advisers excommunicated by Alexander II and was readmitted “into the peace” of the new pontiff.¹³ In short, the point was not to dispense with

¹¹ *Ordinationes, que interveniente pretio vel precibus vel obsequio alicui persone ea intentione impenso vel que non communi consensu cleri et populi secundum canonicas sanctiones fiunt et ab his, ad quos consecratio pertinet, non comprobantur, irritas esse diiudicamus, quoniam, qui taliter ordinantur, non per ostium id est per Christum intrant, sed, ut ipsa Veritas testatur, fures sunt et latrones*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, VI, 5b, no. 5 (11), 403-4.

¹² *At si secularis ille princeps accepta vel promissa pecunia pastorem tibi tradidit baculum, qua fronte poteris episcopalis ordinis excusare commercium? Enimvero nisi per hanc investituram ille secuturi sacerdotii tibi prius imprimeret titulum, futurus ordinator nequaquam per manus impositionem sacerdotii tibi traderet sacramentum. Per hoc enim quod venaliter accepisti, consequenter ad sacerdotium promoveris (...) Sane cum baculum ille tuis manibus tradidit, dixitne: ‘Accipe terras atque divicias illius aecclesiae, an potius quod certum est: ‘Accipe aecclesiam’?* Reindel, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, Teil 3, no. 140, 478-87: 481-2.

¹³ *Ut enim viam, quam ambules, postulasti tibi notificaremus, nullam expeditiorem scimus ea, que nuper dilectioni tue significavimus, videlicet te ab investitura episcopatus de manu regis abstinere, donec de communione cum excommunicatis Deo satisfaciens rebus bene compositis nobiscum pacem possit habere*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, I, 21, 34-5; Jaffé,

investiture altogether, but merely to postpone it, leaving Anselm in the meantime in the status of *episcopus electus*, that is not yet consecrated.¹⁴

Continuing to leaf through the register of Gregorian letters, the first sign of change appears only at the beginning of 1075, with the letter addressed to the clergy and people of S. Leo (Montefeltro) and Gubbio. In this case, the issue is the preparation of the local *electio* – and its approval – by the two Roman abbots sent specifically by the pope, who at that point would either present the elect to him for the conferral of episcopal consecration or themselves identify candidates from outside these dioceses to submit to the pontiff.¹⁵

Even if these were special circumstances and a procedure that was, so to speak, still exceptional, there is no doubt that less than two months later, at the Lenten synod of 24-8 February 1075, the question of the canonical procedure for becoming a bishop was addressed from a general point of view and regulated by a *decretum*. Its content must be reconstructed from the letter sent by Gregory VII to Henry IV on 8 December of the same year. In this text – which is truly fundamental for understanding the rapid succession of positions and actions in the preceding months¹⁶ – Gregory referred to what had been decided at the end of February as something already distant in time, and above all free of any connotation of sudden or arbitrary innovation. Yet it had only recently been called into question by a series of acts promulgated by the king,¹⁷ as if it did not exist or had no authority despite having been issued by a synod presided over by the pope in his capacity as the successor of St Peter. That is why the letter, after briefly recalling these royal acts – actions which ran contrary to “the canonical and apostolic decrees [regarding] what the ecclesiastical religion most required” – immediately went on to set out the Petrine foundation of the pontiff’s authority and the obligation to render

Regesta Pontificum Romanorum, no. 11378, 10. As is well known, this letter is one of the main pieces of evidence cited by Schieffer, *Die Entstehung*: cf., for example, 111-2.

¹⁴ On 4 December of the same year, 1073, when writing to the Bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône, Gregory briefly described the initial stages of an acceptable procedure for episcopal promotion, stating that he wanted to put King Philip’s good intentions to the test in Mâcon, which had long been without a pastor, so that *Augustudunensem archidiaconum unanimi cleri et populi consensu, ipsius etiam (...) regis assensu electum, episcopatus dono gratis, ut decet, concessio, ecclesie prefici patiat* (i.e. giving the green light for episcopal consecration): Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, I, 35, 56-7; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11399, 14.

¹⁵ *Quapropter misimus ad vos religiosos sancte Romane Ecclesie filios (...), ut si forte in ecclesia vestra talis persona que huic regimini congrua sit reperiat, diligenter inquirent et eam, sicut dignum est, vestra electione collaudatam et canonico decreto probatam nobis ad ordinandum quantoties presentare studeant; sin vero inter vos talis reperiri non possit, ipsi cum omni sollicitudine aliunde aliquem, qui vobis secundum Deum preesse possit, invenire procurent et ad suscipiendam episcopalis officii ordinationem ad nos sine mora transmittant*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, II, 41, 178 (1075 January 2); Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11578, 45. As we shall see further on (in footnotes 42 and 46), at the end of the summer of 1077 this procedure was applied to Tuscany by the pope and was subsequently adopted as standard in canon 6 of the Lenten synod of 1080.

¹⁶ We provide a summary table in the Appendix.

¹⁷ That is, as we shall see shortly, the appointments (with relative investitures) of the Archbishop of Milan and the Bishops of Fermo and Spoleto.

him the same obedience due to the Apostle, to whom Christ had entrusted his flock and the keys to the kingdom of Heaven. Only at this point did the letter descend from the level of theological and ecclesiological principles to that of concrete facts, recalling the decisions taken at the Lenten synod. These were to be understood as a remedy for the dangerous decline “of the order of the Christian religion” which was achieved through recourse “ad sanctorum patrum decreta doctrinamque”, so as to make possible once again the attainment of salvation and eternal life in the way indicated by Christ himself, who, in the Gospel of John (10:9), declares: “I am the narrow gate [of the sheepfold]; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture”.¹⁸ These lines from the Gregorian letter may seem obscure, but they become perfectly understandable when compared with the aforementioned canon 5 (11) of the autumn synod of 1078, where the *canonice sanctiones* expressly concern the procedure for the *ordinatio* of bishops, compliance with which is a necessary condition for prelates to enter their office (that is, the sheepfold assigned to each of them as shepherds) *per ostium, id est per Christum*.¹⁹

In fact, Gregory VII had already alluded to the decisions of February 1075 – using very similar, or even clearer, words – several times before November 1078. For example, on 10 November 1076, in writing to the Count of Flanders, he stated succinctly: *per ostium quippe ingreditur, idest per Christum, qui per sacros canones episcopus constituitur*.²⁰ The *sacri canones* were clearly those reinstated at the Lenten synod of 1075. We do not believe we are mistaken in thinking first of a well-known canon of Leo I (which is taken up in Anselm of Baggio’s *Collectio*, at no. 65 of Book VI *de electione et ordinatione ac de omni potestate sive statu episcoporum*), which begins as follows: *nulla ratio sinit, ut inter episcopos habeantur qui nec a clericis sunt electi nec a plebibus expetiti nec a provincialibus episcopis cum metropolitani iudicio consecrati*.²¹ It outlines a four-stage procedure – *expetitus* by the lay faithful, *electio* by the clergy, *iudicium* or consent of the metropolitan, and episcopal consecration by the comprovincial bishops – which was taken up again in a slightly more concise form in 1078 (the *communis consensus* of the clergy and

¹⁸ The passage quoted above, in footnote 5, after the words *sectanda esse censuimus*, continues as follows: *Neque enim alium nostre salutis et eterne vite introitum Christi ovibus eorumque pastoribus patere cognoscimus, nisi quem ab ipso monstratum qui dixit: ‘Ego sum ostium; per me si quis introierit, salvabitur et pascua inveniet’*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 10, 266.

¹⁹ See above, at n. 11. In this regard, see Benz, “Joh. 10, 1-14 in der theologischen Argumentation.” Here, however, due to the influence of Schieffer’s book, the use of the Gospel passage is mainly related to the prohibition of investiture rather than to the canonical procedure of *ordinatio* of bishops.

²⁰ Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, IV, 11, 310; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11742, 78.

²¹ Thaner, *Anselm II, Bishop of Lucca, Collectio canonum*, L. VI, c. 65, 299. This canon was quoted verbatim in the decree on papal election of April 1059: Jasper, *Das Papstwahldekret von 1059*, 103-4 (‘authentic’ redaction).

people and the *comprobatio* by those responsible for the consecration). This procedure was perfectly self-contained, leaving no room – even implicitly – for steps other than those indicated.

3. *The implications of the synodal decretum of 1075 regarding the king's role and duties*

By stating that this procedure was the only one allowing a bishop to enter office (that is, the fold of the diocesan flock entrusted to his care) through the “gate of Christ”, and by giving it normative force through a synodal *decretum*, any act that interrupted the intended succession was declared *ipso facto* irregular and invalid – beginning, of course, with royal investiture. This was clearly explained by Gregory VII in his long letter of 12 May 1077, which was addressed to Hugh, Bishop of Die and the pontiff's ‘plenipotentiary’ for ecclesiastical matters in the Kingdom of France. The letter opened with the problem of the canonical status of Gerard, Bishop-Elect of Cambrai, who, by his own admission, “once the election by the clergy and the people had taken place, had received the ‘gift of the episcopate’ from Henry IV”, declaring that he had been unaware both of the papal *decretum* “prohibiting such reception” and that Henry IV had been excommunicated by the pope.²² The attention of Rudolf Schieffer and those scholars who accepted his approach focused on the second circumstance, which seems to suggest an analogy with the Gregorian letter of 1073 to Anselm (II): a king in a canonical position *sub iudice*, or worse still excommunicated, cannot confer investiture (here called *donum episcopatus*).²³ It seems to us, however, that the personal condition of the king was only an additional reason for the invalidity of an act that was already inadmissible under the synodal decree of February 1075 – namely, the conferral of investiture before the conclusion of the canonical procedure outlined by Leo I. This is confirmed by the remainder of the same letter, whose main subject was the convening of a “council” in which “as many archbishops and bishops of France as possible” were to participate. The pope expressed the hope that on that occasion it would be possible to prohibit explicitly, “in order to observe from now on the canonical and apostolic authority in the promotion of bishops, any metropolitan or bishop who might dare to consecrate by the laying on of hands anyone who had received the gift of the episcopate from

²² *Gerardus Cameracensis electus ad nos veniens, qualiter in eadem Cameracensi ecclesia ad locum regiminis assignatus sit, prompta nobis confessione manifestavit, non denegans post factam cleri et populi electionem donum episcopatus ab Henrico rege se accepisse, defensionem autem proponens et multum nobis offerens se neque decretum nostrum de prohibitionem huiusmodi acceptionis, nec ipsum Henricum regem a nobis excommunicatum fuisse aliqua certa manifestatione cognovisse*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, IV, 22, 330-4, quote on 330-1; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no.11800, 90.

²³ Schieffer, *Die Entstehung*, 156-7.

a layperson”.²⁴ Likewise, the pope sought to establish “that no (secular) power or any (lay)person should interfere in the donation or conferral of episcopal honour”.²⁵

According to what was commonly believed before Schieffer’s book, these words indicated that in February 1075 Gregory VII had already issued a real “prohibition of investiture”, which was now extended (at least in intention) to the Kingdom of France. However, the canonical reference cited by the pope in his letter of 12 May 1077, which was taken from the Council of Constantinople of 869-70 that had been convened in the time of Adrian II, suggests that the issue should be approached in a slightly more nuanced manner. The canon in question sought to reiterate that the “promotions and consecrations of bishops” were to be regarded as an internal matter of the Church – more precisely, of the episcopal body – and therefore established that “no prince or powerful layman may interfere in the election or promotion of a patriarch, metropolitan, or any bishop”, but should instead “remain silent and attend to their own affairs until the election of the future pontiff has been completed, according to the rules, by the ecclesiastical college”. A loophole was nevertheless left open for situations in which “some layperson was invited by the Church to consult and cooperate”: in such cases it would be permissible for them to do so, “with due reverence, obeying those who had called them”.²⁶

We believe that at the synod of 1075, once the binding force of the procedure for the promotion of bishops described in Leo I’s canon had been affirmed – together with the corollary that any act interrupting or distorting it (such as investiture with ring and crozier prior to consecration) was inadmissible – it did not go so far as to issue a “prohibition of investiture” in blunt and absolute terms. Rather, taking realistic account of the bonds between the emperor or king and the episcopate, it reserved to the monarch the task of

²⁴ *Inter cetera, que tua fraternitas agenda suscepit, hoc attentissime perpendat et exequi studeat, ut congregatis omnibus et in conventu residentibus manifesta et personanti denuntiatione interdicat, ut conservanda deinceps in promovendis episcopis canonica et apostolica auctoritate, nullus metropolitanorum aut quivis episcoporum alicui, qui a laica persona donum episcopatus susceperit, ad consecrandum illum imponere manum audeat, nisi dignitatis sue honore officioque carere et ipse velit*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, IV, 22, 333.

²⁵ The passage from the previous note continues as follows. Caspar: *Similiter etiam, ut nulla potestas aut aliqua persona de huiusmodi honoris donatione vel acceptione ulterius se intromittere debeat; quod si presumpserit, eadem sententia et animadversionis censura, quam beatus Adrianus papa in octava synodo de huiusmodi presumptoribus et sacre auctoritatis corruptoribus statuit atque firmavit*. See also the following note.

²⁶ *Promotiones et consecrationes episcoporum concordans prioribus conciliis electione et decreto fieri episcoporum haec sancta et universalis synodus definivit et statuit atque iure promulgavit neminem laicorum principum vel potentum semet inserere electioni vel promotioni patriarchae vel metropolitae vel cuiuslibet episcopi, ne videlicet inordinata hinc et incongrua fiat confusio vel contentio, presertim cum nullam in talibus potestatem quemquam potestativorum vel ceterorum laicorum habere conveniat, sed potius silere et attendere sibi usque quo regulariter a collegio ecclesiae suscipiat finem electio futuri pontificis. Si vero quis laicorum ad concertandum et cooperandum ab ecclesia invitetur, licet huiusmodi cum reverentia, si forte voluerit obtemperare se asciscantibus*: Thaner, *Anselm II. Bischof von Lucca*, *Collectio canonum*, L. VI, c. 20, 276-7.

ensuring the orderly conduct of the procedure by offering support and, when necessary, advice, without prejudice towards the possibility that, once the canonical *ordinatio* had been completed, he might perform an act comparable to investiture.

In relation to the second aspect, reference must be made to a well-known passage by Berthold of Reichenau concerning the role played by the (anti)king Rudolf of Rheinfelden in the promotion of Wigold to Bishop of Augsburg in the spring of 1078, a passage that is worth quoting here in full:

King Rudolf (...) solemnly celebrated Easter in Goslar. There, Wigold, a venerable and learned cleric, provost of the canonry of St Maurice in Augsburg – who had previously been elected bishop of that city by the clergy, the people, and the better and greater part of the *militia* of that Church – after receiving approval and with the participation of a Roman cardinal, the Archbishop and Metropolitan of Mainz, and nine other bishops assembled there, was canonically consecrated and ordained bishop on Easter Day. When all the acts pertaining to his ordination had been duly completed, and after he had received the ring, the crozier, and the episcopal cathedra from the Archbishop of Mainz, the king, for his part, entrusted to him all that pertained to royal right in the administration of the goods of the Church (of Augsburg).²⁷

In any case, that Gregory VII continued to recognize Henry IV's role – and indeed his duty – in ensuring the orderly conduct of episcopal promotions even after the Lenten synod of 1075 seems to us to be demonstrated by the letters the pope sent him between 20 July and early September concerning the bishopric of Bamberg, whose prelate had been declared deposed for simony at that same synod. The primary responsibility for ensuring that a “shepherd was ordained in accordance with the established practice of the holy fathers” in that church lay with the competent metropolitan (Siegfried of Mainz),²⁸ yet Gregory also addressed the king, urging him to ensure that, “with the cooperation of the clergy, that church would be ordained according to the will of God, so that he might merit, through the intercession of St Peter – its patron and protector – to obtain the support of divine protection”.²⁹

In reality, the situation of the bishopric of Bamberg was resolved only at the end of November 1075, when Henry IV installed Rupert, provost of Go-

²⁷ Here we quote only the last few lines of the original text: *Cui rex post peracta legitime omnia que ad ordinationem ipsius pertinebant, videlicet anulo, virga pastorali et cathedra episcopali ab archiepiscopo Mogontino susceptis, ex sua parte quicquid regii iuris fuerit in procurandis bonis ecclesiasticis diligenter commendavit* (Robinson, *Die Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds von Konstanz*, 325).

²⁸ The pope wrote to the metropolitan on this matter on 20 July 1075: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 2, 244-5; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11638, 57.

²⁹ *Nunc ergo, excellentissime fili, sublimitatem tuam hortamur et pro nostre sollicitudinis debito suademus, ut religiosorum consilio virorum eadem ecclesia ita secundum Deum ordinetur, quatinus beati PETRI, cuius et nomini et defensioni attitulata est, intercessione divine merearis obtinere suffragia protectionis*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 3, 247; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11639, 57. The Pope renewed his invitation at the beginning of September: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 7, 258-9; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11645, 58.

slar, and immediately had him consecrated by Archbishop Siegfried.³⁰ While this meant that the king acknowledged the previous prelate's deposition, it also represented a rather liberal interpretation of Leo I's procedure, since the king's intervention (even if approved by the metropolitan) replaced the election by the clergy and people, and the effective assignment of the bishopric preceded – albeit by a short interval – the episcopal consecration. By that point, however, Henry IV had become convinced not to recognise the validity of the synodal 'decree' of February and to resume a central role in the selection and installation of the empire's bishops.

4. *Henry IV's reaction and the Gregorian letter of 8 December 1075*

Henry's decision had taken shape in September when – in a truly sensational gesture – he assigned the archiepiscopal see of Milan to the "cleric" Tedaldo, a Milanese by birth but a member of the royal chapel, without regard either for the investiture he had previously conferred on Gotofredo or for the election of Atto, who had been promoted on 6 January 1072 by the Patarennes, even though the elected bishop had been forced to immediately take refuge in Rome.³¹ The Milanese question was certainly at the centre of Gregory VII's concerns when he sent the aforementioned letter of 8 December 1075, since on the same day the pope also wrote to Tedaldo and to the suffragan bishops of the Ambrosian Church. Tedaldo had informed the pope that he desired and hoped for his "friendship", but Gregory pointed out to him that "the episcopal cathedra on which he had been placed had already been assigned to another person" (Atto), whose election the pope had found no reason to contest. The only way to resolve the situation was therefore for Tedaldo to attend the papal synod scheduled for the beginning of the following Lent, or perhaps even to come to Rome earlier, in order to undergo a "just examination of his entry" (into the fold of the Milanese Church).³² Since this was an archiepiscopal and metropolitan church, the Apostolic See was the sole authority competent to rule on the validity of the elections or appointments that had been made until then and, if necessary, to authorise the suffragans to proceed with episcopal consecration (which, in Tedaldo's case, ought to have been preceded by the conferral of the major orders, from the subdiaconate to the presbyterate).

Before 8 December, however, Henry IV had also installed bishops in two dioceses in central Italy that were directly subject to the Roman Church and its pontiff as their metropolitan. In doing so he completely bypassed the pope,

³⁰ *Regesta Imperii III. Salisches Haus 1024-1125*, Teilband 2, 3. Abt: *Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter Heinrich IV*, 2. Lief.: 1065-1075, no. 773. In *Regesta Imperii Online*, URL http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1075-11-30_3_0_3_2_3_773_773 (1075 November 30, Bamberg).

³¹ See the excellent entry by Lucioni, "Tedaldo."

³² Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 8, 259-61; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 5, no. 11656, 60.

in clear violation of the *statuta apostolice sedis*. It is noteworthy that Gregory VII, in his letter to the king dated 8 December 1075, described the “delivery” of the Churches of Fermo and Spoleto by the latter – “assuming, however, that a church could be delivered or donated by a man” – as acts carried out in favour of “persons unknown to him, upon whom it was not lawful, according to the rules, to lay hands until he had first come to know them well and then approved them” (as was the metropolitan’s duty).³³ In expressing himself in this way, Gregory still believed it possible to avoid a sensational rupture by persuading the king that returning to the limits imposed on him by the synodal decree of the previous February was the only means of avoiding a violation of the principle, which had been established by Christ, of obedience due to the pope as St Peter’s successor – all the more so because, as we have already noted, in Gregory’s view that decree contained nothing new or arbitrary.

Henry was not willing to accept that episcopal promotions should take place in a manner that offered him no guarantee of effective control, however, except insofar as such control might be conceded to him by the pope – who, by virtue of his Petrine (and therefore Christ-derived) authority, had become the sole arbiter and regulator of the entire process; an authority that, in principle, the king could not contest. This, in our view, explains why, after the letter of 8 December 1075 – which, while open to seeking shared solutions for local situations, nonetheless set out in unmistakably ‘non-negotiable’ terms the respective positions of the pope and secular rulers (Henry IV or any other Christian king) – Henry and the bishops appointed and installed by him did not return to the specific issue of episcopal “ordinations”. Instead, they abruptly shifted the discussion to Gregory VII’s personal status and the alleged illegitimacy of his election as pope, thereby establishing grounds on which to condemn his governing methods of the Church as a whole, conceived as a body of bishops and abbots inextricably bound to the holder of royal and imperial authority.³⁴

5. Gregory VII and the ordinations of bishops from 1077 to 1080

After the mutual condemnations of the early months of 1076, the question of the canonical *ordinatio* of bishops – understood as a procedure that could not be interrupted by investiture – seems to disappear from the developments in relations between Henry IV and Gregory VII, as though it had not been the central issue during 1075. Nevertheless, the pontiff continued to refer to

³³ *Et nunc quidem, ut vulnus vulneri infligeres, contra statuta apostolice sedis tradidisti Firmanam et Spoletanam ecclesiam, si tamen ab homine [trad]i ecclesia aut donari potest, quibusdam personis nobis etiam ignotis, quibus non licet nisi probatis et ante bene cognitis regulariter manum imponere*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, III, 10, 264; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11658, 61.

³⁴ See the manifesto letters addressed to Gregory VII by the German bishops and Henry IV on 24 January 1076 in Weiland, *Heinrici IV. Constitutiones*, 58 and 60, 108–9; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, nos. 11675 and 11676, 64.

it when addressing interlocutors outside the heart of the Reich, such as the Count of Flanders³⁵ and, above all, the ecclesiastical and political world of Gaul.³⁶ As other scholars have already noted, in letters such as those sent to the Archbishop of Tours on 1 March 1077³⁷ or to the legate Hugh of Die that May,³⁸ the allusions to investiture by laymen become more explicit and the condemnation more unequivocal.

In September of the same year, the pope dealt with another archiepiscopal and metropolitan see of the empire, namely Aquileia, seeking to guide the choice of the new archbishop towards an outcome consistent with the principles proclaimed in 1075. His letter to the clergy and people of Aquileia dated 17 September is particularly noteworthy. Its first part is a veritable proclamation of those principles, specifying that the pope “in no way wished to contradict or impede what was due to the service of the king and the loyalty owed to him, nor did he seek to introduce anything new”, but only hoped that “in the ordination of bishops, evangelical and canonical authority should be observed first and foremost, according to the common interpretation and approval of the holy fathers”.³⁹ Immediately thereafter, the pope clarified that, since this concerned an archiepiscopal see, the examination of the election procedure and of the moral and intellectual qualities of the elected candidate fell to the Apostolic See, and had been entrusted by him to ad hoc legates who, if everything was in order, would proceed to “confirm” the election – an indispensable step prior to consecration by the suffragan bishops.⁴⁰ In Aquileia too,

³⁵ Above, at footnote 20.

³⁶ Primarily from Schieffer, *Die Entstehung*, 159–60.

³⁷ Here the Pope recalled with satisfaction that the *principes illius terre contra antiquam et pessimam consuetudinem pro reverentia Dei omnipotentis et apostolice auctoritatis* had decided *ulterius in ordinandis episcopis nec dominium investiture tenere nec pecunie commodum querere*, and had asked him that in the Church of Dol *iuxta statuta sanctorum patrum legalis ordinaretur episcopus*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, IV, 13, 316; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11779, 85.

³⁸ See above, at footnotes 24–5.

³⁹ *Antiqua et nota sacre institutionis est regula non ab hominibus sed a Iesu Christo Deo et domino nostro plenissima sue sapientie consideratione et veritatis diffinitione sancita, ipso dicente in evangelio: “Qui intrat per ostium, pastor est ovium; qui autem non intrat per ostium, sed ascendit aliunde, fur est et latro”. Quapropter, quod in Ecclesia diu peccatis facientibus neglectum et nefanda consuetudine corruptum fuit et est, nos ad honorem Dei et salutem totius christianitatis innovare et restaurare cupimus, videlicet ut ad regendum populum Dei in unaquaque ecclesia exigente, tempore talis et eo ordine eligatur episcopus, qui iuxta Veritatis sententiam non fur et latro dici debeat, sed nomen et officium pastoris habere dignus existat.* With this noteworthy clarification, which recalls specific passages of the letter of 8 December 1075 addressed to Henry IV: *Ceterum, quod ad servitium et debitam fidelitatem regis pertinet, nequaquam contradicere aut impedire volumus. Et ideo nichil novi, nichil nostris adinventio-nibus superinducere conamur, sed illum solummodo querimus, quod et omnium salus postulat et necessitas, ut in ordinatione episcoporum secundum communem sanctorum patrum intelligentiam et approbationem primo omnium evangelica et canonica servetur auctoritas*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, V, 5, 353; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11825, 94.

⁴⁰ Jaffé.

however, the new archbishop (Henry of Biburg) did not enter office through this procedure but rather by appointment and investiture by the king.⁴¹

Between August and September 1077, on his return to Rome from *Lan-gobardia* after the possibility of travelling beyond the Alps had vanished, the pope passed through Tuscany and sought to guide the procedure for the “ordination” of the Bishops of Volterra and Pisa, making use of his prerogatives as metropolitan of those sees. In a letter written from Rome on 16 September 1077 to the Bishops of Siena and Florence, he announced that the members of the Church of Volterra had agreed to elect the person he had designated – namely, the Archpriest of Mantua – and instructed the recipients to go there and ensure “that a general election be held by all” to confirm it in the pope’s name, and then to immediately send the elected candidate to Rome, furnished with the “solemn decree of the clergy and people” in order to “receive consecration”.⁴² For reasons that remain unclear, this did not take place. A very similar procedure was followed in Pisa, however, where – on the recommendation of Gregory VII – Landulf was elected bishop in the second half of August and, on 1 September, was sent by the pope to Corsica to address the problems of the local churches and to restore the island to the temporal authority of the Apostolic See.⁴³ Landulf was from Milan and was therefore ‘brought’ to Pisa by Gregory VII, who succeeded in having him accepted by the clergy and people of that city thanks to the good offices of Matilda, who, after the death of her mother Beatrice (18 April 1076), had become Marquise of Tuscany.⁴⁴ A year later, Landulf – who in the meantime had been consecrated by Gregory – took part in the autumn synod convened by the pope, and a few days later obtained from him a solemn privilege (the first of its kind preserved in the *Registrum*) confirming the assets and rights of the bishopric of Pisa. Through this privilege, the procedure that had brought him into office was presented as an epoch-making development, since “the Church of Pisa, which in subjecting itself to bishops had departed from the constitutions of the holy fathers, had at last accepted the sound counsel of the holy Roman Church, its mother, so that it now rejoiced in having as its shepherd – approved and consecrated by the pope – (Landulf), who had entered (the fold) through none other than the gate of Christ himself”.⁴⁵ As already envisaged (but not realised) for the bishopric of Volterra, Landulf became head of the Church of Pisa *consensu Romani pontificis* (who had proposed his name) *et electione pisani [cleri et] populi*, without any prior or subsequent intervention by the king.

⁴¹ Fees, “Enrico di Biburg.”

⁴² Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, V, 3, 350-1; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 5, no. 11822, 94.

⁴³ Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, V, 2, 349-50; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 5, no. 11821, 93.

⁴⁴ For the context of Landulf’s appointment, Ronzani, *Chiesa e «Civitas»*, 165-90.

⁴⁵ Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, VI, 12, 414-5 (30 November 1078), where on 414, the expression *electione pisani populi* must clearly be supplemented with the words *cleri et*; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 11915, 111.

The papal privilege of 30 November 1078 therefore served as confirmation of all the temporal goods and rights that had previously been bestowed on the prelates through royal investiture, and it added a genuine papal vicariate over Corsica – a reward that certainly reflected the city’s willingness to receive the bishop designated by Gregory VII.

It is interesting to note that the procedure described by Gregory VII for the selection and promotion of the new bishop of Volterra was taken up and generalised, so to speak, in the synodal decree of March 1080. According to this decree, every election by the clergy and the people (*remota omni seculari ambitione, timore atque gratia*) had to take place in the presence of a visiting bishop who had been sent to the site by the apostolic or metropolitan see, whose approval (*consensus*) was indispensable for declaring it valid. Indeed, if the clergy and the people (considered as a single body) dared to proceed otherwise, the election would be invalid, and above all, the electoral body would lose – perhaps only on that occasion – all rights in the matter, with “all the power to elect passing into the hands of the Apostolic See or the metropolitan”.⁴⁶ The provision that the visiting bishop should be sent primarily by the Apostolic See was evidently based on the awareness that, with the second and definitive excommunication of Henry IV, it would not always be possible to find metropolitans in communion with Rome, just as it would not be easy to organise elections immune from the influence and pressure of the king.

As is well known, the question remained unresolved for a long time. This prohibition – which was reiterated in the Gregorian Lenten synod of 1080⁴⁷ and subsequently by Urban II and Paschal II⁴⁸ – against “receiving a bishopric or abbacy from the hands of a layperson” reaffirmed that the decision to entrust the promotion of bishops to a procedure reserved exclusively for the local electoral body and the holder of metropolitan prerogatives (that is, in the case of the promotion of a metropolitan archbishop, to the pope and the suffragan bishops) was regarded as irreversible. At the same time, however, it confirmed that Henry IV – and not he alone – had no intention of relinquishing the predominant role he had inherited from his predecessors through which he could choose bishops of proven loyalty and directly entrust

⁴⁶ *Quotiens defuncto pastore alicuius ecclesie alius est ei canonice subrogandus, instantia visitatoris episcopi, qui ei ab apostolica vel metropolitana sede directus est, clerus et populus remota omni seculari ambitione timore atque gratia apostolice sedis vel metropolitani sui consensu pastorem sibi secundum Deum eligat. Quod si corruptus aliquo vitio aliter agere presumpserit, electionis perperam facte omni fructu carebit et de cetero nullam electionis potestatem habebit, electionis vero potestas omnis in deliberatione sedis apostolice sive metropolitani sui consistat*: Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, VII, 14a, 482; Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 12000, 126. The deprivation of the *potestas eligendi*, which has been misused, is justified by analogy with the treatment prescribed for bishops who *talem consecraverint sacerdotem qualem non liceat* by a canon of Leo I, which is included in Anselm’s canonical collection immediately before the oft-mentioned c. 65: Thaner, *Anselm II. Bischof von Lucca*, *Collectio canonum*, L. VI, c. 64, 299.

⁴⁷ Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, VI, 12, VII, 14a, 480.

⁴⁸ The relevant decrees are reported by Beulertz, *Das Verbot der Laieninvestitur*, 10-22.

to them the church they were to govern as bishops. The contrast between the purely canonical approach adopted by Gregory VII at the Lenten synod of 1075 and the practice followed by Henry IV both before and after that date – a practice rooted, of course, in a long-established conception of the indissoluble bond between the king and the bishoprics and abbeys of the Reich – seemed to admit of no compromise.

6. Thirty years later. New negotiations on the procedure for promoting bishops and the solutions of 1111 and 1122

It is not our intention to follow in detail those events which came after 1080 (and that have been amply illustrated in many excellent monographs on the “Investiture Controversy”). It cannot be ignored, however, that the situation only began to unravel once the “false privileges” attributed to Adrian I and Leo VIII⁴⁹ both remedied the undeniable “canonical weakness” of the imperial position and compelled Paschal II – after his first unsuccessful attempt to resolve the issue at its root by releasing the bishops from the *servitium regis* – to revisit the Leonine procedure that had been reinstated by Gregory VII in order to accommodate King Henry V’s demands, which by then had become canonically ‘legitimate’. In other words, in April 1111 the matter was taken up again from the point at which it had been left in September 1075, when, as we have seen, Henry IV had resumed acting as though the synodal decree of the previous February had no force. The starting point was once again that very decree (which had been restated in more explicit terms by the canon issued in 1078) which reiterated that at the beginning of the procedure for the promotion of bishops there must be a “free election”, free from violence and above all from simony – yet now something was added which had remained implicit at the time, namely that such an election was to take place with the king’s “consent”. At that point, he could confer on the elected candidate “the investiture of the pastoral staff and ring”; yet if, by virtue of the “false privileges” of Adrian I and Leo VIII, the absence of royal approval and subsequent investiture prevented the elected person from receiving episcopal consecration, the archbishops and bishops were not obliged to “canonically consecrate” the bishops and abbots invested by the king.⁵⁰ Ultimately, the inclusion of investiture with ring and crozier in the procedure served above all to ensure that those elected

⁴⁹ Märtl, *Die falschen Investiturprivilegien*, 137-47 (*Ex decretis Adriani pape Karolo regi francorum*) and 148-53 (*Ex decretis Leoni pape Ottoni primo regi Teutonicorum*).

⁵⁰ *Regni tui episcopis vel abbatibus libere, preter violentiam et simoniam electis, investituram virgae et anuli conferas. Post investitionem vero canonice consecrationem accipiant ab episcopo ad quem pertinuerint. Si quis autem a clero et populo preter assensum tuum electus fuerit, nisi a te investiatur, a nemine consecratur [exceptis nimirum illis qui vel in archiepiscoporum vel in Romani pontificis solent dispositione consistere]. Sane archiepiscopi vel episcopi libertatem habeant a te investitos episcopos vel abbates canonice consecrandi: Weiland, *Heinrici V. Constitutiones*, 96, 144-5. Cantarella, *Pasquale II*, 117 has incisively observed: *la libertas**

as bishops were persons acceptable to the king and loyal to him. It could also entail – although certainly no longer automatically, as had been stipulated in 1075 and reiterated in 1078 – the interruption of the *ordinatio* procedure itself, leaving the elected but unconsecrated bishops with only patrimonial and judicial powers. On the first point – the idea that a proper and free “election” could not take place without the involvement and consent of the king – was now shared by all (or almost all). On the second point, however, the *vulnus* inflicted on the Gregorian approach remained far too deep.

Agreement could only be reached on the well-known terms of the “peace” of Worms in 1122, in which the king definitively renounced investiture with ring and crozier, and the pope, in his “privilege”, revised the procedure once again in order to ensure – more clearly than ever before – the king’s control over the *electio* phase (though without entirely depriving the metropolitan and the “comprovincial” bishops of the responsibilities assigned to them in 1075-8), while at the same time preventing any interruption or distortion of the episcopal *ordinatio* culminating in consecration.⁵¹

7. *Final proposal*

To conclude this contribution to a volume devoted to the ‘search of the High Middle Ages’, we too hope that the chronological period between 1075 and 1122 (or 1123, if one includes the Lateran Synod of Callixtus II)⁵² will no longer be placed under the now worn-out banner of the ‘Investiture Controversy’. We propose instead the (certainly less concise) expression ‘dispute over the procedure for promoting bishops’, for it was precisely around this issue that the principal reason for the prolonged conflict between papacy and empire arose and developed.

ha una valenza positiva quanto negativa: è ‘la garanzia di poter consacrare’, come di ‘poter non consacrare’.

⁵¹ *Ego Calixtus episcopus servus servorum Dei tibi dilecto filio Heinrico dei gratia Romanorum imperatori augusto concedo, electiones episcoporum et abbatum Teutonici regni, qui ad regnum pertinent, in praesentia tua fieri, absque simonia et aliqua violentia; ut, si qua inter partes discordia emergerit, metropolitani et comprovincialium consilio vel iudicio, saniori parti assensum et auxilium praebeas. Electus autem regalia per sceptrum a te recipiat, et quae ex his iure tibi debet faciat: Weiland, Heinrici V. Constitutiones, 108, 161.*

⁵² Its canon *Nullus in episcopum nisi canonice electum consecret*, which vividly reflected Gregory’s position, was included by Gratian in D. 62, c. III: Richter, *Decretum magistri Gratiani*, col. 234.

Appendix

Register of Gregory VII, III, 10 (8 December 1075): structure and summary (with literal translation of selected passages)

“Gregory, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to Henry, king: health and apostolic blessing, provided that he obeys the Apostolic See as befits a Christian king.”

I: Henry’s misconduct

1. We have sent you the apostolic blessing conditionally, “because it is said that you are knowingly in communion with persons excommunicated by the judgement of the Apostolic See and condemned by a synod.” If this is true, you may receive the blessing only after you have removed the excommunicated persons and received absolution. We therefore advise you to turn to a “religious bishop” who, with our permission, may absolve you and, with your permission, may inform us by letter of the type of penance imposed upon you.

2. Moreover, we are astonished that, although in your letter you proclaim yourself a son of the Church and of ours, in practice you show yourself opposed to the “canonical and apostolic decrees” in those matters that “the ecclesiastical religion requires above all”. The facts show how you have kept the promises you made to us concerning the Church of Milan. And now, piling wound upon wound, “contrary to what has been established by the Apostolic See, you have handed over the churches of Fermo and Spoleto – as though a church could be handed over or donated by a man – to persons unknown to us, upon whom we cannot lay hands according to the canons until we have first known and examined them”.

II: The Petrine and therefore Christ-derived authority of the Pope

3. You ought to have shown greater honour to the magister Ecclesie, that is, to St Peter, to whom Christ entrusted all his sheep and the keys to the kingdom of heaven. We act in his stead, and what you write to us, he receives. Therefore, “in matters through which the Christian faith and the good order of the Church contribute to eternal salvation”, you should not deny due reverence to God, who said to the apostles: “He who hears you hears me; he who despises you despises me”. Those who seek to obey God cannot disregard our admonitions in what we have said “in accordance with what has been established by the holy fathers”.

III: The legitimate and open-minded behaviour of Gregory VII

4. At the synod convened this year at the Apostolic See, seeing that the order of the Christian religion had fallen into decline, “we resorted to the decrees and doctrine of the holy fathers” without establishing anything new, but deciding to resume “the only rule of ecclesiastical discipline”. “We know of no other way to access salvation and eternal life for the flock of Christ and His shepherds than that indicated to us by Him Himself with the words: ‘I am the gate’”. This decree, which some call an unbearable burden, we call a necessary truth for finding salvation, which must be received not only by you and those in your kingdom, but by all princes and peoples who profess and venerate Christ, even though we would like you, as the most powerful in glory, honour, and virtue, to also be the most sublime in devotion to Christ.

5. So that all this might not seem too harsh or unjust to you, however, we wrote to you asking that you send us “wise and religious” persons, and that if they could show us how to moderate “the sentence of the holy fathers promulgated by us”, we would accept their counsel. “But even if you had not received such a kindly admonition from us, it would still have been right for you, before violating the apostolic decrees, to ask us – using reasonable arguments – to account for whatever we may have imposed upon you or for anything in which we might have appeared to affront your honour”. Yet what you have since done or arranged shows plainly how you heeded our warnings and how you observed justice.

IV: Conclusion – between hopes and warnings

6. Yet we still hope to incline your heart to obedience to the divine commands, and we admonish you: “recognising Christ’s dominion over you, consider how dangerous it is to place your own honour before his, and do not impede the freedom of the Church, the bride whom He has deemed worthy to unite to Himself. Rather, begin to show faithful devotion to Almighty God and to Saint Peter, so that they may increase your glory and strengthen your virtue” – all the more so, since you owe your victory over your enemies to them. And because the fear of God has greater weight for you than our admonitions, remember what befell Saul, who boasted of his victory and did not heed the prophet’s warnings – how he was punished by God, and how much grace passed to David.

7. As for the other matters contained in your letter, which we do not mention here, we shall reply only when your envoys Rabodo, Adelpreth, and Uodescalkus return to us and openly declare your intentions concerning the matters we charged them to discuss with you.

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Mauro Ronzani
Università di Pisa
mauro.ronzani@unipi.it
ORCID: 0000-0002-2089-4190

Structure, dynamics, and transformation of the *ecclesia*: the long Middle Ages or an ecclesiastical revolution?

by Michel Lauwers

This article addresses the specificity of the 11th and 12th centuries within the framework of the 'long Middle Ages' as defined by Jacques Le Goff. Moving beyond a focus on the clergy alone, it examines the ecclesial dimension of social organization, as articulated through the concept of *ecclesia*. On the basis of a synthetic analysis of archaeological and historical evidence from Western Europe, the study seeks to document and characterize the successive phases of a social dynamic generated by the establishment and subsequent proliferation of places of worship. It distinguishes two successive processes: an initial phase of social polarization, followed by a phase of territorialization in the organization of society. Within this broader trajectory, the article situates and evaluates the effects of the transformation of ecclesiastical institutions, a process often associated with what is conventionally termed the 'Gregorian Reform'.

Questo articolo interroga la specificità dei secoli XI e XII all'interno del 'lungo Medioevo', così come concepito da Jacques Le Goff. Superando una prospettiva incentrata esclusivamente sul clero, l'analisi si concentra sulla dimensione ecclesiale del funzionamento sociale, quale è indicata dal concetto di *ecclesia*. A partire da un tentativo di sintesi dei dati archeologici e storici relativi all'Europa occidentale, esso si propone in particolare di documentare e caratterizzare le diverse fasi di una dinamica sociale indotta dall'istituzione e dalla successiva moltiplicazione dei luoghi di culto, distinguendo due processi successivi: una fase di polarizzazione e una fase di territorializzazione dell'organizzazione sociale. All'interno di questa evoluzione complessiva, l'articolo cerca di collocare e valutare gli effetti di quel processo di trasformazione dell'istituzione ecclesiastica talvolta identificato con la cosiddetta 'riforma gregoriana'.

Michel Lauwers, Université Côte d'Azur, France, Michel.Lauwers@univ-cotedazur.fr, 0000-0001-9330-7412

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Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, social change, *ecclesia*, Gregorian reform, places of worship, polarisation, territories.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, mutamento sociale, *ecclesia*, riforma gregoriana, luoghi di culto, polarizzazione, territori.

1. *Introduction: periodisation and historical transitions*

The logic of periodisation in history – on which the organisers of the Pisa Conference invited us to reflect by focusing on the High Middle Ages – concerns the evaluation of change within human societies. For, as Marc Bloch wrote in the early 1940s, history is not the “science of the past”, but rather that “of human beings in time”. Time, however, “is, by nature, a continuum”, while also being “perpetual change”: “from the antithesis of these two attributes arise the great problems of historical research”.¹ While everything in the history of societies is in a state of continuous transformation, the operation of periodisation presupposes that certain changes are more significant – or more general – than others: moments or historical phases in which a shift occurs from one state of society to another.² The difficulty, then, lies in distinguishing between dynamics – that is, the fact that every social system is constantly transforming – and historical transitions, that is, phases of re-configuration or tipping points within the system.³

My essay seeks to situate the High Middle Ages within the broader dynamics that shaped Western Europe as a whole. The Church, or *ecclesia* – the use of the Latin form here is intended to distance the term from the modern notion of “Church”, which cannot adequately account for medieval realities, as we shall see – constitutes the guiding thread of my argument. I propose to highlight the ecclesial dimension of how medieval society functioned by focusing on the key role of the *ecclesia* in organising the characteristic structures of the Middle Ages, and on its transformations over the centuries. In the pages that follow, I shall first address these overall dynamics and their

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¹ Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire*, chap. 1: *On a dit quelquefois: 'l'histoire est la science du passé'. C'est à mon sens mal parler. Car d'abord, l'idée même que le passé, en tant que tel, puisse être objet de science est absurde. Des phénomènes qui n'ont d'autre caractère commun que de ne pas avoir été nos contemporains, comment sans décanage préalable en ferait-on la matière d'une connaissance rationnelle?* He then argued that history is rather the *science des hommes*, before adding: *science des hommes dans les temps*. Time, however, *est, par nature, un continu. Il est aussi perpétuel changement. De l'antithèse de ces deux attributs viennent les grands problèmes de la recherche historique*.

² See Müller and Heintz, *Historical Transitions* (in particular the chapter by J. Revel).

³ In order to identify transitions (or revolutions, if the shift is abrupt, intentional, or profound), it is of course first necessary to define historical regimes – stable states of affairs, constant or in relative equilibrium, which form systems and succeed one another over time.

distinctive features, and then distinguish the principal stages and rhythms of their development, paying particular attention to the changes that occurred during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

2. *The ecclesial dominium of the “long Middle Ages”*

In the 1970s, Jacques Le Goff proposed the notion of the “long Middle Ages” to characterise what he envisaged as a phase of “long equilibrium of the feudal mode of production dominated by Christian ideology”, extending “from the end of classical Antiquity to the Industrial Revolution”, and “not without crises nor without innovations”.⁴ By thus advancing a new periodisation of Western history, Le Goff sketched out a research program aimed at deciphering a singular social organisation inscribed in the *longue durée*, one that articulated material and ideational structures, stability and change. Alain Guerreau is one of the few medievalists to have taken up this challenge, attempting to elaborate a model capable of accounting for both the mode of production and the system of representations characteristic of this long Middle Ages. He progressively defined this model in a series of essays published from the 1980s onward, relying on two key concepts – *dominium* and *ecclesia* – which will serve as my point of departure.⁵

Forged from a Latin term attested in medieval documents to designate social relationships simultaneously involving persons, places, and things, the concept of *dominium* seeks to account, in a generic manner, for a social structure and a relationship of domination in which the powerful exercise control over both land and the populations who cultivate it.⁶ It thus exceeds what medievalists commonly refer to as “lordship” or “feudalism”, *dominatus loci* or *Herrschaft*, and transcends the distinctions often drawn between the manorial (or curtense) system, the rent-based economy, and seigneurial jurisdiction, in order to consider more globally a power relationship ideally founded on control over land and people. Between the 4th-5th and the 17th-18th centuries, such control constituted a necessary condition for levies on agricultural production and, thereafter, for the exercise of rights within a jurisdiction. From the perspective of dominant groups, the “categorical imperative” was therefore to “bind men to the land through effective mechanisms, without the

⁴ Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge*; Le Goff, *La civilisation*, preface to the second edition (1982); Le Goff, “Pour un long Moyen Âge.”

⁵ Guerreau, *Le féodalisme*; Guerreau, “Fief, féodalité, féodalisme;” Guerreau, “Féodalité;” Guerreau, *L’Avenir d’un passé incertain*; Guerreau, “Réflexions sur l’historiographie.” Alain Guerreau is currently preparing a new essay on these questions.

⁶ It is therefore clear that this theoretical concept is not intended to account for the diversity of forms of lordship, still less for the differentiated chronology and geography of their establishment.

need to resort to physical violence”.⁷ This is not to say that violence was absent from the Middle Ages; rather, in a world in which lords were external to the process of production, violence alone was insufficient to anchor populations and to stabilise relations of dependence.⁸ The “fixing” of dependents to the lands of the powerful is, in fact, a phenomenon long studied by medievalists, particularly from the 1970s-1980s onward, when several scholars turned their attention to the role played by seigneurial powers in the formation of communities of dependent cultivators – along lines that Marc Bloch had, moreover, already anticipated.⁹

Pierre Toubert identified a process of gathering populations on elevated sites around fortified establishments, which he termed *incastellamento*.¹⁰ Robert Fossier, for his part, identified a more generalised process of *encellulement*, which he argued was encouraged both by the foundation of places of worship controlled by dominant groups and by the construction of fortified sites.¹¹ A “fundamental social phenomenon of medieval times”, *encellulement* corresponds to the development of local structures – “villages” and “parishes” – that functioned as frameworks of collective life and shared rituals, as well as spaces of agricultural production and seigneurial exaction. According to Fossier, it was the parish that played a driving role in this movement, for it “brought men closer together, perhaps even chained them”.¹² Georges Duby had earlier evoked this quasi-constraining effectiveness of the parish, a “closed group from which one cannot escape at will”.¹³ From this perspective, the settlement of groups of men and women around fixed points, gathered within small territories subject to local lords, follows a precise and compressed chronology: “for more than half a century, from 990 to 1060, this was a veritable social revolution”, writes Fossier.

The imposition of local forms of domination also represents – under the notion of *dominatus loci*, more or less derived from the documentary record – one of the major themes of Italian medieval studies, which have devoted sustained attention to the relationships between powers, rural communes, and

⁷ Guerreau, “Féodalité,” 397. He concludes: “La relation cruciale de cette structure (...) était le lien des hommes au sol, la domination d’ensemble supposant que les hommes fussent tendanciellement liés à une terre”.

⁸ On the control of the means of production by dependents, see Wickham, “How Did the Feudal Economy Work?,” 32 and 34 (“Lords were not there on the ground, and peasants were”).

⁹ Communities of inhabitants are not timeless entities, contrary to what many jurists and historians from the 18th and 19th centuries claimed; in the perspective of Bloch and his successors, they are instead understood as a product of seigneurial structures: Lauwers, “Des ‘communités de village.’”

¹⁰ Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*.

¹¹ Fossier, *Enfance de l’Europe*, vol. 1, chap. 2 (“L’encellulement”), 288-601.

¹² Fossier, 345, 358. The importance of the concept of *encellulement* (“qui subsume à la fois les modalités de la domination et celles de l’organisation du travail dans une perspective spatiale” and “met en évidence le double aspect concret (du) rapport (de production féodal): paroisse-seigneurie”) has been emphasised by Guerreau, “Un tournant de l’historiographie,” 1168.

¹³ Duby, *La société aux XI^e et XII^e siècles*, 227-31.

parishes.¹⁴ According to Cinzio Violante, it was between the 10th and 12th centuries that a territorial logic replaced the personal logic that had previously prevailed in social organisation. There may well be an echo here of evolutionary models identified in German historiography (from *Personenverbandstaat* to *Territorialstaat*), but in Violante's work it is the articulation of groups of the faithful with places of worship, then the hierarchisation of these places, and finally the establishment of parishes associated with the authority of the *dominus loci* that constitute the most visible manifestations of a "territorial lordship" ultimately imposed throughout the West.¹⁵ Specialists of medieval Italy largely continue to share this position, making – above all – the development of a "territoriality" of power one of the keys to understanding the major changes that occurred in the course of the 11th century, albeit not always relating it explicitly to ecclesial territoriality.¹⁶

The attachment of populations to dominant places, within increasingly well-defined and controlled territories, thus appears to have constituted a strong tendency in the social dynamics of the feudal age. Is it possible to specify its chronology more precisely and to grasp its underlying mechanisms? Over recent decades, archaeological research has produced a large body of material evidence capable of providing some elements of an answer. Two essential points must be emphasised here:

1. The remains recently brought to light by archaeologists primarily document social configurations that predate the period traditionally explored by historians of feudal society or territorial lordship.¹⁷ The discovery, throughout Europe, of hundreds – indeed thousands – of early medieval

¹⁴ Palmieri, "Degli antichi comuni rurali;" Sorbelli, *Il Comune rurale*; Sorbelli, *La Parrocchia*; Santini, *I 'comuni di pieve'*. These works are cited and criticised (for their schematic character) in the conclusions of Wickham, *Communautés et clientèles*, 214–5.

¹⁵ Violante, "Le strutture organizzative della cura d'anime;" Violante, "Pieve e parrocchie." According to Violante, this process of recomposition followed the fading, in the early centuries of the Middle Ages, of the "principle of territoriality" that had structured the ancient world, in favour of a "personal principle." Between the second half of the 10th century and the end of the 12th century, a form of territorialisation from below then took place, marked by the transition from *signoria fondiaria* to *signoria territoriale* or local lordship, in which the parish therefore played a role, and *da una consuetudine riferita alle persone a una consuetudine riferita ai territori*. See Violante, "La signoria 'territoriale'," and Castagnetti, "Il potere sui contadini." On Italian historiography concerning the territoriality of power, see the retrospective assessment proposed by Violante, "Per una storia degli àmbiti." On processes of ecclesial territorialisation in Italy, see Ronzani, "L'organizzazione territoriale delle chiese."

¹⁶ See, for example, in the proceedings of the recent Settimane di Spoleto (2025) devoted to the 11th century, the contributions by Wickham, "Nuovi approcci ai cambiamenti dell'XI secolo," 1 and 10–2, which, drawing on Violante, refers to *signoria privata territorializzata*, *Bannherrschaft*, and the creation of territorial "cells", as well as Fiore, "La signoria."

¹⁷ I cannot provide here a bibliography for all the archaeological data pointing in this direction, as the studies are now extremely numerous. Considerable benefit may be drawn from several recent collective volumes, including Quirós Castillo, *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Villages*; Valais, *L'habitat rural*; Sanchez-Pardo, and Shapland, *Churches and Social Power*; Sánchez-Pardo, Marron, and Crîngaci Tiplic, *Ecclesiastical Landscapes in Medieval Europe*; Leroy, et Verslype, *Communauté des vivants, compagnie des morts*; Hernandez, Schneider, et Soulat, *L'habitat rural du haut Moyen Âge*; Schneider, Raynaud, et Dusseaux, *Septimanie*.

rural settlements (5th-10th centuries), whose density had previously gone unsuspected, attests to the emergence, at the end of Antiquity, of forms of land occupation and collective organisation that appear to foreshadow or prepare the configuration of places of power and groups of inhabitants in subsequent centuries.¹⁸ Rather than viewing *encellulement* as a sudden rupture, it should therefore be understood as the culmination – or ultimate stage – of a long-initiated socio-spatial process, one that may be accounted for by the generic concept of *dominium*, conceived as the binding of dominated groups onto lands locally controlled by dominant groups.

2. Current archaeological research further confirms what several historians had already suggested regarding the structuring of parishes: places of worship and funerary areas – which initially attracted less attention than castles¹⁹ – appear to have played a driving role in the formation and stabilisation of communities of dependents. These communities did not always take the form of settlements or villages clustered around churches; nonetheless, churches and their cemeteries almost everywhere served as points of reference and “polarised” people’s lives.²⁰ By attracting both the living and the dead, as well as a wide range of activities and collective facilities, sacred places effectively transformed a substantial portion of the population into “(co-)inhabitants”, “neighbours”, or “manants”, to use the terms found in early medieval documents.²¹ Residence, neighbourhood, and the practices associated with sacred sites thus fostered relations of dependence – or, at the very least, constituted a condition for their establishment.

Due to the phenomenon of “polarisation”, Alain Guerreau, followed by several others, has argued that the mode of production and social relations distinctive of the long Middle Ages were facilitated by the deployment of the *ecclesia*. This concept is meant to capture a reality that is at once material and

¹⁸ This is notably argued by Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, and “L’identité villageoise.”

¹⁹ On this issue, see Lauwers, “De l’incastellamento à l’inecclesiamento.” The situation is not the same across historiographies: whereas in France numerous studies from the 1990s onward focused on the place of places of worship and their surroundings within settlement systems (Fixot, and Zadora-Rio, *L’environnement des églises*; Galinié and Zadora-Rio, *Archéologie du cimetière*), in Italy churches long remained in the background of medieval archaeology and investigations into land occupation – no doubt because, in their monumentality, they were more often regarded as a distinct domain of Christian archaeology. This situation is now changing: see Campana, Felici, Francovich, e Gabbrielli, *Chiese e insediamenti*; Bianchi, “Castles and Churches.”

²⁰ The notion of polarisation was proposed by Guerreau, “Quelques caractères spécifiques de l’espace féodal:” in the Middle Ages, “space was not conceived as continuous and homogeneous, but as discontinuous and heterogeneous, in the sense that it was everywhere polarised (certain points being valorised and sacralised in relation to others perceived – starting from the former and in relation to them – as negative).” One can readily see how this system of representations coincided with the relationship of *dominium*, polarisation favouring or reinforcing spatial anchoring and thus the indissolubility of the simultaneous control of people and land.

²¹ Zeller, West, Tinti, Stoffella, Schroeder, van Rhijn, Patzold, Kohl, Davies, and Czock, *Neighbours and Strangers*; Lauwers, “Polarisation ecclésiale.”

ideational, encompassing all the meanings of the term *ecclesia* as it appears in medieval documents: (i) the community (spiritual, non-carnal) formed by all the faithful, conceived in its dual – universal and local – dimension, which constitutes the primary meaning of the word; (ii) the consecrated place in which the faithful regularly gather and to which they bring their dead, a derived meaning that appears in the 4th century; and (iii) the clergy, or ecclesiastical hierarchy, that administers these places, this third meaning being the last to appear, perhaps not before the 11th century.²² The complexity of the articulation among these elements suggests that the medieval *ecclesia* was something other than the (ecclesiastical) institution that immediately comes to mind when we speak of the Church today.

The *ecclesia* is therefore not the Church (nor even churches), and invoking its determining role in the structuring of social relations does not imply that the clergy dominated everything and everyone in the Middle Ages.²³ Rather, the nexus of realities designated as *ecclesia* functioned as a lever, or driving force, of social organisation, as is shown, on the one hand, by the necessity for elites – both lay and ecclesiastical – to possess or control sacred objects, offices, and places, and, on the other hand, by the power of attraction that these sacred places and objects exerted over populations. It is in order to characterise such a social system that I have proposed the notion of ecclesial *dominium* (“*dominium ecclésial*”), which designates less a form of power or organisation proper to the clergy, or established by its members, than a specifically ecclesial logic of relations between the dominating and the dominated – in other words, the fact that the *ecclesia*, in all the forms outlined above, sustained or accompanied the social regime of the long Middle Ages.²⁴

While recognising the overall dynamics of ecclesial *dominium*, it is nonetheless necessary to distinguish specific moments within it, as well as points of adjustment or transformation. This is what I propose to do in the pages that follow, by privileging the question – essential from the standpoint of how the system operates – of forms of ecclesial spatialisation, which will lead us to examine further the social function of sacred and funerary sites.

3. From the 4th to the 7th century: “small worlds” and ecclesial polarisation

Between the 4th and the 7th centuries, the territorial and fiscal organisation of the ancient *civitates*, together with the network of *villae* that ensured

²² On the *ecclesia*, in addition to the works cited above in note 5, see Guerreau-Jalabert, “L’*ecclesia* médiévale;” Morsel, “L’*ecclesia*, institution dominante;” and Lauwers, “Qu’est-ce que le *dominium ecclésial*?” 125–35.

²³ While the *ecclesia* is not (or not only) the ecclesiastical institution, it is nonetheless the dominant institution of the medieval social system, in the sense given to this notion by anthropologists, referring to the principles and forms of organisation that confer coherence upon a society (Morsel, “L’*ecclesia*, institution dominante”).

²⁴ Lauwers, “Qu’est-ce que le *dominium ecclésial*?”.

their provision, gave way – on a regional and even local scale – to settlements of varied shapes: disparate “small worlds”, subject to diverse authorities and distributed in an irregular fashion, in what Chris Wickham has described as a “leopard-spot” pattern.²⁵ In a context marked by withdrawal and fragmentation, competition among elites, and the reconfiguration of the balance between city and the countryside, access to resources, control over populations, and the organisation of production proved crucial. The small worlds that replaced the ancient one were structured around values modelled by ecclesiastical authorities. Within cities, bishops envisaged forms of social cohesion based on new modes of circulation and redistribution of wealth, on an articulation between carnal and spiritual principles, and on the establishment of close relationships between the living and the dead, as manifested in particular in the cult of relics, as shown, among others, by Peter Brown.²⁶ At the urban periphery and within the city itself – sometimes on the very sites of former civic buildings – bishops established places of worship, soon endowed with the relics of the prestigious dead, around which populations regularly gathered, burying members of the community in the vicinity of suburban churches.²⁷

While these foundations contributed to a reorganisation of the urban world as early as the 4th century, a comparable process unfolded in the countryside from the 5th and 6th centuries onward, when most *villae* were abandoned and certain parts of these estates were dismantled and replaced by places of worship and burial grounds. It is often impossible to determine whether agricultural operations were still functioning and residences still occupied by the same families at the time when churches and tombs were installed; nevertheless, the material transformation of aristocratic *villae* clearly points to significant social changes.²⁸ At the same time, fortified hilltop settlements, established in strategic locations – often in connection with routes of communication – were likewise provided with churches (and baptisteries) built in prominent positions.²⁹ Ecclesiastical buildings thus became ubiquitous and structuring elements of both the landscape and a social organisation in transformation.

The Christian ideology promoted by bishops did not, however, erase or absorb other forms of social and cultural identity: being Christian was in no

²⁵ Davies, *Small Worlds*; Kohl, Patzold, und Zeller, *Kleine Welten*; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 541.

²⁶ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*; Brown, *The Body and Society*; Brown, *Power and Persuasion*; Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*.

²⁷ See the synthesis proposed by Méhu, “Reliques, sépultures et lieux de culte,” as well as several of the contributions collected in the volume Cuchet, Laubry, et Lauwers, *Transitions funéraires*.

²⁸ Brogiolo, *Chiese e insediamenti nelle campagne*; Bavuso, and Castrorao Barba, *The European Countryside during the Migration Period*; Castrorao Barba, “The Afterlife of Roman Villas;” Castrorao Barba, *La fine delle ville*; and Chavarria Arnau, *El final de las villae*.

²⁹ Schneider, *Établissements de hauteur*; Martinez, “Entre plaine et montagne;” Martinez and Quiquerez, *Approche diachronique des sites de hauteur*.

way incompatible, as Éric Rebillard emphasises, with other kinds of identities.³⁰ As for the dissemination of places of worship, it was less the result of an institutional framework or a concerted plan than a more diffuse process of appropriation of ecclesial sacredness by different groups, the mechanisms of which can often be grasped only retrospectively. A first threshold nonetheless appears to have been crossed almost everywhere in the West around the 7th and -8th centuries. Various investigations conducted in several regions show that churches – whether of wood or stone – experienced an unprecedented increase at that moment, certainly at the instigation of bishops, but above all through the initiative of landowners and local leaders who built them on their own lands.³¹ These churches were initially intended by their founders for both the living and the deceased members of their kin, and only subsequently for their dependents and the local population, who were buried on site, near the privileged tombs of local elites. Nonetheless, as conciliar acts and certain pontifical formularies attest, ecclesiastical authorities sought to establish a hierarchy and differentiated rights between churches administered by bishops and oratories or chapels held by powerful laymen.³² Other establishments had also developed which may be regarded as laboratories for new forms of community: these are the monastic complexes that articulated – for the community that inhabited them – sacred spaces and places of residence, spaces for the living and for the dead, while at the same time constituting centres of large agricultural estates within which cultivators and artisans lived.³³

The construction and maintenance of churches and monasteries required the mobilisation of considerable wealth, which from the 6th century onward, and especially from the 7th, took the canonical form of gifts made for the salvation or the commemoration of founders and benefactors. Recorded in writing, in acts that gradually became hegemonic within the documentation used by medievalists, these *pro anima* or *pro memoria* donations distinguished and reinforced the powerful in their social position, while at the same time facilitating their control over local populations.³⁴ Places of worship, relics, burials, and habitation thus became ever more closely associated: distant necropolises were replaced by smaller funerary ensembles, sometimes by mod-

³⁰ Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*.

³¹ See above the bibliography mentioned in note 17, which concerns – with some chronological shifts – the whole of the West. Overall, however, the number of churches was already considerable by the 7th century: see, for western Gaul, Schneider, “Les églises rurales;” Zadora-Rio, *Des paroisses de Touraine*; and Valais, *Les églises rurales du premier Moyen Âge*; for Italy, Brogiolo, *Le chiese rurali*; and Chavarría Arnau, *Archeologia delle chiese*; Chavarría Arnau, “The Archaeology of Early Italian Churches.” On the role of aristocratic groups in church foundations, beyond Wood’s overview (*The Proprietary Church*): Gasparri, and La Rocca, *Carte di famiglia*; La Rocca, “Le élites, chiese e sepoltura.” For an exemplary case revealed by archaeology, see Cartron, and Castex, *Histoire d’un îlot médocain*.

³² Ronzani, “L’organizzazione spaziale.”

³³ See Lauwers, *Monastères et espace social*; Lauwers, *Labeur, production et économie monastique*.

³⁴ On gifts, see Magnani, “Don aux églises” and Magnani, “Les médiévistes et le don.”

est clusters of graves, established along the plots and routes that structured human settlements, among units of life and production, often in the immediate environment of a place of worship.

The convergence of habitation, churches, and funerary spaces is undeniable; it should nonetheless be emphasised that this convergence does not always take material form in the topography. Places of worship and burial could polarise social organisation even in settlement contexts characterised by dispersed or loosely clustered habitation. When they did not lead to a concentration of dwellings, churches still attracted a range of structures connected with practices essential to subsistence, as evidenced by areas devoted to the processing and storage of cereals – barns and batteries of silos – which archaeologists now identify in the vicinity of, and sometimes even within, churches.³⁵ More generally, it appears that, from this period onward, a substantial share of land, agricultural reserves, and treasures was associated with churches and monasteries, which played a leading role in processes of production, extraction, and redistribution. Ian Wood has recently sought to account for this situation by invoking the notion of a *temple society*, a concept that may be adopted insofar as it serves to characterise a society in which sacred places – and, more broadly, the social practices fostered by the *ecclesia* – occupy a central position in the organisation of production and access to resources.³⁶

4. *From the 8th to the 10th century: hierarchisation, ecclesial monumentalisation, and the sharing of dominium*

From the 8th-9th centuries onward, as Carolingian authorities sought to impose order on society by establishing a hierarchical network of clergy (archbishops, bishops, abbots, local priests, and so forth) and churches, the transformation and elaboration of rites of consecration for both persons and places reinforced their valorisation, as well as the polarising power exercised by places of worship.³⁷ By the mid-10th century, a consecration ritual was also devised to mark the “cemeteries” surrounding churches – areas dedicated to burial that at the same time accommodated collective facilities and commu-

³⁵ Numerous case studies and bibliographical references may be found in Vigil-Escalera Guirado, Bianchi, and Quirós, *Horrea, Barns and Silos*, as well as in Lauwers, and Schneider, *Mises en réserve*.

³⁶ Wood, “The Early Medieval West;” Wood, *The Christian Economy*. One should be more cautious, however, about accepting the idea that the Church, as an institution, or the clergy, as a social group, owned a substantial share of the available land (as suggested by Wood, “Entrusting”). The question of the polarisation of wealth by the *ecclesia* is not posed in such highly institutional terms, in the classical sense of the word (see below, note 52).

³⁷ Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu*; Méhu, *Mises en scène et mémoires*; Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places*.

nal practices.³⁸ The consecration of places of worship constituted a long and complex ritual – the longest of all rites codified by ecclesiastics – mobilising multiple actors and giving rise to ceremonies on local, regional, or even broader scales. These ceremonies were carried out by both secular and clerical authorities, particularly within the imperial worlds (Carolingian, Ottonian, and Salian).³⁹

It was also in the 8th-9th centuries that the first manuals intended for local priests were committed to writing, along with the earliest directives concerning the organisation of *plebes* and “parishes” (*parrochiae*). The latter term appears at this time in many regions, together with that of “parishioners”, to designate local churches, their officiants and faithful, the sacraments dispensed in these churches, and the tithes – a levy of one tenth on production – that capitularies and councils required all *manants* to pay.⁴⁰ As Jean-Pierre Devroey has noted, a process of progressive “parochialisation” (*emparoisement*) gradually took hold across the whole of the West.⁴¹ Everywhere, small cells – if we take up the carceral vocabulary invoked earlier – brought together the faithful, living and dead, under the responsibility of their priests.⁴² Synodal jurisdiction, which enjoined parishioners to keep watch over one another and to denounce any failure to comply with parochial obligations, established mediators and sworn jurors within each parish.⁴³

The churches associated with burial grounds – which, as we have seen for the previous period, already formed a fairly dense yet somewhat irregular pattern, marked by gaps and concentrations – were then structured into a more regular network. The authorities sought both to ensure a more even distribution of such sites and to monitor the regularity of their consecration.⁴⁴ The establishment of the parish network, which guaranteed the daily working of ecclesial control, corresponds to a dual evolution: first, a reduction in the distance between habitations and churches or cemeteries⁴⁵ (from the 9th century onward, some regulations even specify a maximum distance between places of worship and people’s residences), a development broadly confirmed by archaeological evidence; second, a slower process of “monumentalisation”

³⁸ Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière*.

³⁹ These ceremonies conferred a form of sacral legitimation upon the king-emperor, the bishops, and the powerful figures who served as their principal agents: see Benz, *Untersuchungen*.

⁴⁰ Lauwers, “Paroisse, paroissiens et territoire;” Patzold, *Presbyter*. On manuals intended for priests, see van Rhijn, “Manuscripts for Local Priests.”

⁴¹ Devroey, *De la grêle et du tonnerre*, 176-8, on the “progressive parochialisation of villages” between the 8th and 12th centuries.

⁴² Zadora-Rio, “The Making of Churchyards and Parish Territories;” Lauwers, “Le cimetière au village;” Lauwers, “Polarisation ecclésiastique.” On local priests: Patzold, and van Rhijn, *Men in the Middle*; Patzold, *Presbyter*.

⁴³ Lauwers, “L’exclusion comme construction,” 267-9, 276; Devroey, *De la grêle et du tonnerre*, 182-3.

⁴⁴ Lauwers, “Polarisation ecclésiastique,” 13.

⁴⁵ On the question of distance, see Cura, Tannier, Leturcq, Zadora-Rio, Lorans, et Rodier, “800-1100. Fixation, polarisation et hiérarchisation.”

(or “petrification”) of sacred sites. Just as the presence of the dead in the soil adjacent to churches reinforced social attachment, so too did the use of stone and masonry in construction increase the fixation of populations around stable sacred poles.⁴⁶

Consideration of the distance between dwellings and places of worship is closely tied to the obligation to attend a “nearby” or “neighbouring” church – an obligation that was all the more crucial in a society in which relations of dependence were established through the regular movements of dependents, who were compelled to perform a wide range of services on the lands of local lords (often the very founders of the churches around which cultivators clustered), as well as through the ability of lords to appear “on the spot” to collect agricultural produce.⁴⁷ Such an organisation, which required proximity between lords and dependents, proved particularly effective when it could rely on a network of churches and cemeteries as fixed and permanent reference points. Travel to places of worship was articulated with the movements required by agricultural labour and transport obligations, as prescribed in the *Admonitio generalis* of 789, which mandated that mobilities linked to the performance of *opera servilia* and *ruralia* be suspended “on the Lord’s Day”, so that “all, from everywhere, gather at the church”.⁴⁸ The alternation between these two forms of locally imposed mobility, the *habitus* they established, and the hierarchy implied by the polarisation of “all” and “everywhere” around the church jointly structured the social order.

This convergence, or complementarity, between production activities and the rituals performed around places of worship helps to explain both the strategic role and the effectiveness of tithe collection, which was closely linked to the distribution of lands and churches. For post-Carolingian populations, tithes constituted the most widespread, continuous, and onerous levy – estimated in many regions at nearly half of the extractable yield – and they remained so until the 18th century.⁴⁹ Their revenues were allocated simultaneously to the construction and maintenance of the place of worship, to the support of the local priest and his hierarchy, to aid for the poor within the community, and, when necessary, to the community as a whole, as well as to all those involved in their collection. An important aspect of this levy was that it was not managed solely by ecclesiastics, but rather by the full range

⁴⁶ On ‘monumentalisation’ between 800–1200, see Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu*, as well as the European Research Council (ERC) project *Petrifying Wealth. The Southern European Shift to Masonry as Collective Investment in Identity, c. 1050–1300*, directed by Ana Rodriguez and Sandro Carocci. Although this project does not focus exclusively on churches, they play an important role in its early phases.

⁴⁷ Since the cultivators were relatively autonomous in the production process, movement and extraction were essential to the structuring of social domination. See Demade, “Le système seigneurial.”

⁴⁸ The *Admonitio* developed prescriptions already attested in the 6th century (in a sermon of Martin de Braga, preserved in the acts of a council held in Orléans in 538).

⁴⁹ Viader, *La dîme*; Lauwers, *La dîme, l’Église*.

of local powers, with the participation of the population – or at least some of its representatives. The collection of tithes, which enabled lords to extend or regularise the scope of their dominion by strengthening their hold over all those attached to a church, was carried out by local elites and by various mediators, notables, and heads of households. To these actors it conferred both social and symbolic authority, as well as potentially substantial income – often surpassing other forms of property – while remaining highly flexible, since tithes were frequently divided, shared, or delegated.⁵⁰

The involvement of multiple social actors in the administration of tithes, together with the local scale of the levy, fostered the acceptance of a system of production, storage, and redistribution of the fruits of the land that extended beyond tithes themselves, for which they served as a kind of paradigm.⁵¹ The example of tithes shows that the ecclesial dimension of social functioning was not reducible to the action of a single group, class, or institution. Buildings, persons, lands, and revenues associated with places of worship were in fact co-managed or shared among lay and ecclesiastical aristocrats, landowners, warriors, and clerics – who often belonged to overlapping social milieus, perhaps since the 5th century.⁵² The management of local churches also involved the communities of inhabitants, whose internal hierarchies directly reflected the roles played by these actors in the administration of sacred matters.⁵³ Despite occasional competition or tension, this arrangement was fully accepted by the authorities; one might even argue that the participation of a broad range of social actors in the *ecclesia* was a necessary condition for the effectiveness of the system.

Whereas at the end of the 8th century, ecclesiastical authorities recognised that “free men” who had “built” churches had the right to dispose of them as they saw fit – including the right to “donate” or “sell” them⁵⁴ – a Roman synod in 826 affirmed that the “builder” of a “monastery” or “oratory” should not be

⁵⁰ On the role of tithe collection in the process of seigneurialisation/domination, see the contributions gathered in the two collective volumes mentioned in the previous note, as well as, earlier, Violante, “Pievi e parrocchie,” and Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*. On the considerable revenue that tithe collection could represent between the 10th and 12th centuries, see Castagnetti, *La pieve rurale*; Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 732-3; Fiore, “Building the ‘feudal revolution’.”

⁵¹ There seems to have been little fundamental challenge to tithe collection – which did not exclude various kinds of more or less active forms of resistance, in the sense understood by Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, whereby cultivators sought to conceal part of their production and reduce the amount of the levy, as suggested by Devroey, *De la grêle et du tonnerre*, 201-3.

⁵² This situation should not be interpreted as the result of “usurpations” by laypeople, as envisaged by the historiography of the 19th and much of the 20th century. The laypeople who controlled the churches had founded and endowed them. As with the tithe (the two are obviously connected), this was a form of functioning that was more ecclesial than ecclesiastical: as emphasize Patzold, and van Rhijn, “The Carolingian local ecclesia,” 536: “neither all churches nor all ecclesiastical land (*res ecclesiasticae*) belonged to ‘the church’; rather, ‘there was much variation in the specific forms of ecclesiastical landownership.’” See also Patzold, *Presbyter*, *passim*.

⁵³ West, “Visions in a Ninth-Century Village;” Lauwers, “Polarisation ecclésiale.”

⁵⁴ According to the Council of Frankfurt of 794, canon 54: Werminghoff, *Concilia aevi Karolini* 1.1, 171.

deprived of their *dominium*.⁵⁵ In Normandy as in central Italy, the term *dominus* thus referred less to a generic lord than to the relationship between an individual and churches and the rights attached to them, a relationship itself described as *dominium*.⁵⁶ The exercise of *dominium* over a place of worship (a *plebs*, rural church, or oratory), which entailed the administration of its tithes and other spiritual rights, thereby served to legitimise local authority.

The consecration of churches was certainly one of the bishop's prerogatives, falling under his power to ordain; however, it did not preclude the *dominium* exercised by founders over sacred buildings, as Archbishop Hincmar of Reims wrote in the mid-9th century: "Nowhere is it established [...] that churches should be handed over by those who built them to the mother church of the bishopric on the pretext that they must be consecrated [...]. Nor is it found that, on the pretext that churches are placed under the power of the bishop, the builders of these churches should be deprived of their *dominium* and of all the marks of respect owed to them".⁵⁷ Hincmar was no doubt alluding to positions defended by other prelates, but he did not endorse them. Places of worship, offerings, tithes, and all levies associated with churches were instead managed by a wide variety of local actors, through negotiations and compromises that gave rise to agreements specifying or regularising situations of shared or mixed *dominium*.⁵⁸ Indeed, many documents recording transfers of property – such as the so-called acts of precarious tenure or, in Italy, the *livelli* – attest to divisions and overlapping rights, whether temporary or permanent, concluded between clerics and laypeople.

5. From the 11th to the 13th century: an ecclesiastical revolution?

Many of these aspects seem to change from the mid-11th century onward. As we have seen, *encellulement*, once presented as a "revolution", is better understood as the culmination or crystallisation of a dynamic that had begun several centuries earlier. In recent French historiography, however, another social transformation tends to replace this seigneurial or feudal "revolution": known since the 19th century as the "Gregorian Reform" (or, in the German

⁵⁵ Council of Rome of 826, canon 21: *De monasterio vel oratorio, quod a proprio domino soli aedificatum est. Monasterium vel oratorium canonicae constructum a dominio constructoris invito non auferatur [...]* (Werminghoff, *Concilia aevi Karolini* 1.2, 576).

⁵⁶ Combalbert, 'Sauf le droit épiscopal', *passim*; Fiore, "Building the 'feudal revolution'."

⁵⁷ *Et nusquam inuenitur [...] statutum, ut tradantur ecclesie ab aedificatoribus suis episcopi matri ecclesiae pro hoc, ut debeant consecrari [...]; neque inuenitur, ut ita sub potestate episcopi maneant, quatenus aedificatores ipsarum ecclesiarum dominii nomine et funditus debito earum priuentur obsequio* (Hincmar de Reims, *Collectio de ecclesiis*, 86-7).

⁵⁸ The agreement reached by the *domini* was recorded in writing, in the form of a charter signed by witnesses: Hincmar of Reims, *Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis*, 85-6, which cites several letters from Gregory the Great demanding that donations made prior to the consecration of places of worship be entered into the "municipal registers".

context, the “Investiture Contest”), this transformation did indeed affect the ecclesiastical institution between the mid-11th and mid-12th centuries.⁵⁹

It should be emphasised at the outset that the current use of the term “Gregorian Reform” does not imply a revival of the connotations it acquired in France and elsewhere following its dissemination by Augustin Fliche in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁰ Two main points distinguish our approach from this Catholic historiographical tradition. First, as many Italian medievalists have repeatedly emphasised, the new form taken by the ecclesiastical institution in the 11th and 12th centuries did not result from a coherent plan or program continuously defined and implemented by successive popes – foremost among them Gregory VII – according to a long-matured strategy.⁶¹ Rather, it was the outcome of what Violante described as a “progressive synthesis of opposing ideas and structures”,⁶² referring to a “plurality of reformist orientations”, in the words of Nicolangelo d’Acunto,⁶³ whose effects of which converged. Nevertheless, these effects have indeed been characterised by several specialists of medieval Italy as a “revolution”,⁶⁴ in line with suggestions already advanced by Harold Berman and Robert Moore, who saw in the transformations of the Church the “first European revolution”.⁶⁵ More importantly, today it is necessary to abandon the moralistic and anachronistic vision of the “liberation” of a Church supposedly held captive by powerful laypeople and constrained in its religious missions. In reality, the clerical hierarchy had never been truly separated from secular powers: the *ecclesia*, essential to social production and reproduction, was the concern of all, as we have seen in the preceding pages. As early as 1936, Gerd Tellenbach suggested that, in the second half of the 11th century, the popes and their allies broke with a traditional (or imperial) conception of the Church – one that closely associated the secular and the clerical, powerful laypeople and ecclesiastics – in favour of a papal conception based on a separation of the sacred and the profane,⁶⁶ unless one interprets

⁵⁹ The question of investitures and the characterisation of the “Gregorian” crisis are the subject of a chapter in this volume by Mauro Ronzani, which discusses, in particular, German historiography. I also refer the reader to Lauwers, “Qu’est-ce que la réforme grégorienne?”

⁶⁰ Fliche, *La réforme grégorienne*.

⁶¹ The challenge to a “Gregorian” program dates back at least to Capitani, “Esiste un’età gregoriana?”

⁶² Violante, “La réforme ecclésiastique.”

⁶³ D’Acunto, *La lotta per le investiture*, 11. See also D’Acunto, “Le riforme della Chiesa.” If the adjective “Gregorian” can be considered improper or limiting, the notion of reform is hardly any more adequate, as shown by Perreaux, “Après la Chute.”

⁶⁴ Cantarella, *Il sole e la luna*; D’Acunto, *La lotta per le investiture*, passim, and D’Acunto, “Le riforme della Chiesa,” 464, 467–70; Wickham, *Roma medievale*, 54, and Wickham, “Nuovi approcci ai cambiamenti,” 17, who suggests that the actions of the popes from the 11th century onward are reminiscent of “the early years of the Russian Revolution,” when a small group of people “truly believed they were capable of creating a new world”.

⁶⁵ Berman, *Law and Revolution*; Moore, *The First European Revolution*; Mazel, “Une ‘révolution totale’?”

⁶⁶ Tellenbach, *‘Libertas’*.

this development as a form of appropriation by the popes alone of imperial ideology, law, and rites.⁶⁷

In any case, a new form of organisation of the clergy emerged, which appears to contrast sharply with the workings of the previous period, even though the ecclesiastical hierarchy was appropriating elements of the representational system that had developed over the preceding centuries. As Marc Bloch wrote of the “Gregorian Reform”:

a group of monks and prelates revolutionised the Church. These men, whose actions were so powerful, were not in any way within the realm of the inventors’ thought. The theses they repeated tirelessly had been produced by others before them; their originality lay elsewhere: in that relentless logical sense which compelled them to push to the extremes the application of principles they had received from tradition [...], especially in the heroic effort they made to transform into practical rules of conduct ideas, most of which were as old as Christianity, but which for many centuries had been accustomed to remain confined to the harmless world of theological or moral treatises.⁶⁸

One might say that the transformations that unfolded from the mid-11th century onward correspond to the constitution of a new ecclesial field identified with the clergy. Like Marc Bloch and many others, Florian Mazel interprets this transformation as a “revolution”, but above all as a kind of “total social fact”, to use Marcel Mauss’s expression for a phenomenon that imposes itself upon all social actors through the totality of practices and relationships that make up a society.⁶⁹ Precisely because of the ecclesial dimension of social functioning, the process of hierarchisation and institutionalisation in the 11th and 12th centuries had far-reaching repercussions, that I will attempt to outline.

6. From the 11th to the 13th century: institutionalisation and territorialisation of the ecclesial network

What are the signs of this turning point in the history of the *ecclesia*? The establishment of a hierarchical administration governed by the sovereign pontiff, grounded in a new deployment of law,⁷⁰ brought about a reorganisation of the elements of the ecclesial system and of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which became increasingly distinct from other social bodies. The growing juridical definition of the *ecclesia* did not, of course, erase the ritual and sacred dimensions of social functioning; rather, these could in principle be exercised

⁶⁷ D’Acunto, *La lotta per le investiture*.

⁶⁸ Bloch, *Les Rois thaumaturges*, 120.

⁶⁹ See, among others, Mazel, “Pour une redéfinition de la réforme ‘grégorienne’;” Mazel, “Une ‘révolution totale’ ?;” Mazel, “La réforme grégorienne.” The notion of revolution should be understood here not in terms of the suddenness of the change, but in terms of the significance of its social implications.

⁷⁰ On the reinvention of law and its new uses, see in this volume the contribution of Emanuele Conte and Luca Loschiavo.

only by the specialists of the sacred. From the mid-11th century onward, for example, popes frequently resorted to the ritual of church consecration, which – diverting it from its imperial uses – they made a prerogative of their own authority. During the journeys they undertook throughout Christendom, sovereign pontiffs performed numerous consecrations of churches (and cemeteries), leaving their mark on the landscape.⁷¹ At the same time, developments in eucharistic doctrine made the local priest, as dispenser of the sacraments, the sole intermediary between this world and the beyond, as well as a mediator within his community. These changes coincided with shifts in the conditions of clerical recruitment, as clerics were more sharply distinguished from laypeople by their way of life and relationship to the flesh.⁷² The “separate” status of the clergy, sacred things, and sacred places thus reinforced their association with the spiritual pole.⁷³

It was also between the 11th and 13th centuries that the process was completed across the West whereby all the faithful were attached to a fixed church – their church – within a territorialised parish framework, itself integrated into an increasingly well-defined diocese.⁷⁴ In Italy, the *plebes* were subdivided into parishes, and the *parrochia* received a clear definition from canonists: by the mid-13th century, Henry of Susa (*Hostiensis*) described it as a bounded territory inhabited by the faithful who paid tithes and brought their dead to the church.⁷⁵ Historians have often conflated place with territory, the *dominatus loci* with territorial lordship, and the church with the parish.⁷⁶ It is important, however, to distinguish between two forms of spatial reality and to note that, between the 11th and 13th centuries, a process of territorialisation completed the polarisation that had characterised the Early Middle Ages. Dependents were increasingly assigned to a territory with defined boundaries, and parish territory became the primary reference point for socio-spatial organisation. A lexical survey conducted on a European scale by Nicolas Perreaux, drawing on several hundred thousand charters written between the mid-11th and early 13th centuries, clearly shows the development of the overall system of spatial

⁷¹ Méhu, “Réflexions pour une analyse structurelle.”

⁷² Frassetto, *Medieval Purity*; Fournier, Le Blévec, et Théry, *L'Église et la chair*; Rosé, *Le mariage des prêtres*. On the opposition between the carnal and the spiritual – which first emerged in the 4th and 5th centuries, but became clearly associated with social groups from the 11th century onward – see Guerreau-Jalabert, “*Spiritus et caro*,” and Guerreau-Jalabert, “Occident médiéval et pensée analogique.” On the transformation of the image of the priest, see Laudage, *Priesterbild*; Rauwel, “Les hiérarchies internes.”

⁷³ On the process of materialisation/spiritualisation of material goods, see Miramon, “*Spiritualia et temporalia*,” Henriot, “*Corporalia et spiritualia*.”

⁷⁴ Lauwers, “Paroisse, paroissiens et territoire,” Lauwers, “Territorium non facere diocesim,” Zadora-Rio, *Des paroisses de Touraine*; Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*; and Mazel, *L'évêque et le territoire*. On dedication as the establishment of a *locus* linked to a territorialised and hierarchised community, see Méhu, “L'onction, le voile et la vision.”

⁷⁵ On the village-parish-cemetery-community structure, see Lauwers, “Le cimetière au village,” Provero, “Cemeteries and Villages,” Lauwers, “Polarisation ecclésiale.”

⁷⁶ This confusion, present in the work of Violante, can be found, for example, in most of the contributions to the volume *Profili del secolo XI*.

reference, characterised by “a very clear assertion of all ecclesial structures, which literally replaced the old spatial markers”: *parrochia*, as well as *episcopatus* and *diocesis*, articulated with *feodum*, *dominium*, and *territorium*.⁷⁷ In short, the *ecclesia* was simultaneously strengthened, institutionalised, and territorialised.

The collection of tithes, which all the faithful were obliged to pay everywhere, certainly contributed to the territorialisation of the parish. Within this new framework, however, the levy itself was transformed. According to the principles disseminated from the second half of the 11th century and throughout the 12th century, tithes – whose ecclesial dimension had hitherto in no way prevented, and had often even facilitated, appropriation by a wide range of social actors, both lay and clerical – were now to be collected solely by and for the clergy. Relayed through episcopal legislation, this requirement was mitigated by various arrangements, yet it appears that lay lords largely lost control over this substantial and flexible source of income. The same held true for other sacred things and places that they had previously controlled and often administered: it was now “(no longer) permitted for laypeople to exercise *dominium* over a church”, and “the builder of a church, after having dedicated it to God and had it consecrated, could no longer have any rights over it”.⁷⁸ Didier Panfili has shown that these prohibitions compelled secular lords to abandon revenues derived from tithes and to impose on cultivators other forms of proportionate levies unrelated to churches.⁷⁹ Alessio Fiore has recently suggested that the partial loss of control over churches and tithes was one of the factors behind the emergence of a new type of power exercised by castle lords – one less grounded in the control of churches, tithes, and agricultural produce than in armed protection and the exercise of justice within a territory.⁸⁰ In this context, the fortified sites of previous generations were replaced by a new type of castle, more abundant, more massive, and detached from cultic elements.⁸¹ Conversely, ecclesiastical authorities sought to consolidate their power through exclusive control over sacred things and places.

In 1215, the prelates gathered at the Fourth Lateran Council thus asserted – drawing on a formula of Pope Innocent III – their “general” or “universal” *dominium*, by virtue of which it fell to them to collect the tithe in all parishes.⁸² They thus claim a monopolistic control over ecclesial *dominium*, made universal in the image of the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy. I do not overlook the fact that the *dominium* explicitly claimed by the pope and prelates at this time – referring to a category of Roman law reappropriated by canonists of

⁷⁷ Perreaux, “Des structures domaniales aux territoires ecclésiaux ?,” 71-7.

⁷⁸ See Deusdedit, *Libellus contra invasores* and Placide de Nonantola, *Liber de honore ecclesie*, along with Landau, “Das *Dominium* der Laien an Kirchen.”

⁷⁹ Panfili, “La dîme;” Panfili, “Transferts d’églises.” See, more generally, several chapters of Lauwers, *La dîme, l’Église*.

⁸⁰ Fiore, “Building the ‘feudal revolution.’”

⁸¹ Del Tredici, “Castelli, chiese, mutazione signorile.”

⁸² For an overview, see Lauwers, et Mazel, “Le *dominium* universel de l’Église.”

the late 12th and early 13th centuries – does not operate on the same level as the historiographical concept of ecclesial *dominium* employed in the preceding pages. Yet it is precisely the assertion, by the 12th- and 13th-century ecclesiastical authorities of the “universal *dominium* of God” (and the Church that represents him) – according to a usage of the expression that differs from most earlier documentary occurrences of the term – that may justify the historiographical notion of ecclesial *dominium*. One might even say that this notion is best grasped at the moment of its transformation.⁸³

These were not merely declarative statements. Between the late 11th and the early 13th centuries, one can indeed observe a dual phenomenon: on the one hand, a separation or redistribution between ecclesiastical and secular elites – whose modes of exercising power, previously often intertwined, became increasingly distinct – and, on the other, a territorialisation of their respective spheres of domination.⁸⁴ Monastic lords were probably the first to seek to transform their possessions, sometimes with papal support, into compact and sacralised territories, modelled on the “sacred ban” and on the various circles of domination delineated around the monastery of Cluny, the lordship of Saint-Gilles, or the areas traversed by the *bancroix* processions in the vicinity of religious establishments in the Rhineland regions.⁸⁵ Moreover, from the 12th century onward, in Flanders as well as in central and northern Italy, castles and churches – which had developed jointly, particularly since the late 9th and 10th centuries, often on the same sites and within the same enclosures – were sometimes materially dissociated. The reorganisation of earlier structures and new construction resulted in a topographical separation between the fortified loci of secular power and the ecclesial network of sacred sites.⁸⁶

The domination exercised over the men and women living on ecclesiastical lands was likewise distinguished from that imposed by castle lords. From the second half of the 11th century onward, numerous documents produced at the initiative of monks and clerics denounce the “bad customs” violently imposed by lay lords and, conversely, praise the moderation of ecclesiastical lordships, portrayed as less burdensome for their dependents. Around 1090, the inhabitants of Cliviano, near Rieti, who had previously lived under the lordship of the abbots of Farfa, addressed the religious community to complain about the lay lords who, following an exchange of lands, had imposed themselves

⁸³ Lauwers, “Qu’est-ce que le *dominium* ecclésial?,” 139–40.

⁸⁴ Mazel, “La seigneurie territoriale.” The current use of this term in French historiography does not exactly correspond to the *signoria territoriale* of Italian medievalists, but there is nonetheless a convergence.

⁸⁵ Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*; Méhu, *Paix et communautés*, 133–93; Mazel, “Lieu sacré;” Devroey, *De la grêle et du tonnerre*, 215–7.

⁸⁶ Lauwers, “Le château, le cimetière et l’île;” Del Tredici, “Castelli, chiese, mutazione signorile;” Fiore, “Building the ‘feudal revolution’;” Bianchi, “Castles and churches.”

locally: “these lords take everything, whereas you demanded little”.⁸⁷ In the middle of the following century, Abbot Peter of Cluny similarly contrasted the manner in which “secular masters treat their peasants, their serfs and female serfs”, demanding from them “countless services” and thereby forcing them to attempt to “flee to another place”, with the conduct of monks, who “resort to the services of peasants only for their subsistence”, “legitimately and according to what is owed to them”. In keeping with a principle of redistribution, he added that “when [the monks] see that [their dependents] lack something, they even take from their own goods to assist them”.⁸⁸ These two texts show – contrary to what their authors sought to suggest – that monastic lordship and secular power operated in fundamentally similar ways, instituting local (and often fluctuating) relations of dependency based on control over land and people. At the same time, they reveal a process of progressive differentiation between these forms of domination, based on a distinction between good and bad servitude, the former being favoured by the clergy, who were otherwise considered to be *servi Dei*.

The transformation of the rules governing social functioning by an increasingly autonomous ecclesiastical institution led to a recomposition of dominant groups that was not without consequences for the dominated.⁸⁹ The formalisation and territorialisation of domination contributed to intensifying pressure on dependents;⁹⁰ this development was moreover accompanied by the implementation, by ecclesiastical authorities, of procedures intended to “order” society and to “exclude” those who challenged the role of clerics and, more generally, the powers that be. Accusations of “heresy” thus came to target challengers of many kinds.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the assertion of the Church’s

⁸⁷ *...eo quo seniores tollunt omnia et vos modicum tenetis* (Gregorio di Catino, *Il Regesto di Farfa*, quoted in Fiore, “Building the ‘feudal revolution’”).

⁸⁸ Quoted in Lauwers, *Labeur, production, économie monastique*, 268-9, 275-9.

⁸⁹ Whereas Wickham, “Nuovi approcci ai cambiamenti,” 19, distinguishes socio-economic, political, and religious registers, and considers that *la ‘rivoluzione’ nella chiesa* was *il risultato diretto della ‘rivoluzione signorile’*, I instead see a structural unity among the different domains that we are accustomed to distinguishing, and I regard transformations of the *ecclesia* as a driving force behind changes within dominant groups rather than as an effect.

⁹⁰ There is a substantial body of scholarship on this subject, particularly in Italy: see, most recently, Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*, as well as Mazel, “La seigneurie territoriale,” 371-2.

⁹¹ I am referring to Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner et exclure*. The coincidence between accusations of heresy and the strengthening of ecclesiastical institutions, noted by Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, has been explored in the collective volume Zerner, *Inventer l’hérésie?* One of the most recent syntheses drawing on this perspective is Moore, *The War on Heresy*. Contrary to what some misguided critiques suggest, the problem is not whether “heresy” and “heretics” ‘existed’ – a question that makes no sense – but rather to identify who the persons, ideas, or practices designated by these terms actually were. Except in exceptional cases, in the Middle Ages heresy was never self-proclaimed; it always resulted from an operation emanating from institutions or authorities concerned with disqualification. Accusations of heresy could be attached (i) to individuals or groups bearing propositions or doctrines alternative to those of the dominant institution; (ii) to protest movements that rejected clerical mediation or the authority of the powers that be; (iii) to any type of opponents whom the accusation of heresy made it possible to eliminate. In all these cases, there is a power relationship: the accusation and the

omnipotence did not translate into an unchecked expansion of clerical power, as evidenced by the many accommodations that preserved older balances or by the development, for lay people, of other ways of being in the *ecclesia*. Is it relevant to identify a shift in the social system between the 11th and the early 13th centuries, or to posit a sharp division between a “first” and a “second Middle Ages” on either side of the “Gregorian Reform?”⁹² The process of territorialisation can in fact be understood as a further development – or even as the ultimate form – of the polarisation initiated in earlier centuries, and the differentiation that emerged between lay and ecclesiastical dominants did not fundamentally call into question the model of *dominium*, even if its forms and its actors were partly transformed.⁹³ The idea of an ecclesiastical revolution is certainly suggestive, insofar as it draws attention to a transformation of paramount importance within the clergy, one that had multiple short- and long-term consequences, primarily within the dominant class. Yet it does not fully account for the overall dynamics of ecclesial *dominium*, in light of which the period stretching from Late Antiquity to the 18th century may be seen as governed by a single social logic.

Finally, one must consider the subsequent stages of this continuous history. Other “crises” and “innovations”, to use Jacques Le Goff’s terms, punctuated its course, such as the Protestant Reformation, which notably challenged the cult of relics and the care of the dead – two practices that had fostered polarisation around places of worship – and rejected the forms of clerical promotion implemented from the second half of the 11th century onward.⁹⁴ Although opposed to the institutionalisation of the Catholic Church, the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers nonetheless fits within a logic that may still be described as ecclesial, insofar as society as a whole continued to be identified with the *ecclesia*.⁹⁵ Moreover, the Reformation proceeded through numerous compromises: the social system polarised around churches and burial practices was only marginally disrupted before the 18th and 19th centuries, when the dead, removed from churches, were relegated to the peripheries of Western cities. Nevertheless, the violent religious conflicts that ravaged parts of Europe from the 16th century onward must be seen as the

treatment of heretics emanate from a dominant power, or from one seeking to construct a form of domination. Finally, it should be emphasised that, most often, the available documentation – emanating from the accusers – does not allow one to decide between these different scenarios.

⁹² The notions of a “first” and a “second Middle Ages” have become very common in France, among historians as well as archaeologists.

⁹³ No more so than its ecclesiastical jurisdiction: village identity, more easily identifiable in documents from the 13th century onward, seems to follow the rooting of the church and the constitution of parish territory. The first references to “communes” and to communal leaders systematically associate them with their church. See Lauwers, “Polarisation ecclésiastique.”

⁹⁴ Grosse, “Révolution ou transition?”

⁹⁵ One may say that the identification of *ecclesia* and society took two opposing forms: the Catholic one, since the “Gregorian Reform,” involving the envelopment of society by the ecclesiastical institution; and the Protestant one, which involved a society characterised by the priesthood of all believers.

upheavals that accompanied a gradual change in society, the end of the Long Middle Ages.

7. *Conclusion: on ecclesial transformation and social change*

Rather than adopting the various narratives of a passage from one world to another around the 11th century (1000 or 1100), one may prefer to recognise a dynamic intrinsic to the structures of the long Middle Ages. As shown by the process of polarisation – followed by territorialisation – associated with churches, a process that is now increasingly well documented, the *ecclesia* constituted one of the principal driving forces of this development. From this long-term perspective, the High Middle Ages appear as a distinctive stage: a moment of culmination or crystallisation marked by unprecedented forms of institutionalisation and by a heightened self-awareness of the clergy. These developments broke with the organisation of earlier centuries while at the same time perpetuating the *habitus* of which the *ecclesia* had long been the matrix. This transformation of the clergy altered modes of power and relations within dominant groups, but it scarcely transformed relations between the dominating and the dominated, which remained, until the 18th century, embedded in the logic of ecclesial *dominium*.

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Michel Lauwers
Université Côte d'Azur
Michel.Lauwers@univ-cotedazur.fr
ORCID 0000-0001-9330-7412

II

Forms of Political Power

**“Something with which we still desire to live”.
Forms of resistance and royal power
in the *Regnum italicum*
between the 10th and 11th centuries**

by Giuseppe Albertoni

This essay aims to contribute to the reopening of the debate on the emergence of new forms of political and social resistance as a historical turning point that occurred roughly between 950 and 1030. It begins by recalling the closing pages of Bloch's *Société féodale*, devoted to the notion of a 'right of resistance', and reconstructs its historiographical background. In light of the renewed framework of feudalism studies following the publication of Susan Reynolds' *Feud and Vassals*, the essay then proposes to apply Bloch's insight to the role of the *milites* in the society of the *Regnum italicum* from the mid-10th century to the first decades of the 11th, highlighting the role of horizontal ties.

Questo saggio intende contribuire alla riapertura del dibattito sull'emergere di nuove forme di resistenza politica e sociale come svolta storica collocabile approssimativamente tra il 950 e il 1030. Esso prende avvio richiamando le pagine conclusive della *Société féodale* di Bloch, dedicate alla nozione di 'diritto di resistenza', e ne ricostruisce il retroterra storiografico. Alla luce del rinnovato quadro degli studi sul feudalesimo successivo alla pubblicazione di *Fiefs and Vassals* di Susan Reynolds, il saggio propone quindi di applicare l'intuizione di Bloch al ruolo dei *milites* nella società del *Regnum italicum* dalla metà del X secolo ai primi decenni dell'XI, mettendo in evidenza l'importanza dei legami orizzontali.

Middle Ages, 10th-11th centuries, Italy, Lombardy, political conflicts, right of resistance, vassals, Marc Bloch.

Giuseppe Albertoni, University of Trento, Italy, giuseppe.albertoni@unitn.it, 0000-0001-6670-7509

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Giuseppe Albertoni, "Something with which we still desire to live". *Forms of resistance and royal power in the Regnum italicum between the 10th and 11th centuries*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-1076-8.08, in Alberto Cotza, Giuseppe Petralia (edited by), *In Search of the High Middle Ages. Change and Continuity in 11th-12th-century Italy*, pp. 141-163, 2026, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-1076-8, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-1076-8

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1. *A medieval origin of the right of resistance?*

One of the most stimulating – yet also most problematic and, in some respects, least discussed – parts of Marc Bloch's *La société féodale* is the short concluding section entitled *L'idée guerrière et l'idée de contrat*.¹ Here, Bloch engages with the debate on the 'right of resistance' that emerged in the 1920s in response to an important monograph published by the German medievalist Fritz Kern in 1914, titled *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht im früheren Mittelalter*.² Bloch had already devoted a detailed review to this volume in 1921, highlighting its contents and innovative aspects. He began by reconstructing the parallel development of two 'political ideas' conceived in the Middle Ages and established in the modern age: the divine right of kings and the right of resistance of peoples.³ It was precisely because of these innovative aspects that, according to Bloch, Kern's book "deserves to be known, thought about and discussed", despite the serious limitations of its approach – limitations shaped by its attempt to trace medieval political innovations back to a supposed 'Germanic tradition'.⁴ "It was once said", Bloch wrote at the conclusion of the review "that the freedoms of modern Europe emerged from the 'forests of Germany'. Kern no longer claims this, but he cannot resign himself to not believing it: the old illusions still have the upper hand over honest minds. When will people finally decide to study the Middle Ages for what they deserve to be studied: for themselves?"⁵

Bloch's critique of Kern clearly exposed the fundamental contradictions of *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht* and its reliance on concepts rooted in the 'poisoned landscape' of 19th-century nationalist historiography.⁶ Foremost among these was the very concept of a 'right of resistance' (*Widerstandsrecht*), which Kern claimed could be traced back to a medieval conception of the state that he, unsurprisingly, described as 'Germanic'.⁷ Equally 'Germanic', in Kern's view, was the concept of 'mutual loyalty' (*wechselseitige*

¹ Bloch, *La société féodale*, 617-9.

² Kern, *Gottesgnadentum*.

³ Bloch, "Fr. Kern, *Gottesgnadentum*."

⁴ Bloch, 248: *Il mérite d'être connu, médité et discuté*.

⁵ Bloch, 253: *Un disait jadis que les libertés de l'Europe moderne étaient sorties des 'forêts de la Germanie'. M. Kern ne le dit plus; mais il ne peut se résigner à ne plus le croire: tant les vieux mirages ont encore d'empire sur les plus probes esprits. Quand donc, d'un accord unanime, se décidera-t-on à étudier le moyen âge comme il mérite de l'être: en lui-même?*

⁶ On the concept of 'poisoned landscape' in this context, see Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 15-9.

⁷ See Kern, *Gottesgnadentum*, 169, where he states: *Das Widerstandsrecht ist ein integrierender Bestandteil der germanisch-mittelalterlichen Staatsanschauung gewesen*.

Treue), which he regarded as the basis of feudal law – understood in turn as an essentially Germanic institution.⁸

With these considerations, Kern entered the historiographical debate on the nature of Germanic law – and, within it, of feudal law – which had engaged several leading German medievalists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁹ He returned to these issues only sporadically in the following decades, most notably with the English translation and subsequent reissues of his book in 1939 and 1954.¹⁰ By then, however, his scholarly interests had shifted towards a form of universal history that might be described as 'transnational'.¹¹ Politically, however, the concept of resistance remained significant for him, as it had been for Marc Bloch.¹² In Kern's case, however, this resistance was not without ambiguity: it was directed against Nazism, yet grounded in positions that could be traced back to conservative nationalism.¹³

Despite these political differences, the long-distance dialogue with Bloch remained open.¹⁴ It is worth recalling in this context that Bloch's interest in feudalism and vassalage had, from the outset, much to do with the space they allowed for forms of 'resistance'. It is surely no coincidence that one of his earliest scholarly essays – published when he was only twenty-six – was devoted to a still often neglected aspect of the feudal bond: the breakdown of homage, and thus the possibility for a vassal to abandon his 'unworthy' or 'criminal' lord.¹⁵ Bloch analysed numerous cases reported in historical-narrative sources from the 12th and 13th centuries, beginning with a central episode in a text written in the early 12th century by Galbert of Bruges, a notary and priest of the collegiate church of St Donatian in Bruges. Gilbert was deeply shaken by the dramatic assassination of the Count of Flanders, Charles the Good, which took place in his church in March 1127.¹⁶ His account is well known to scholars of 'feudalism' because it describes how the new count, William Clitus, sought to secure control over his county by receiving the homage of his subjects in

⁸ Kern, 177 and 284. For an effective framing of the issue, see Ryan, "Feudal Obligation," 55-6.

⁹ See Oexle, "Feudalismus."

¹⁰ Kern, *Kingship and Law*; Kern, *Gottesgnadentum*.

¹¹ For an initial overview of Kern and his work, see Valjavec, "Fritz Kern" – one of the most comprehensive obituaries published at his death – and Hallman, "Kern, Fritz." For a more detailed reconstruction, see Defrance, Pfeil, "Ein Nationalist," 21.

¹² Regarding the centrality of the concept of resistance in Bloch's biography and research, Geremek's "Marc Bloch" remains fundamental.

¹³ Defrance, Pfeil, "Ein Nationalist," 23-5.

¹⁴ See, in this regard, Defrance, Pfeil, "Ein Nationalist," 21-2, who recall Kern's positive impression of Bloch's presentation at the International Congress of Historical Sciences held in Oslo in 1928. A few years later, Kern contacted Bloch and proposed that they write a 'handbook' of Franco-German history together, though the project never came to fruition. Their paths subsequently diverged, yet – as Defrance, Pfeil, "Ein Nationalist," 32, remind us – the news of Bloch's execution by the Nazis 'traumatised' Kern.

¹⁵ Bloch, "Les formes." On the context in which Bloch drafted this essay, and on its subsequent reworking in 1921, see Le Goff, "Le rituel symbolique," 345-7; Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 45; and Arcangeli, *La storia*, 129, n. 86.

¹⁶ Bloch, "Les formes," 1909-2 and Galbertus, *De multro*.

a ceremony long regarded as the most complete and detailed account of the 'feudal system'.¹⁷ But it was not this supposed system that chiefly interested Marc Bloch, at least in this context.

In fact, contrary to the opinion of many 20th-century scholars, it was another episode narrated by Galbert that drew Bloch's attention: the conflict between William Clitus and one of his vassals, Iwan d'Alost, who – together with others – believed that the new count had failed to honour his commitments.¹⁸ Offended by this accusation, William sought to sever the bond with his vassal in order to challenge him to a duel. Galbert describes this break with the verb *exfestucare*, which refers to the public gesture of throwing a twig to symbolically end a relationship.¹⁹ Iwan d'Alost opposed this solution, however, and, together with his allies, broke off relations with the count by *exfestucatio*.

This is, of course, not the place to elaborate on these and other cases examined by Marc Bloch in his 1912 essay, in which he analysed various episodes of resistance and vassal revolt that can be traced back to the rite of *exfestucatio*, which he understood as *une véritable cérémonie, qu'il n'est pas simplement une expression proverbial et imagée*.²⁰ From our perspective, it is important to remember that, for Marc Bloch, this was a ritualised form of relationship-breaking that, in rare instances, left a trace of itself, but which in any case revealed the latent tension inherent in the vassalage bond – a tension that Bloch 'intuited' yet which has been rarely explored in depth in the extensive literature devoted to 'feudalism'.

Jacques Le Goff was already fully aware of this almost fifty years ago, and in a famous lecture delivered in Spoleto in 1977 on the symbolic ritual of vassalage, he reconstructed the asymmetry between the rites of entering into vassalage and those of breaking it, noticing that each symbolic moment of the former did not correspond to the equivalent moment of the latter.²¹ Le Goff also recalled – this time in the preface to the new edition of *Le rois thaumaturges* – that it was precisely this interest in such questions that led Marc Bloch to turn to German historians, then *ouvert à l'ethnographie et au comparatisme*, as opposed to almost all French historians and historians of medieval law.²² It is no coincidence that Bloch's essay on the breaking of the vassal bond was accompanied by a brief but significant appendix, in which he addressed the criticism of the German historian and jurist Karl von Amira. In a book that was widely discussed at the time, *Der Stab in der germanischen Rechssymbolik*, von Amira had criticised another German scholar, Ernst von Moeller, who in an equally famous essay had argued that *exfestucatio*

¹⁷ For an up-to-date analysis of Galbert's text and its political context, see Feller, *L'assassinat* and Depreux, "Lehnrechtliche Symbolhandlungen." With regard to the role played by Galbert's text in defining the paradigm of the 'feudal system', see Albertoni, *Vassalli*, 34-6 and 184-9.

¹⁸ Bloch, "Les formes," 190-1 and Le Goff, "Le rituel," 347.

¹⁹ For the 'classical' definition of *exfestucatio*, see Ganshof, *Qu'est-ce que*, 160-1.

²⁰ Bloch, "Les formes," 196.

²¹ Le Goff, "Le rituel," 347.

²² Le Goff, "Preface," III.

could be traced back to a broader legal practice: the 'breaking of a stick'. This gesture, von Moeller claimed, symbolically marked the rupture of any 'legal community' (*Rechtsgemeinschaft*).²³ Bloch rejected this reconstruction, both on the basis of von Amira's thorough research and on the important methodological principle that, in ritual forms, one must distinguish between the similarity of a ritual from its direct descent.²⁴

In the case of *exfestucatio*, as in many other aspects of 'feudalism', Bloch thus always maintained an ongoing dialogue with German medievalists, some of whom he had met during his stay in Wilhelmine Germany – in Berlin and Leipzig, between 1908 and 1909.²⁵ At present, however, it is unclear whether he met Fritz Kern personally at that time, although he had already encountered him in 1902, when the young German historian spent a short research period in Paris with the assistance of Jean de Pange.²⁶ Certainly, Kern's *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht*, together with a 1911 monograph on royal coronation by another German medievalist, Hans Schreuer,²⁷ were among the works that most prompted Bloch to reflect on kingship and to write *Les rois thaumaturges*. In some ways, this study can be seen as a dialogue with Kern's work, which Bloch repeatedly cites in the notes and praised as a "beautiful book" to which "one always turns with profit".²⁸ This dual attitude of criticism and admiration towards Kern's work reemerges in the final pages of *La société féodale*, where Bloch emphasises that, in the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the transfer of vassalage from the level of individual relations to that of political relations brought about a structural political transformation. From this development, in many ways, the modern concept of democracy would ultimately be derived: *Dans cet accent – he wrote – mis sur l'idée d'une convention, capable de lier les pouvoirs, réside l'originalité de notre féodalité à nous*.²⁹

²³ Bloch, "La rupture," 207-9; von Amira, *Der Stab*; von Moeller, "Die Rechtssitte."

²⁴ Bloch, "La rupture," 209: *Mais je ne pense pas non plus qu'il soit possible de l'appuyer sur aucune preuve solide: peut-être y a-t-il d'un rite à l'autre, non pas filiation, mais simplement similitude*. For an initial contextualisation of Bloch's reception of von Amira and von Moeller, see Le Goff, "Préface," III; Arcangeli, *La storia*, 134-5.

²⁵ For an initial overview of this period, see Raulff, *Ein Historiker*, 167-8. Raulff recalls how Bloch spent part of his *Deutschlandjahr* in Leipzig, where he came into contact in particular with the circles that gravitated around Karl Lamprecht, and part of it in Berlin with the historian and theologian Adolf von Harnack. For more on Bloch's year in Germany, see Mastrogregori, *Introduzione*, 23-4 and Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 37.

²⁶ Defrance, Pfeil, "Ein Nationalist," 21. Concerning Kern's activities during the period when Bloch was in Germany, see Valjavec, "Fritz Kern," 491, who recalls that Kern graduated from Berlin in 1906 with Michael Tangl and moved to Kiel in 1909. He began teaching at Kiel University in 1913.

²⁷ Schreuer, *Die rechtlichen Grundgedanken*. On the role of Schreuer's book in the conception of *Les rois thaumaturges*, see Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 47-8. For Bloch's admiration and criticism of *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht*, see the remarks in Arcangeli, *La storia*, 134-6.

²⁸ See, for example, Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges*, 54, n. 1 or 120, n. 1.

²⁹ Bloch, *La société féodale*, 618-9.

For Bloch, the complete transfer of vassalage to the level of political relations contributed to the emergence of a new contractual element in political action, with significant consequences for relations between the aristocracy and the king. According to him, this process fully emerged in the second half of the 11th century, within the context of what he called the *protestation grégorienne contre le mythe de la royauté surnaturelle et sacrée*.³⁰ It was in this context, Bloch argued, that the supporters of this protest began to invoke *parmi les justifications de la déchéance à laquelle ils condamnaient le mauvais prince, le droit universellement reconnu au vassal d'abandonner le mauvais seigneur*.³¹ Particularly significant from this point of view were the words of intellectuals associated with the ecclesiastical reform movement, such as Manegold of Lautenbach, who was apparently the first to express clearly and decisively the idea of a contract binding the sovereign to his people *as le porcher au maître qui l'emploie*.³²

It is precisely the reference to Manegold of Lautenbach and the quotation of this sentence from the *Liber ad Gebehardum*, which the Alsatian monk wrote in defence of Gregory VII and his reform,³³ that reveal the close relationship between Bloch's reconstruction in the final pages of *La société féodale* and certain passages of *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht*. By directly citing Manegold, Bloch was actually echoing a similar quotation from the section of Kern's book that defines the right of resistance in the context of the 11th-century reform. Kern there contrasted the 'Italian' jurists, who advocated 'absolute' royal power, with the ideal of 'popular resistance' that had been developed in 'German' monastic circles.³⁴ While eliminating the ethnic contrast proposed by Kern, Bloch retained his reconstruction, which also appears in *Le rois thaumaturges*.³⁵

By doing so, he made an important contribution to consolidating an interpretative paradigm in which a 'fertile principle' existed within the political turmoil of the 11th century – one that soon shifted from the Church to the vassals.³⁶ It was in this context that the 'right of resistance' (*droit de résistance*), which had its origins in the Carolingian period – in the Strasbourg Oaths of 843 and the *Consilium optimatum Karol II. datum* of 856 – was reaffirmed. However, it "exploded" in the 13th and 14th centuries in texts such as the English *Magna Charta* or the *Sachsenspiegel*, from which Bloch quotes the famous passage: "man can resist his king and his judge when the latter acts against the law".³⁷

³⁰ Bloch, 617.

³¹ Bloch, 618.

³² Bloch, 617.

³³ Manegoldus, *Ad Gebehardum*, 365.

³⁴ Kern, *Gottesgnadentum*, 251-66, esp. 265, n. 471.

³⁵ Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges*, 121-2, where the quotation of Manegold's passage with the swineherd metaphor first appears.

³⁶ Bloch, *La société féodale*, 618.

³⁷ Bloch, 618. Regarding the sources cited by Bloch here, see Nithardi *Historiarum libri IV*, III, 5, 35-6; MGH Capit. II, n. 295 (IX 856), 424. The quote from the *Sachsenspiegel* is taken from

However, it must be stressed that while Marc Bloch largely followed the trajectory of the sources presented in Kern’s *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht*, he proposed an interpretation that differed from the German historian’s in several respects. Kern had identified the root of the ‘right of resistance’ in the concept of ‘bilateral’ loyalty developed within feudal law, yet he also maintained that it existed prior to and independently of feudal law, as an essential component of the medieval ‘German’ conception of the state.³⁸

Instead, Bloch viewed the ‘feudal regime’ as the necessary precursor of the ‘representative regime’. In this context, he noted that it was surely no coincidence that the latter had developed in states that were freeing themselves from the ‘feudal regime’, yet still bore its imprint: this was the case, for example, with the British Parliament, the French *États*, the German *Stände*, and the Spanish *Cortes*.³⁹ For Bloch, the very idea of a convention capable of binding the various powers together was the most original aspect of Western feudalism. He therefore ended his book with a famous, only seemingly paradoxical, sentence: *Par là, si dur aux petits qu’ait été ce régime, il a véritablement légué à nos civilisations quelque chose dont nous souhaitons vivre encore*.⁴⁰

But beyond their differing conclusions, Bloch, as mentioned above, took up the sequence of texts proposed by Kern. These reflected a kind of ‘canon’ of sources on feudalism and feudal law that had developed since the 16th century – first in the French context, and then, from the early decades of the 19th century, in the German one.⁴¹ This canon emphasised the Frankish and ‘Germanic’ origins of feudalism and interpreted most of the sources from outside the Loire-Rhine area as ‘exceptions’ that confirmed the rule.⁴² From this perspective, the two historians’ reconstructions of the ‘right of resistance’ gave little weight to sources that did not fit into this interpretative paradigm, such as the *Edictum de beneficiis* of Conrad II, which, according to a then established tradition, was analysed primarily in relation to the history of the fief.⁴³ We will return to this point in the concluding section of this essay. First, however, it is necessary to consider some methodological aspects.

Eckhardt, *Sachsenspiegel*, I, *Landrecht*, 260, III, 78, §2: *De man mut ok wol sime koninge unde sime richtere unrechtes wederstan, und san helpen weren to aller wis, al si he sin mach oder sin herre, unde ne dut dar an weder senen truwen nicht*. The debate over the interpretation of this passage – often reflecting positions very different from those of Kern and Bloch – has generated an extensive bibliography that cannot be addressed here.

³⁸ See Kern, *Gottesgnadentum*, 260-1 and 269: *Das Widerstandsrecht ist ein integrierender Bestandteil der germanisch-mittelalterlichen Staatsanschauung gewesen*.

³⁹ Bloch, *La société féodale*, 618.

⁴⁰ Bloch, 618-9.

⁴¹ On these aspects, see the reconstruction proposed by Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, 3-14 and 475-82.

⁴² The text that most contributed to the dissemination of this ‘paradigm’ is Ganshof, *Qu’est-ce que*. For a reconstruction of the historiographical tradition that fed into Ganshof’s influential work, see Albertoni, *Vassalli*, 21-42 and Patzold, *Das Lehnswesen*, 6-13.

⁴³ Bloch, *La société féodale*, 281-4.

2. *Vassals, 'resistance' and the 'semantic triangle'*

As noted above, despite the great influence of *La Société féodale* since the Second World War, Marc Bloch's reflections on the vassal-derived 'principle of resistance' as a periodising factor in medieval political history have remained on the fringes of the cyclical debates on feudalism. They found little space in either the decade-long discussion of the *mutation féodale* or in the debate that followed the publication of Susan Reynolds' *Feuds and Vassals*.⁴⁴

A partial exception was the legal historian Magnus Ryan. In an essay published in 2002 on 'feudal obligations' and 'rights of resistance', he drew attention to the parallel reconstructions of Kern and Bloch.⁴⁵ With regard to the former, he stressed that the German historian's main concern was twofold: on the one hand, he had set out to demonstrate that "subjects could legitimately use violence to compel their rulers to obey and enforce the law"; on the other, he had argued that in this context "vassals enjoyed an enhanced version of this right because for them such a right was founded on contract".⁴⁶ With regard to Bloch, however, Ryan recalled how he had transposed the legal concept of the bilateral contract between vassal and lord to the political level. This intellectual operation, Ryan argued, underpinned the striking conclusion of *La société féodale*, according to which European feudalism had left our civilisation "something with which we still desire to live".⁴⁷

But, accepting Ryan's remarks, how should we evaluate Marc Bloch's intuition in light of the debate sparked thirty years ago by Susan Reynolds's *Fiefs and Vassals*, which 'deconstructed' the concept of vassal and highlighted the changing meaning of the term *vassus/vassallus* in different contexts and historical phases, with its legal definition in relation to *beneficium/feudum* not dating back before the 12th century?⁴⁸ One possibility is to follow the approach taken by Reynolds herself, who suggested analysing sources in light of the so-called 'semantic triangle' – i.e. the distinction between 'word', 'concept', and 'phenomenon' – not only in relation to the question of vassalage, but more broadly.⁴⁹

According to the English historian, the most common mistake made by those who studied the role of fiefs and vassals in the past was precisely the tendency to conflate these levels – for example, by assigning to the word 'vassal' a general meaning derived from concepts elaborated by jurists from the 12th century onwards and later adopted by modern and contemporary schol-

⁴⁴ Poly, Bournazel, *La mutation*; Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*. For further bibliographical references and an overview of this debate, see Albertoni, *Vassalli*, 65-86.

⁴⁵ Ryan, "Feudal Obligation."

⁴⁶ Ryan, 52.

⁴⁷ Ryan, 53 e Bloch, *La société féodale*, 619.

⁴⁸ See Albertoni, *Vassalli*, 65-86 and Patzold, *Das Lehnswesen*, 1-13. Over the years, Reynolds herself has overcome her initial reluctance to consider vassalage. See Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, 17-34 and Reynolds, *The Middle Ages without Feudalism*, XII.

⁴⁹ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, 12-3 and Reynolds, "Fiefs and Vassals", 18-9.

ars. Even great historians such as Marc Bloch, François-Louis Ganshof, and Jacques Le Goff were not exempt from this error. Although approaching the subject from very different historiographical perspectives, they all took for granted the postulate of a uniform condition of the vassal from the Carolingian age to the late Middle Ages, with serious consequences in their reconstructions and interpretations.⁵⁰ This led them, among other things, to consider prejudicially as vassals persons who were not defined as such in the sources, but who were involved in bonds of loyalty or received a *beneficium/feudum* for their services. Significant examples from the early and late Middle Ages include the *Formula* of Tours No. 43 and the aforementioned homage to the Count of Flanders narrated by Galbert of Bruges, which were associated with vassallage by Ganshof and many other scholars without paying particular attention to the lexicon of the sources or the absence of the word *vassus/vassallus*.⁵¹ This does not mean, of course, that we can only speak of vassals when they appear explicitly in the sources; rather, we must try to understand the meaning of the sources' lexicon and the relationship between words and concepts. As Jürgen Dendorfer and Steffen Patzold, two leading figures in the recent renewal of studies on 'fiefs' and 'vassals', have emphasised, “Not every *vasallus* mentioned in a 9th-century document reflects a contemporary concept of vassallage in the Carolingian period and, in any case, does not necessarily refer to a component of feudalism as defined by classical terminology of the medieval studies”.⁵²

Taking these observations into account, we can uphold Kern and Bloch's insight into the spread of political forms of resistance in the 11th century. This can be done by reversing the terms of the argument in *La société féodale* and positing that political action preceded the formalisation of a legal and political discourse based on feudal law. In this perspective, I aim to avoid misleading generalisations and, employing Reynolds' semantic triangle, focus on the 'phenomenon': the role played in the political dynamics of the *Regnum italicum* between the 10th and 11th centuries by representatives of a middle military class, traditionally defined as *secundi milites*.⁵³ This requires setting

⁵⁰ See, for instance, the convincing criticism of Le Goff's essay on the symbolic ritual of vassallage (Le Goff, “Le rituel”) made in Reynolds, “Afterthoughts.”

⁵¹ Ganshof, *Qu'est-ce que*, 26 e 123-4. For a more detailed discussion of these aspects, see Albertoni, *Vassalli*, 99-101 and 184-9.

⁵² Dendorfer, Patzold, “Tenere et habere”, 17. This is the original text: *Nicht jeder vasallus, der in einem Dokument des 9. Jahrhunderts erwähnt wird, steht für ein zeitgenössisches Konzept der Vasallität in der Karolingerzeit, und schon gar nicht muss damit eine Komponente des Lehnswesens im Sinne der klassischen mediävistischen Terminologie angesprochen sein.*

⁵³ More than forty years ago, Hagen Keller already observed that the term *secundi milites* can be misleading when interpreted socially. Although frequently employed in 19th- and 20th-century Italian historiography, it appears in the sources only once: in a 997 letter (Hehl, *Die Konzilien Deutschlands*, doc. 60C, 584) in which numerous bishops in northern Italy accused Arduinus of Ivrea of various crimes. See Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*, 273. On this letter and its over-interpretation within an outdated master narrative, see the important discussion in Roach, *Forgery and Memory*, 253-5.

aside the ‘feudal sunglasses’, to use Reynolds’ apt expression,⁵⁴ and reconstructing the political and social categories developed by those who were contemporary with the events. In this context, I will reflect on some episodes of ‘resistance’ by these *milites*, not so much in terms of their possible specificity as vassals, but rather as a social group that, as François Menant observed in his monograph on the *Campagnes lombardes*, at the turn of the 11th century ‘jammed’ the mechanisms regulating relations between royal power and the aristocracy, and contributed to affirming a political principle that was in many ways new – one based on horizontal relations between ‘peers’.⁵⁵

3. *Milites and kings: from Berengar II to Arduin*

As pioneering researchers such as Hagen Keller or François Menant pointed out a few years ago, from the second half of the 10th century onwards, a social group of *milites* that was internally very varied in terms of status and function began to play an increasingly autonomous political role, entering into a dialectical relationship with royal power, the episcopate, and the more established aristocracies.⁵⁶ In the past, this group was often subsumed under the general category of vassals, projecting onto the 10th and 11th centuries a reality that, as we have seen, would only later acquire a proper vassal sense, precisely as a result of the action of these *milites*. In reality, over the fifty years between 970 and around 1030, vassal relationships were established or maintained within a vast network of personal ties, many strands of which elude us when viewed through the lens of legal definitions.⁵⁷ In this context, the *milites* of the *Regnum italicum* operated in a political landscape where opportunities to swear oaths and forge both vertical and horizontal bonds were virtually limitless. There were also countless opportunities to ‘remunerate’ their loyalty through established contractual forms such as the *libellum*, the *precaria*, or *emphyteusis*, as Cinzio Violante and Amleto Spicciati had already noted.⁵⁸ At this stage, the granting of *beneficia* was not yet exclusively ‘feudal’: *beneficium* remained a word without clearly defined legal contours, suggesting a form of service that was far from specifically military.⁵⁹ Indeed, it was the political action of the lower-middle *milites* and their efforts to assert their

⁵⁴ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, 12: “However feudalism is defined, many medieval historians feel uncomfortable without their feudal sunglasses”.

⁵⁵ Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 589-94, a chapter significantly entitled *Résistances et conflits*.

⁵⁶ Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*; Keller, “Militia;” Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 564-671.

⁵⁷ The reconstruction proposed in Menant, 580-600, is exemplary in this respect.

⁵⁸ See Violante, *La società milanese*, 94-113 and Spicciati, *Protofeudalesimo*.

⁵⁹ Unfortunately, there is no recent study on this subject. For an overview, Giordanengo, “Les féodalités italiennes,” 215, may be useful. Even if one may not always agree with his reconstruction, Brancoli Busdraghi, *La formazione storica*, remains indispensable on the subject of the *beneficium* in the *Regnum italicum*.

‘rights’ through the use of writing that marked a turning point towards what would later become feudal law.

To identify the starting and ending points of this political trajectory, we can look to the political crisis triggered by the rise of Berengar II and Otto I’s acquisition of the Italian royal title, and the ‘revolt of the vavasours’ in Milan, which ended with Emperor Conrad II issuing the *Edictum de beneficiis*. At least from the perspective of the *Regnum italicum*, these eighty years were crucial not so much for a feudal ‘revolution’ or ‘mutation’, but for the initial redefinition of political relations within the kingdom, shifting from the plane of orality to that of writing, thanks to the affirmation of the ‘right to resist’ and to be judged by peers, as discussed by Marc Bloch. It was only from the mid-12th century that this political process began to be interpreted retrospectively in terms of the then nascent feudal law, creating an interpretative paradigm from which I will propose a way forward.

But let us proceed in order and turn our attention to the first stage of this process. In the sources, a new political opposition between two groups of *milites*, the *maiores* and the *minores*, began to emerge and to be noticed by some keen observers of contemporary events. This contrast appears less in documentary sources than in historical-narrative accounts, thanks to authors who were also themselves political actors and employed a vocabulary that reflected the ways they categorised the political and social reality in which they were embedded.

In the *Praeloquia*, a well-known text written in prison by Bishop Ratherius of Verona between 935 and 937, we find the earliest evidence of this process.⁶⁰ It is in this work that the first reflections appear on who the *milites* of the *regnum Italicum* were and what their social and political role was. In particular, they are described as a group of low social status and obscure origin who sought social advancement through military service.⁶¹ Years ago, Giacomo Vignodelli highlighted that Ratherius used the term *miles* differently in the *Praeloquia* and in his letters.⁶² Indeed, in the latter, he employs *miles* as a technical term to refer to the vassals of his church, as well as other powerful individuals, including the emperor.

In a text by another bishop of the *regnum Italicum*, Atto of Vercelli, this distinction between *milites* of different ranks is even more pronounced. He was an active participant in the political events of the 10th century, siding with Berengar II against Otto I. He developed important reflections on the role of the *milites* in some cryptic passages of his political pamphlet, with the equally enigmatic title *Polipticum quod appellatur Perpendicularum*, now made accessible thanks to a critical edition with translation and commentary again

⁶⁰ Ratherii Veronensis *Praeloquiorum libri VI*.

⁶¹ Ratherius, I, 3, 24. On this passage and the historiographical debate it has provoked, see the brief but concise overview in Vignodelli, “*Milites*,” 115, n. 64.

⁶² Vignodelli, 147-9.

by Giacomo Vignodelli.⁶³ From our point of view the passages in which Atto describes the various levels of the aristocracy are of particular interest. He mostly uses “terms indicating social preminence: *procere, potentes, summates, magnates, primates, insignes, praeclares, eugenes*”.⁶⁴ As Vignodelli pointed out in his monograph on the *Perpendiculum* of Atto, the Bishop of Vercelli also uses the more generic term *milites*, which is always employed in a relational sense in relation to the king. Only when it is applied to the bishop’s military clientele is it specified that these are *primi milites*, demonstrating that “the term alone fails to express a recognisable social status but should primarily be understood as denoting position within a relationship”.⁶⁵

Vignodelli has also highlighted how Atto assigns a relational value to the term *miles*, even when it is used to define lower-level aristocracies, who, not by chance, appear in the *Perpendiculum* only when they enter into direct fidelity with the king.⁶⁶ It is in this context that Atto draws a distinction between *milites primi* and *milites secundi ordinis*, to be understood as a hierarchy of prestige and political capacity for which the king was supposed to serve as guarantor.⁶⁷

A model for relations between *milites* and kings was thus outlined, linking political and social ‘peace’ relationally to the ‘rights’ for which the king was to act as the guarantor. Breaking this relational balance, however, led to *chaos*. According to Atto, this is what happened after Hugh of Provence renounced the kingdom.⁶⁸ The ensuing situation was only made possible by the joint action of the *procere* of the kingdom, but only the *maiores* ultimately gained substantial advantages, while the *minores* – also defined by Atto as *iuveneres*, meaning those recently elevated to honours – felt excluded from the division of offices after Lothair II assumed the royal crown.⁶⁹ In fact, as Vignodelli has again pointed out, if we consider the allocation of the kingdom’s highest offices between 945 and 947, all the recipients belonged to the old aristocracy, while the ‘new’ families that had contributed to the emerging political order remained outside this division.⁷⁰

In this context, in addition to the *milites secundi ordinis* who were partly out of the picture, there were also those whom Atto described in one passage as *neoterici buteones* – an expression referring to the animal world which, as Vignodelli suggests, can be rendered as ‘new hawks’.⁷¹ Subordinate to the king without holding any particularly prestigious positions, they were in fact

⁶³ Attone di Vercelli, *Perpendiculum*; for its contextualisation, see Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, and Vignodelli, “Politics.”

⁶⁴ Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, 198.

⁶⁵ Vignodelli, 198.

⁶⁶ Vignodelli, 199.

⁶⁷ Vignodelli, 200.

⁶⁸ Attone di Vercelli, *Perpendiculum*, I, cap. 23, 274-6 e II, 95-7.

⁶⁹ Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, 201.

⁷⁰ Vignodelli, 119-20.

⁷¹ Attone di Vercelli, *Polipticum*, I, cap. 21, 195 e II, 95.

a creation of King Hugh, who had elevated them to *homines regales* and favoured their integration among the *proceres*, particularly within the ranks of the *minores*.⁷²

For Atto, involving these ‘birds of prey’ in political affairs was a tragic mistake on Hugh’s part. Although they did not participate in the distribution of offices, their numbers exceeded those of the more powerful *maiores*. This imbalance, he argued, generated political *chaos* and destabilised the highest strata of the social hierarchy. The only remedy lay in the restoration of political order on a twofold basis: curbing the political ambitions of the *minores* while at the same time recognising some of their claims, so that they would not become a dangerous obstacle to royal authority. It is no coincidence that Atto concluded his *Perpendiculum* with a prayer to God, asking that future kings “preserve just rights for the *milites* of the second rank, so as not to appear ungrateful to them, nor to favour them over their superiors”. Only by “granting to each his due” could kings hope to maintain peace.⁷³

“Granting to each his due”: this was the political action that a good king was expected to take. But how was one to determine what was due? And what might happen if a king proved unable to fulfil his function, or if it was unclear who should legitimately occupy the throne? This was precisely the situation that arose from the mid-10th century, following the sudden assumption of the royal title by Berengar II. His coronation on 15 December 950 created a new political balance that seemed likely to foster integration between the *milites minores* of the kingdom and the *milites maiores*, a group to which Berengar himself had belonged until then.

To understand how contemporaries perceived this situation, it may be useful to revisit Atto’s words. On the one hand, he emphasised the rapacity of the ‘new hawks’; on the other, he reminded us that a strong royal power was the least thing the *potentes* desired. They – wrote the Bishop of Vercelli – preferred “to elect an inept king” through whom they could secure what suited them.⁷⁴ As a result, Berengar II feigned weakness: first by retaining Hugh of Provence in his post, then by acting alongside Lothar II as *summus consiliarius*, and finally by securing the royal crown after Lothar II’s premature and sudden death. In his rise to power, Berengar displayed his determination by elevating many of Hugh’s *homines novi*, for example by conferring the title of *marchio* on some of them.⁷⁵ It was precisely this resolve, and the consequent reshuffling of the cards, that prompted the other *maiores*, who had now become his enemies, to send emissaries abroad to request the intervention of transalpine dukes or kings. It is no coincidence that, according to a gloss in

⁷² Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, 201.

⁷³ Attone di Vercelli, *Polipticum*, I, cap. 50, 220: *Secundi uero ordinis militibus ita debita iura conseruent, ut nec ipsis se ingratos exhibeant, nec eos prioribus anteponan. Quia tunc pacem firmam poterunt obtinere, si congrua cuique studeant adimplere*, and II, 67.

⁷⁴ Attone di Vercelli, *Polipticum*, II, cap. 24, 29.

⁷⁵ Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, 120, and Attone di Vercelli, *Polipticum*, 97.

the *Perpendiculum*, their motto was: *Non enim volunt imperantem habere dominum, sed potius obsequentem*.⁷⁶

One of the consequences of Berengar II's political unscrupulousness was the direct involvement of Otto I in Italian affairs. Until then, Otto had remained a distant yet interested observer of political events south of the Alps, and the main ally of the *marchio* of Ivrea, who had risen to kingship. This role, however, shifted amid the constant making and unmaking of political alliances that marked Berengar's fluctuating relations with Otto.⁷⁷ It was precisely this instability that enhanced the political prominence and contractual power of the *milites* at various levels, enabling them to insert themselves effectively into the loyalty networks established by the key figures in the struggle for the kingdom.

The role they were able to play in this new political context becomes clear if we look at the political crisis that erupted after the death of Otto III, with the ensuing conflict between Arduin of Ivrea and Henry II. In this perspective, it may be useful to focus our attention in particular on Arduin, himself a *homo novus* whose story, as Giuseppe Sergi pointed out a few years ago, illustrates that the social climate was already one that would later determine the granting of the *Edictum de beneficiis* by Conrad II.⁷⁸ Of course, as Levi Roach has recently argued, it would be misleading to attribute his political rise solely to the contrast between the *primi* and *secundi milites*.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the years of Otto III's reign and those immediately following certainly point to the existence of strong social tensions in which *milites* of different levels participated.⁸⁰

This social climate was characterised by a variety of personal relationships in which many *milites* were entangled, moving on unstable ground defined by bonds of loyalty that were sometimes ephemeral and could not a priori be ascribed to a feudal-vassal relationship, which at this time was anything but clearly defined. Landholding was equally ephemeral, mostly made up of *beneficia* that could easily be revoked with the breaking of ties of loyalty.⁸¹ Among these *milites*, very similar to Atto's *neoterici buteones* in their desire for social advancement, Arduin in some respects became the interpreter, although he also found support among many members of the 'great families', such as the Obertenghi.⁸²

⁷⁶ Attone di Vercelli, *Polipticum*, 98.

⁷⁷ See Albertoni, "Otto I. in Italien."

⁷⁸ Sergi, "Arduino," 19. For more information on Arduino and the political context of his reign, see Brunhofer, *Arduin*.

⁷⁹ See Roach, *Forgery and Memory*, 193-255, esp. 253-5.

⁸⁰ For an overview of the political balances and tensions in 'Ottonian' Italy, see Sergi, "The Kingdom;" D'Acunto, *Nostrum Italicum regnum*, 154-8; Manganaro, *Stabilitas regni*; and Roach, "The Ottonians."

⁸¹ Keller, "Militia" and Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 580-96.

⁸² Sergi, "Arduino," 20 and Lucioni, "Re Arduino," 53.

Arduin’s sudden departure from the scene did not, however, result in their marginalisation. Intricate threads of the ‘web of loyalties’ entangled *milites* of different social levels around the royal court, the bishop’s *curiae*, and those exponents of the aristocracy who, precisely between the end of the 10th century and the first decades of the 11th century, were asserting their seignorial rights at the local level – a phase defined by François Menant, with reference to Lombardy, as the ‘second seignorial age’.⁸³ These were threads that could easily be severed by those who had created them, preventing the socially ascendant *milites* from projecting confidently into the future.⁸⁴

4. *Between revolt and ‘resistance’: the case of the vavasours and the Edictum de beneficiis*

These new dynamics emerged, often in dramatic and conflictual forms, after the age of Arduin. As Hagen Keller argued more than forty years ago in his famous book on the aristocratic society of the *Regnum italicum* and in an equally well-known article on the *militia*, it was precisely in the thirty years between the age of Arduin and the *Edictum de beneficiis* that the *milites* increasingly began to define themselves politically through their royal service (*Königsdienst*).⁸⁵ In this context, the *secundi ordinis milites* constituted that group of the *fideles regis* who entered the clientele of the bishops and *marchiones*, thereby assuming a political profile very different from that of the public office holders of the Carolingian era.⁸⁶ For Keller, it was precisely this dual level of loyalty – the need to guarantee military support for kings when they travelled to Rome with their armies for the imperial coronation, and the latent competition between different social levels of the *milites* – that caused the political tensions which periodically erupted into ‘revolts’ in the first thirty years of the century. Consider, for example, the destruction of the *palatium* of Pavia in 1024, the banishment of the bishop of Cremona in 1030, or the so-called ‘revolt of the vavasours’ in 1035, to which we will now turn our attention.⁸⁷

The best-known account of this ‘revolt’ was written about ten years after the events by Wipo, chancellor of Conrad II, in a complex text whose interpretation depends on the meaning we attribute to his vocabulary, which in part differed from that used in contemporary Lombard society.⁸⁸ Referring to 1035, Wipo speaks of a *magna et inaudita confusio*, arising from *coniuratio*-

⁸³ Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 411-6. For an up-to-date summary of these processes, see Cortese, “Strutture aristocratiche,” 75-81.

⁸⁴ Sergi, “Arduino,” 22-3.

⁸⁵ Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*, 270-1 and Keller, “Militia.”

⁸⁶ Keller, 88.

⁸⁷ Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*, 271.

⁸⁸ Keller, 56.

nes made by the *populus* against the *principes*. After this general premise, he provides a more detailed description, stating that those who *coniuraverunt* were all the vavasours of Italy (*omnes valvassores Italiae*) and the *gregarii milites*, who allegedly rose up against their lords (*dominos suos*). This statement that is clarified – or perhaps further obscured – by his claim that *omnes minores* opposed the *maiores*, insisting that nothing could be done by their lords (*domini*) beyond their will (*supra voluntatem*). From this situation, the rebels are said to have requested the emperor's intermediation, declaring that if he did not act, they would make a law for themselves (*ipsi per se legem sibimet facerent*).⁸⁹ Wipo, in perhaps the best-known passage in his work, recounts: "When this was announced to the emperor, he is said to have said: 'If Italy is greedy in this way for law, with God's grant I will satiate it well with laws'".⁹⁰

This episode was also reconstructed, in roughly the same years as Wipo, by the *Annales Sangallenses maiores* and Hermann von Reichenau. The anonymous author of the former recalled that a *foedus coniurationis* had taken place in Italy, setting the *inferiores milites* against the unjust rule of the *superiores*, while the latter reported instead that it was the *minores milites* who had risen up in Italy against their 'lords' because they wished to live according to their own law.⁹¹ The only contemporary source by a Lombard author – Arnulf of Milan – written probably forty years after the events, adopted terminology also used by Wipo, recalling that *quidam urbis milites, vulgo valvassores nominati*, had started the 'conspiracy', seizing the occasion from the loss of a *beneficium*.⁹²

All these passages are well known and have been widely discussed in the past, beginning with the very terms used by Wipo to define the protagonists of the *coniuratio*.⁹³ Who were the *valvassores Italiae*? Who were the *gregarii milites*? To whom did the distinction between *minores et maiores* apply? And who were the *domini*? For a long time, the discussion of these questions remained polarised between the reconstruction proposed by Cinzio Violante in *La società milanese nell'età precomunale* and that offered some twenty years later by Hagen Keller in his book on aristocratic society in the *Regnum Ital-*

⁸⁹ Wipo, "Gesta Chuonradi," Cap. 34, 54: *De coniuratione Itolorum. Coniuraverant enim omnes valvasores Italiae et gregarii milites adversus dominos suos et omnes minores contra maiores, ut non paterentur aliquid sibi inultum accidere a dominis suis supra voluntatem ipsorum, dicentes, si imperator eorum nollet venire, ipsi per se legem sibimet facerent.*

⁹⁰ Wipo, Cap. 34, 54: *Hoc cum nunciatum esset imperatori, fertur dixisse 'Si Italiam modo esurit legem, concedente Deo bene legibus hanc saciabo'.*

⁹¹ *Annales Sangallenses maiores*, 83: *Foedus validae coniurationis in Italia exoritur. Inferiores namque milites superiorum iniqua dominatione plus solito oppressi simul omnes illis resistunt coadunate; Hermann von Reichenau, "Chronicon," Cap. 35, 98: In Italia minores milites contra dominos suos insurgentes et suis legibus vivere eosque opprimere volentes validam coniurationem facere.*

⁹² Arnulf von Mailand, *Liber*, 154: *Unde factum est, ut quidam urbis milites, vulgo valvassores nominati, clanculo illius insidiarentur operibus adversus ipsum assidue conspirantes.*

⁹³ See e.g. Violante, *La società milanese*, 239-43 and Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*, 289-91.

iae.⁹⁴ Schematically, the former gave the uprising a social connotation, while the latter traced the conflict back to the relationship between aristocracies and kings.

"The vavasours – wrote Violante – created by the lay vassals of the Church, assault its property".⁹⁵ Through their actions, including the 'revolt' of 1035, they established themselves as leading figures in a 'feudal society' in which power was not devolved hierarchically from above, but rather "conquered by assault, with a motion that starts simultaneously from above and from below the social classes through violent clashes and contrasts".⁹⁶ In this context, they would have constituted a 'class' clearly distinct from the *capitanei*, the great royal vassals, and would have used their feudal bond as a means of inserting themselves into the feudal hierarchy and actively participating in the governance of public affairs.⁹⁷ By appealing directly to the sovereign, they thus reclaimed the feudal bond as an 'instrument of freedom'.⁹⁸ This interpretation seems to echo the final words of Bloch's *Société féodale*, from which we began.

Very different was the reconstruction proposed by Keller, who begins with an important linguistic observation. He noted that the term *valvassor* had not been used in Italian sources before 1037, when it appeared in the *Edictum de beneficiis*.⁹⁹ By treating it as a synonym for the *secundi milites* occasionally attested earlier, Violante, and with him other eminent historians such as Giovanni Tabacco, would, according to Keller, have made a serious 'prospective' error.¹⁰⁰ Keller's argument is based on the fact that, as noted, the *Edictum de beneficiis* and some historical-narrative sources speak of *valvassores maiores et minores*, who are placed in opposition to the *principes* or *senatores Italiae*, the powerful royal vassals from whom, according to Keller, the vavasours received their fiefs. Since, in the 12th century, feudal law treaties define these *principes* as *tenentes in capite*, and therefore as *capitanei*, and since this designation had also been previously applied *valvassores maiores*, Violante and others have erred in thinking that in 1035 the conflict was between *maiores* and *minores valvassores*. In fact, Keller argues, the conflict arose between the *principes* on the one hand and all the *milites* – then defined as vavasours, a terminology foreign to the Italian social reality – on the other.¹⁰¹ Certainly, as Chris Wickham noted, the only preserved definition of

⁹⁴ Violante, *La società milanese* and Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*.

⁹⁵ Violante, *La società milanese*, 171: *I valvassori, creati dai vassalli laici della Chiesa, danno l'assalto ai suoi beni*.

⁹⁶ Violante, 177: *conquistato d'assalto, con un moto che parte contemporaneamente dall'alto e dal basso delle classi sociali attraverso violenti scontri e contrasti*.

⁹⁷ Violante, 237.

⁹⁸ Violante, 172.

⁹⁹ Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*, 272.

¹⁰⁰ A refutation, citing the 'incriminated' passages by Violante and Tabacco, can be found in Keller, 272-3, n. 111.

¹⁰¹ Keller, 272.

what constitutes a *capitaneus* and a *valvassor* comes from the mid-12th century, in the well-known section of the *Antiqua* version of the *Libri feudorum* attributed to Oberto dell'Orto, which may itself have been interpolated at a later date.¹⁰²

But, beyond the sometimes arguably excessive rigidity of Keller's definitions, the risk he warns of – projecting later legal constructs onto the first decades of the 11th century – remains significant, and it limits our understanding of how the 'revolt' of 1035 involved a vast class of *milites*, admittedly internally diverse but united in their aims.¹⁰³ From our point of view, it is also important to recall that the *confusio* evoked by Wipo was characterised by two fundamental aspects: firstly, the unexpected predominance of horizontal ties binding the 'rebels' to one another, at the expense of the vertical ties linking them to their lords; and secondly, their appeal the emperor, and above all their request for a resolution of the conflict through written law – a request attested in various contemporary sources and made particularly explicit by Wipo in the famous passage already quoted. This request found expression in the text we usually call the *Edictum de beneficiis*.¹⁰⁴

Of course, this is not the place for an in-depth analysis of the edict.¹⁰⁵ From the perspective of this essay – namely, the presence of forms of resistance – it is important to remember that the edict aimed to pacify the *milites* with their *seniores* and *satiare* the rebellious ones, distinguished in the edict as *vasvasores maiores* and *minores*, using a political vocabulary that, as already mentioned, was foreign to the Milanese area at the time and was most likely introduced by Conrad II's transalpine entourage. This bipartition testifies to the crystallisation, within what had previously been the magmatic world of the *milites*, of a hierarchical structure determined by the typology of the *seniores*, all of whom, according to the *Edictum*, were in any case linked to networks of loyalties reporting to bishops, abbots, abbesses, marquises, counts, or all those who had received a *beneficium* drawn from the royal *fiscus* or ecclesiastical lands.¹⁰⁶ The edict thus attests, on the one hand, the centrality of the *fiscus* as the linchpin of the king's network of relations – an aspect often misunderstood¹⁰⁷ – and, on the other, to a relational hierarchy within the vast world of the *milites*, for whom the main problem was not, as an outdated commonplace often claimed, so much the inheritance of the *ben-*

¹⁰² Wickham, *Sleepwalking*, 60 e n. 63, 224-5. Lehmann, Karl. *Consuetudines feudorum*, 128: *Qui vero a capitaneis antiquitus beneficium tenent, valvassores sunt*.

¹⁰³ Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*, 290.

¹⁰⁴ Bresslau, cur. *Die Urkunden Konrads II.*, doc. 244, 335-7.

¹⁰⁵ Since the bibliography on the *Edictum de beneficiis* is so vast, in addition to the essays already cited, I will refer only to two summaries and the bibliography they cite: Albertoni, *Vassalli*, 141-51 and Patzold, *Das Lehnswesen*, 45-50.

¹⁰⁶ On these aspects, see Keller, *Adelsherrschaft*, 54-8, Keller, "Das Edictum." See now also the up-to-date *status quaestionis* in Stella, *The Libri feudorum*, 8-12 and West, *Europe*, 92.

¹⁰⁷ The role of the royal fisc in the *Edictum de beneficiis* has recently been highlighted in Lazari, "Risorse contese," 395-7.

eficia, but their *subtractione sine certa e convicta culpa*.¹⁰⁸ This was a central issue because, from the beginning of the 11th century onwards, there was an increasing tendency to replace precarious or level contracts with *beneficia*, which, by their vagueness, offered less protection to the *milites*, who not infrequently reacted with forms of resistance or revolt – the 1035 case being the last of these.¹⁰⁹

But the edict also testifies to the existence of horizontal ties, at least between the *valvassores maiores*, and of an *iudicium* of peers that had to be exercised regarding the confiscation of *beneficia* by the *seniores*. By referring to this, the *Edictum de beneficiis* thus brings to light, for the first time, the importance and formalisation of a horizontal bond between peers – something that the documentary sources do not reveal and that a narrative based on the feudal paradigm has largely ignored.

This narrative began to be elaborated a little more than a century after the events of 1037, once Conrad II's edict had become, as the Milanese *valvassores* had most likely hoped when they invoked the use of a written law, an important point of reference within the informal world of military loyalty relations – so much so that it found its way into the *Liber Papiensis* and the oldest redaction of the *Libri feudorum*, the aforementioned *Antiqua* of the Milanese consul Oberto dall'Orto.¹¹⁰ In the evocative portrait of Oberto proposed by Chris Wickham in his *Sleepwalking into a New World*, he appears as the prototype of those who, in the communal context, can be defined precisely as ‘sleepwalkers’ because of the sharp contrast between practice and thought. “Oberto was – Wickham writes – (along with his peers) taking his city in a profoundly new direction, but his mind was elsewhere”.¹¹¹ His ‘elsewhere’ was the world of the military aristocracy, to which he did not belong, yet he solved many of its problems in his work as a judge. These problems often revolved around the inheritance of fiefs, the historical genesis of which Oberto reconstructed by projecting the problems he faced in the present into the past. For example, he isolated only the part of the *Edictum de beneficiis* relating to inheritance, recounting how, “when Conrad was setting out for Rome, he was asked by the vassals who were in his service that he consider it convenient, with the promulgation of a law, to extend this to grandsons in the male line, and that a brother is to succeed his brother who had died without a

¹⁰⁸ Bresslau, cur. *Die Urkunden Konrads II.*, doc. 244, 336.

¹⁰⁹ Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 591; Giordanengo, “Les féodalités italiennes,” 217. On the centrality of the *beneficium/feudum* as a social marker in this context, see now Stella, *The Libri feudorum*, 9.

¹¹⁰ Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 591-601, remains indispensable for the analysis of the consequences of the *Edictum de beneficiis*. For the broader legal context, Stella, *The Libri feudorum*, 8, is a useful starting point. For an initial overview of Oberto, see the biographical profiles by Giancarlo Andenna, “Dall’Orto, Oberto” and Loschiavo, “Oberto dall’Orto.”

¹¹¹ Wickham, *Sleepwalking*, 61.

lawful heir in the benefice which was their father's".¹¹² Thus began the narrative that gave rise to the often still prevailing commonplace about Conrad II's *Edictum*, while its truly central and structural aspect – the legal recognition of peer mediation, and thus an early form of 'principle of resistance' between *milites* and *seniores* that anticipated broader developments in the following decades – fell into oblivion. With this essay, I hope to have made a small contribution to reopening the debate on this specific aspect and, more generally, on the role of horizontal loyalty relations in a world that cannot be understood solely through the distorting lens of vertical vassalage. It was in this world of fluctuating loyalties that Bloch's idea of a convention that could restrict powers emerged – an idea that, however, would only be formalised in feudal law from the second half of the 12th century onwards.

¹¹² Lehmann, *Consuetudines feudorum*, 33. For the translation, see Stella, *The Libri feudorum*, 57.

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Giuseppe Albertoni
Università degli Studi di Trento
giuseppe.albertoni@unitn.it
ORCID: 0000-0001-6670-7509

Officials and fiscal lands. The imperial presence in Italy (c. 1050-1150)

by Luigi Provero

This paper aims to analyse the forms, instruments and effectiveness of imperial power in Italy between the 11th and 12th centuries. The starting point is the early decades of the 11th century, marked by a significant rift between the Empire and the Italian high aristocracy, which was busy consolidating its power on a strictly local basis. This distancing is expressed both in the impossibility for emperors to replace Italian marquises (whose power was entirely dynastic) and in the lack of interest of Italian aristocrats in intervening in the election of kings, as had been the case in the early 11th century. However, the imperial history between the 11th and 12th centuries cannot be interpreted in simplistic terms as a continuous and inevitable decline: Italian churches and nobles regularly addressed the Empire to obtain benefits and diplomas, the effectiveness of which appears to have been concrete; at the same time, the aristocracy seems to have articulated its own behaviour, between those who limited themselves to formal loyalty to the emperor and those who made this loyalty an effective political practice.

L'articolo si propone di analizzare forme, strumenti ed efficacia del potere imperiale in Italia tra XI e XII secolo. Il punto di partenza è costituito dai primi decenni del secolo XI, segnati da un rilevante allontanamento tra l'Impero e l'alta aristocrazia italiana, impegnata a consolidare il proprio potere su basi propriamente locali. Questo allontanamento si esprime sia nell'impossibilità per gli imperatori di sostituire i marchesi italiani (il cui potere era pienamente dinastico), sia nel disinteresse degli aristocratici italiani a intervenire nell'elezione dei re, com'era invece successo nei primi anni del secolo XI. La vicenda imperiale tra XI e XII secolo non può però essere letta nei termini semplicistici di una continua e inevitabile decadenza: chiese e nobili italiani fanno regolarmente ricorso all'Impero per ottenere benefici e diplomi, la cui efficacia appare concreta; al contempo l'aristocrazia sembra articolare i propri comportamenti, tra chi si limita a una formale fedeltà all'imperatore e chi fa di questa fedeltà un'effettiva pratica politica.

Luigi Provero, University of Turin, Italy, luigi.provero@unito.it, 0000-0002-4151-1507

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“It is very tempting to understand the evolution of the Kingdom of Italy in Matilda’s age as a precipitous process of reduction of the royal possibilities for political action, a reduction so radical as to eventually render the function of the Kingdom superfluous”. This was the incipit of Giovanni Tabacco’s 1978 paper on the structures of the Italic Kingdom between the 11th and 12th centuries,¹ and I cite it here to note that this temptation – which Tabacco himself gradually complicated in that paper, to the point of ultimately rejecting it – remains very much alive, and we must still confront it.

A particularly productive way to test the effectiveness of the relationships between the emperors and the Kingdom of Italy is to move beyond a purely institutional level and examine the networks of people and writings that criss-crossed the political society of the 11th century.² Along these lines, I will focus on two aspects: the relations between the sovereign and the great royal officials and the outcome of the fiscal estates. To do this, my discussion will focus on the period from 1039 to 1152, i.e. from the accession to the throne of Henry III to that of Frederick I. These are very traditional points of reference, but they are consistent with the aims of the book, since the decades before 1039 and those after 1152 were two periods of intense transformation of imperial power in Italy. Indeed, the reign of Frederick Barbarossa – which I will not discuss here – is best known for its conflicts with Italian powers, to the point of often overshadowing the developments of his authority in the kingdoms of Germany and Burgundy.³ The age of Henry II and Conrad II, on the other hand, had been marked by a series of changes that produced new balances, which it is necessary to outline as a premise.

1. *A preliminary note: Henry II and Conrad II*

In brief, by the mid-11th century the Kingdom of Italy was far removed from the functioning it had exhibited in the Ottonian age, and this change resulted from several different processes. First of all, the matter of royal election: in the early years of the century, it appeared both possible and attractive for the Italian aristocracy to intervene in deciding who should be the new king. The death of Otto III opened the way for the confrontation between Henry II and Arduin of Ivrea, who was crowned with the support of some great Italian

¹ Tabacco, “Le strutture del regno italico,” now in Tabacco, *Sperimentazioni del potere*, 119. All translations from the Italian are my own.

² This is the path adopted in Doublier’s important book, *Ein Reich ohne König?*

³ The most recent and articulate analysis is by Görich, *Federico Barbarossa*.

families.⁴ The tension did not end with Arduin's final defeat – which, moreover, did not come until 1014, a full twelve years after his coronation – both because Henry had to work to rebuild ties with Italian churches, dynasties and communities,⁵ and because the issue resurfaced upon his death in 1024, as shown by the contacts between certain Italian aristocrats and William of Aquitaine, to whom they offered the crown, probably on behalf of his son. And again, in 1037, some bishops, led by the Milanese Ariberto of Intimiano, within the framework of their conflicts with Conrad II, initiated similar contacts with Odo of Blois.⁶ These episodes are poorly documented and, in any case, did not produce concrete results. They nonetheless show that, in these decades, attempting to influence the royal election was an accessible and appealing option. Directly related to this context are the destruction of the palace of Pavia and – perhaps even more significant – the imperial decision not to rebuild it, events that again occurred within the window of opportunity created by the transition from Henry II to Conrad II in 1024. The citizens of Pavia took advantage of the crisis to free themselves from a presence that probably imposed more burdens than benefits. Conrad, by choosing not to rebuild the palace, acknowledged the eclipse of a properly administrative dimension of the Kingdom, leaving room instead for an approach characterised by relational networks, active recognition of local developments, and the assertion of a central position within the political and military system.⁷

The weakening of royal centrality is seen above all in the appointment – or rather, in the non-appointment – of new counts and marquises. At the highest levels, the last appointments of a marquis who was not the son of his predecessor were those of Boniface of Canossa for the March of Tuscia and the Hucpoldingian Hugh for the March of Camerino.⁸ The case of the *Amtsgrafen*, appointed from the reign of Henry IV onwards, is a completely different matter, to which I will return later.⁹

Greater mobility is evident in the comital functions,¹⁰ but, overall the room for manoeuvre available to the Empire in this respect is well illustrated by the diploma issued in 1029 for the bishop of Parma, to whom Conrad II

⁴ Sergi, *Arduino fra storia e mito*, and Levi Momigliano et al., *Arduino mille anni dopo*, especially Sergi, "Arduino marchese conservatore."

⁵ We can see from the extensive series of diplomas Henry granted to churches, laymen and communities during his brief presence in Italy between 1013 and 1014: Bresslau, *Die Urkunden Heinrichs II. und Arduins*, docs. 274-314, 323-95. The conflictual climate surrounding Henry is amply evoked in *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg*, VII.2, 400-1.

⁶ Behrends, *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, doc. 103, 186; doc. 111-3, 196-202 (for William); Nass, *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo*, 373 (for Odo).

⁷ On the destruction of the palace and its implications, see Cammarosano, *Storia dell'Italia medievale*, 237-42; Majocchi, *Pavia città regia*, 69-74.

⁸ For Bonifacio, the reconstruction by Bertolini, *Bonifacio, marchese e duca di Toscana* remains useful; for Hugh: Manarini, *I due volti del potere*, 109.

⁹ See note 40 below.

¹⁰ Collavini, "Mutazione signorile e trasformazioni economiche," 3, emphasises the mobility of comital functions in Tuscany in the 11th century.

granted *totum comitatum Parmensem [...] post decessum videlicet Barnardi comitis Vuidonis filii*, unless the count should have a legitimate son. If such a son, in turn, did not leave legitimate heirs, the district would pass to the bishop.¹¹ The public nature of the office is not entirely obscured, but dynastic control appears to prevail.¹² Naturally, the recognition of aristocratic powers had long been a requirement of the realm: Otto I's conquest of Italy had itself largely consisted in acknowledging existing dominations and reintegrating the Italian dynasties into a system of loyalty.¹³ Yet this necessary recognition became more explicit and more systematic in the 11th century.

A fact that is only apparently marginal is the growing illiteracy of the great official families. At different times – but with an interesting convergence in the decades between the 10th and 11th centuries – we see both the ability to write and even the most elementary capacity to sign one's name diminish or disappear among dynasties such as the Gisibertini, the Obertenghi and the Aldobrandeschi.¹⁴ These families moved away from cities and thus from opportunities for education, but above all their power changed, shifting towards a less administrative and more local orientation, for which writing appeared superfluous in comparison with practices rooted in orality and political ceremonial.

A profound rupture also took place in the system of fiscal lands, which is now at the centre of an intense phase of scholarship. The principal merits of this research seem to lie in three aspects: a dynamic perspective that seeks to reconstruct the actions and implications associated with fiscal possession; renewed attention to archaeological data; and, finally, the study of the relationship between fiscal lands and documentary practice – or rather, the distinctive unwritten form of the acts by which royal rights were redistributed.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that it is precisely in the first decades of the 11th century that we can trace the end of royal control over specialised production sites – the 'off-scale' sites studied particularly by Giovanna Bianchi – with the consequent weakening of a system of production and circulation within the royal economic network.¹⁶

In the same decades, two types of deeds – very different in form but sharing an underlying affinity – became significantly more common in the documentation of the great royal officials: on the one hand, the fictitious sales of

¹¹ Bresslau, *Die Urkunden Konrads II.*, doc. 143, 194.

¹² Provero, "Apparato funzionariale e reti vassallatiche," 204-11.

¹³ Cammarosano, *Nobili e re*, 263-4 and 310-9.

¹⁴ For the issue in general and the Aldobrandeschi specifically, see Collavini, "Aristocrazia d'ufficio e scrittura," especially 36-7; see also Menant, "I Gisibertini," 57. New elements regarding the Obertenghi and their literacy are emerging from Loris Motta's ongoing research; for the dynasty and its context, see Nobili, *Gli Obertenghi e altri saggi*.

¹⁵ Collavini and Tomei, "Beni fiscali e 'scritturazione';" Collavini, "'Mutazione signorile' e trasformazioni economiche," 7.

¹⁶ Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*; for some implications in terms of economic functioning, see also Fiore, *The Knots and the Nets*.

large estates to loyal followers (usually clerics), and on the other, the foundation of private monasteries. The sales could serve to manage a complex or disputed inheritance, to provide security for a church, or to protect against possible requisitions.¹⁷ The foundations expressed, above all, the intention to polarise local society around holy centres on which the “necessary generosity” – to use Georges Duby’s phrase – of those expected to demonstrate solidarity with the founders could converge.¹⁸ It is obviously not possible to offer here an exhaustive picture of the monastic foundations established by great officials between the 10th and 11th centuries. It is worth noting, however, that the activity of the Arduinic marquises of Turin appears particularly intense: over a span of about twenty years in the first half of the 11th century, we have documentary evidence for the foundation of at least three monasteries and a rectory by this family.¹⁹

Although profoundly different in many respects, foundations and sales shared their focus on lands – often of fiscal origin – that had become the fundamental basis of dynastic power. This base needed to be secured, both against hereditary partitions and, above all, against possible imperial requisitions, which rested on the assumption that royal lands retained their fiscal character indefinitely and that grants were therefore always revocable. Foundations and sales made it possible to anchor the assets in written instruments,²⁰ to obscure their original fiscal nature, and thus protect them from the Kingdom, which itself exhibited obvious weaknesses in managing the documentary memory of the Italian fiscal lands, as shown – a century later – by the serious uncertainties faced by the canons of Aachen when compiling for Frederick I the list of courts and their revenues.²¹

Finally, the processes of redistributing goods also changed with the *Edictum de beneficiis* of 1037, which was undoubtedly a form of “active ascertainment”,²² i.e. both an acknowledgement of the balances emerging within aristocratic society and a claim by the Kingdom to an overarching political-military system that had to – or should – depend on the king. Scholarly attention has generally focused on the *Edictum*’s implications for bishops and *milites*, but from my perspective it is important to note its impact on the power of the great official dynasties, whose ability to influence the middle aristocracy, and thus to act as mediators of imperial authority, was significantly reduced by the rapid effectiveness of the *Edictum*.

¹⁷ On fictitious sales, see Sergi, *I confini del potere*, 27, 83-4; Collavini, *Honorabilis domus et spetiosissimus comitatus*, 80-4, 117.

¹⁸ Duby, *Le origini dell'economia europea*, 70-1.

¹⁹ Sergi, *I confini del potere*, 87, 99, 136-7; Provero, “Monasteri, chiese e poteri,” 399-409 and 419-20.

²⁰ Collavini, e Tomei, “Beni fiscali e ‘scritturazione’.”

²¹ See note 42, below.

²² Sergi, *I confini del potere*, 385; Keller, “Das *Edictum de Beneficiis*,” Albertoni, *Vassalli, feudi, feudalesimo*, 145-51.

2. Successions of kings, successions of marquises

These developments in the first decades of the 11th century form the premises and the key to understanding the period at the centre of our enquiry. A good starting point is the question of royal succession, an issue that might seem of little relevance to Italy. Yet that is precisely the point: after the mid-11th century, the Italian aristocracy was completely excluded from elective procedures and appears passive in this respect. This was not a foregone conclusion. It had not been so in the preceding decades, when dynastic discontinuities and conflicts had offered opportunities and prospects, as we have seen from the case of Arduin onwards and then again into the 1030s.

Not even the conflicts between Lothair III and Conrad III – a century later – had the effect of opening new opportunities for intervention by the Italian aristocracy. But it was above all the reign of Henry IV, and his conflict with Gregory VII, that offered the most promising potential opportunity in 1077, when Gregory excommunicated and deposed Henry. In this context, the German princes elected Rudolf of Swabia as king, yet the Italian aristocrats did not act – either in support of Rudolf or in search of another, different king²³ – and the interventions of the major dynasties tended towards mediation rather than further destabilisation of royal authority. Between 1030 and 1070 the great Italian aristocracy had altered its outlook: it no longer operated to control the Kingdom, but rather to secure its own autonomy. If in the first decades of the century electing a king had been an accessible and attractive option, by the 1070s it was perhaps still accessible, but no longer attractive.

If the great dynasties were no longer interested in choosing the king, was the king still able to appoint new marquises? The short answer is no: after 1037 the emperors did not appoint any new marquises who were not themselves the sons of marquises. The longer answer is somewhat more complex, because the redistributive power of the Empire – always significant in terms of resources and prestige – underwent an interesting evolution over the course of the century with respect to functions and jurisdiction.

A good opportunity to understand this is provided by the history of the Arduinici, marquises of Turin from the mid-10th century to the end of the 11th.²⁴ In 1091, the death of Countess Adelaide marked the end of the March and could be interpreted as an irretrievable dynastic crisis. In fact, however, there was no dynastic crisis at that moment, since Adelaide's grandsons were alive and politically active – above all Humbert of Savoy, the son of her son Amedeo and thus a direct male descendant.

The real dynastic crisis had occurred almost sixty years earlier, in 1034, when Marquis Olderico Manfredi died leaving three daughters and no sons. At that point, however, the Kingdom could neither forgo the March nor detach

²³ D'Acunto, *La lotta per le investiture*, 141.

²⁴ For the whole history of the Arduinici, see Sergi, *I confini del potere*, 56–141.

its fate from that of the Arduinic dynasty, whose rootedness in the territory was too strong to be resisted – that is, too strong to allow the imposition of a different marquis in their place. The solution is succinctly and effectively described by Hermann of Reichenau: “Herimannus quoque dux Alamanniae, marcham soceri sui Meginfridi in Italia ab imperatore accepit”.²⁵ The passage makes its institutional ambiguity perfectly clear: the March was that of the father-in-law, transmitted hereditarily to Adelaide’s husband, Hermann, who nevertheless received it from the emperor – a necessary mediator to legitimise a transmission that was indeed hereditary but did not possess a fully patrimonial character.²⁶ The point of balance was therefore to preserve the unity of the March by recognising Adelaide as its *de facto* holder and by avoiding a fully patrimonial division among Olderico’s three daughters and the different branches of the Arduinic family.

The Arduinic affair is particularly clear in its successive phases, but it forms part of a much broader process in which new female powers emerge, linked above all to the increasing structuring of families along patrilineal lines – a development that entailed the exclusion of parallel branches and generated difficulties in the absence of sons, with powers consequently devolving upon daughters.²⁷ It was also connected to the fear, on the part of the various parties involved – and in particular the Empire – of destabilising the regional political framework, as would have occurred in this case with the appointment of a new marquis from a different family.

Adelaide’s rise to power in 1034 was thus the result of a convergence between royal authority and dynastic interests: the Empire needed to preserve the unity of territorial blocs that ensured a relatively effective mediation between the sovereign and local societies, yet the power of these dynasties had acquired such autonomous solidity that the unity of the district could be maintained only by recognising and consolidating this entrenched position.

In 1091 the situation was very different: Henry IV was obviously unable to counter the strength of Adelaide’s descendants, but he had no interest in preserving the March, an intermediate structure that no longer functioned as a channel of mediation towards local society. As a result, the Counts of Savoy and the Marquises of Vasto were able to develop their princely-oriented seigneurial powers with considerable autonomy, asserting control over larger or smaller portions of the March. At the same time, the emperor sought to seize Adelaide’s patrimony, in a claim that combined the fiscal character of the lands with the personal bond that linked Henry to the countess, mother of his first wife.²⁸

²⁵ Herimanni Augiensis *Chronicon*, 122.

²⁶ Creber, “Adelaide of Turin,” 37-40, discusses Emperor Conrad II’s intervention in enabling the succession and linking Adelaide to imperial power through her marriage to Hermann. Gandino, *Contemplare l’ordine*, 191 emphasises how a model already operating at the royal level – namely, the transmission of royal charisma through women – is taken up here.

²⁷ Lazzari, “I poteri delle donne al tempo di Matilde,” especially 54.

²⁸ Tabacco, “L’eredità politica della contessa Adelaide.” For the question of royal intervention in Adelaide’s estate, see n. 38, below.

Interesting analogies can be found in the developments in the March of Tusciana throughout the 11th century. Here too the dynastic crisis triggered by the death of Boniface was managed in the 1050s by accepting the *de facto* authority of Beatrix and Matilda, in a manner not unlike what occurred in the March of Turin. Yet even here the imperial orientation changed profoundly in the following decades. Before Matilda's death in 1115, a key moment came in the early 1080s, when Henry IV stripped Matilda of the title of marquise and issued two diplomas to the cities of Lucca and Pisa, outlining a political model based on direct communication between the Empire and the cities – bypassing all mediation and, above all, dispensing with the March as a mediating structure.²⁹

The change in the second half of the 11th century therefore lay not so much in the dynastic strengthening of the royal officials – long already underway – but in the decline of their ability and willingness to act as mediators between the emperor and Italian society. And, in what was hardly a coincidental convergence, this development overlapped with the effects of the Reform: both because of the impact of the prolonged civil wars and because of the lasting rupture in relations between the Empire and the bishops, which undermined the latter's capacity to act as mediators between the Kingdom and the cities, as they had very concretely done until the first decades of the century.

3. *Calling on the emperor*

At the end of the 11th century, the Empire thus lacked structural mediators within Italian society. In this context, imperial power must be understood in relational terms, and we must therefore assess the ability of different political actors to manipulate this network in ways that could challenge imperial authority.

We can step back a few decades, and in this respect Germana Gandino has interpreted the 1037 testament of Landolph, bishop of Turin,³⁰ which is situated in a dual context: on the one hand, the profound crisis of the Arduinic dynasty, with the delicate question of female succession to Marquis Olderico; and on the other, the strong and direct presence of the emperor in Lombardy, in the midst of the conflict between bishops and vassals. Through a refined textual operation – crafted through both words and silences – Landolph presented himself as an effective and reliable local embodiment of imperial power, in opposition both to the marquises, portrayed as incapable of guaranteeing peace, and to the archbishop of Milan, who at that time was aligned with the Arduinics and opposed to the emperor.

²⁹ Doublier, *Ein Reich ohne König?*, 65–74. For the diplomas for Lucca and Pisa, see below, no. 33.

³⁰ Gandino, *Contemplare l'ordine*, 188–210 (my entire presentation follows Gandino's analysis); edition in Cancian, "Il testamento di Landolfo."

The operation was carried out in three steps: first, the presentation of the diocese as a desolate and defenceless land, subject to the violence of pagans and Christians alike, of strangers and compatriots; second, the works undertaken by Landolph, in which the construction of each church is invariably preceded by fortifications, since an orderly religious life required the protection of social life, which only the bishop could guarantee; and finally, the commissioning of the monks of Cavour to pray for the emperor and empress, for the bishops, and for the faithful – with a “resounding silence” (as Gandino puts it) regarding the Arduinic marquises and the archbishop of Milan.

Similar developments – some decades later – can be found in another famous text, namely the letter sent by the monks of Monte Amiata (in southern Tuscany) to Henry IV, probably in 1081, to denounce the violence inflicted upon them by the Aldobrandeschi counts.³¹ Here too the act is situated in a dual context, again at the crossroads of regional dynamics and imperial action: first, the long-standing tension between the counts and the monks, with the abbey’s commitment – “a fiscal patrimony endowed with conscience”, as it has been aptly described³² – to resisting the advancing process of patrimonialisation by the Aldobrandeschi; and second, the period of intense imperial intervention in Tuscany by Henry IV, who between 1080 and 1081 had deposed Matilda and issued two important diplomas to Lucca and Pisa, likely made more effective by the emperor’s direct presence in the region.³³

Precisely the themes of imperial mobility and the variable impact of imperial power lie at the heart of the Amiata monks’s argument, in which they highlight a fundamental change. When Henry III had intervened in person, Count Hildebrand had submitted to the imperial will, only to attack the abbey again once the emperor had departed. When, by contrast, Henry IV approached Tuscany, Hildebrand’s sons fortified themselves and increased the pressure on the abbey’s resources and men. The picture had shifted: although no one could ignore the approach of the sovereign and his armies, the ways of responding to it differed, so that by the end of the century submission was only one of the available options.

On this basis, the monks make a further textual move, seeking to draw a sharp contrast between the seigneurial power of the counts and their own, and they do so through a shrewd and insistent use of possessives. The monks and the abbey are consistently associated with the Empire (with no fewer than twenty-one repetitions of the possessive *tui* throughout the letter), while the connection between the counts and the sovereign is either silenced or denied (the violence is carried out “a comitibus iuxta eam positus”, or “a comite, qui Ildebrandus dicebatur”). A systematic juxtaposition of possessives is thus

³¹ Published in Kurze, *Monasteri e nobiltà nel Senese*, 262-3; see Collavini, *Honorabilis domus et spetiosissimus comitatus*, 133-6.

³² Collavini, 87.

³³ Von Gladiss and Gawlik, *Die Urkunden Heinrichs IV.*, doc. 334, 437; doc. 336, 442; context in Ronzani, “L’affermazione dei Comuni cittadini fra Impero e Papato.”

constructed, in which *servi tui* (the monks) are opposed to *sui milites*, and so on. The counts are presented as outsiders to the imperial power structure, acting against a royal church and therefore against the king himself.

The monks' attempt failed, just as Bishop Landolph's had failed; but these textual strategies clearly show how, throughout the 11th century, royal power – viewed from the point of view of local forces – was one of the elements in play, or rather, to quote Tabacco, “a hegemonic element whose decisive action was requested or accepted in situations of stalemate of conflicting local forces”.³⁴ Imperial power was invoked not only by appealing for its intervention, but also by situating a church within the power structure headed by the emperor, thereby denying or delegitimising the role of counts and marquises within the same system. Certainly, the capacity of churches to manipulate texts is nothing new; what is new is the malleability of the political-institutional framework, in the context of a progressive and non-linear loosening of the imperial grip on Italian society. District frameworks were no longer a relevant point of reference. Thus, whereas Landolph in 1037 sought to replace the Arduinici as mediator between his diocese and the Empire, the horizon of the Amiata monks in 1081 was entirely different: their aim was to protect the monastery, its lands, and its men.

Even after applying all the necessary qualifications that prevent us from reading the decades at the turn of the century as a period of total imperial absence from Italy, the discontinuities remain undeniable. In the first half of the 12th century, imperial presence in Italy was sporadic, and between 1097 and 1110 there is a complete absence of diplomas issued for Italian entities or dynasties.³⁵ This fact that must, however, be used with caution, since the documentary series of several episcopal sees display significant gaps precisely at the end of the 11th century – gaps corresponding to the tenure of imperial bishops whose memory was probably erased later (and who would have been potential recipients of diplomas).³⁶ There was no power vacuum, to be sure, but rather a crowding – “an unbridled competition of powers”,³⁷ in which the Empire struggled to find its place.

Periodic imperial absences meant that moments of presence became occasions for assertion. This was the case with the lands of Adelaide and Matilda, whose vast inheritances became object of struggle in which the Empire did not act as arbiter but as a party.³⁸ These lands were expected to serve as a key instrument for ensuring a concrete imperial presence, yet the fragility of imperial claims also emerges in the law issued by Lothar III in 1136, which,

³⁴ Tabacco, *Sperimentazioni del potere*, 121.

³⁵ Doublier, *Ein Reich ohne König?*, 89; Fiore, *Il mutamento signorile*, 46.

³⁶ D'Acunto, *La lotta per le investiture*, 161-4.

³⁷ Tabacco, *Dai re ai signori*, 97.

³⁸ For Matilda's possessions, see Gross, *Lothar III. und die Mathildischen Güter*; less documented is the imperial intervention in the dispute over Adelaide's possessions, on which see Fiore, *Il mutamento signorile*, 45.

in regulating feudal relations, acknowledged the existence of autonomous military nuclei not fully connected to the Kingdom.³⁹ It is in this context that the so-called *Amtsgrafen* – the counts and marquises appointed by Henry IV and subsequently by Henry V and Lothair III – acquired growing relevance: German aristocrats with no local roots in the territories in which they operated, entrusted not with the unrealistic task of governing them, but with the far more specific and concrete function of managing the imperial estates.⁴⁰

In the same vein, the list of fiscal properties drawn up by the canons of Aachen, probably between 1152 and 1153, was first and foremost a claim – but also an admission of the profound difficulties in knowing the actual Italian situation.⁴¹ Shortly after being elected king of Germany, and before descending into Italy to be crowned emperor, Frederick Barbarossa asked the canons of Aachen to draw up a list of the fiscal courts, indicating for each how much was owed to the king. The canons produced a series of short lists for the different regions of the Empire: Saxony, Rhineland, Bavaria, and Lombardy. But whereas the first three lists are clear, naming easily identifiable places with well-defined levies, matters become difficult when Italy is reached: the canons record toponyms that are often unrecognisable and, in any case, always incorrect (e.g. Carvil, Cavallar, Sypont...). As Renato Bordone has noted, these toponyms “are transcribed in a highly distorted form, certainly attributable to the incomprehension of the German copyists”.⁴² And even the levy claimed by the Empire in the various courts are poorly defined, formulated at times in expressions that are enigmatic at best (“Septima dat II regalia servitia, Turrin allodium suum”). Clearly, the canons were relying on fragmentary and uncertain documentary traditions, writing about places with which they were unfamiliar, and they could not rely on any regular imperial practice of levy-collection. Indeed, the final statement is illuminating: “iste sunt curie de Lombardia: tantum dant, quod nullus potest renarrare nec investigare, nisi prius veniamus in Lombardiam”. The Empire needed to read the territory and organise information into operational lists on a basis that was above all patrimonial; yet a clear sign of imperial weakness lies in the obvious limits of its knowledge of the territory and of its own patrimony.

4. *Loyalty as a political practice*

An important way to understand the Empire’s insertion into the crowded landscape of powers during these decades is through its documentary sys-

³⁹ Tabacco, *Dai re ai signori*, 96; Albertoni, *Vassalli, feudi, feudalesimo*, 158-60.

⁴⁰ Bordone, “L’amministrazione del regno d’Italia;” Fiore, “L’impero come signore,” 36-7; Cortese, “L’impero e la Toscana,” 58.

⁴¹ Edited in Bühl and Kölzer, *Das Tafelgüterverzeichnis*; the most recent analysis is Bordone, “L’enigmatico elenco dei beni fiscali.”

⁴² Bordone, “L’enigmatico elenco dei beni fiscali,” 68.

tem: not only the most forceful and most programmatic texts – some of which I have already mentioned – but also the sequences and transformations of textual models.⁴³ I would like to highlight three aspects: two are very well known (and I will therefore mention them only briefly), while the third, to my mind, deserves particular attention.

The first point concerns the *placita*, or rather their disappearance – a process that was undoubtedly slow, yet shows a clear progression over the second half of the 11th century. This development directly reflects the limits of the Empire's coercive effectiveness, which had become insufficient to sustain its credibility as a judge capable of bringing an end to litigations.⁴⁴ A second aspect concerns the sequence of imperial diplomas for Italy throughout the 11th century, and specifically the increase in diplomas granted to urban communities. The few diplomas issued in the first half of the century show that direct political communication between the sovereign and the communities was already an available option within imperial political practices,⁴⁵ but it is only from the final years of Henry III onwards that we see the frequency of such diplomas increase. This growth continues in the following decades, with certain periods of acceleration,⁴⁶ and, above all, with a profound change in their content: from patrimonial protections and tax exemptions they shift towards an increasingly explicit promotion of more properly political components, as is already evident under Henry V.⁴⁷

These two developments in the imperial documentary system are well known. The third theme – less emphasised in historiography – concerns people, and specifically those who stood beside the emperor during assemblies. The assembly constituted the foundational political ceremonial of the relationship between king and aristocracy,⁴⁸ and it served the interests of all the parties involved: for the recipients of the diploma, the public display of the ceremonial concession offered the first political guarantee of the diploma's effectiveness; for the great aristocrats, the assembly provided an opportunity to exhibit their direct and privileged relationship with the king; and, finally, for the king, the assembly offered the firmest foundation for his decisions and a means of displaying aristocratic support and the extent of his clientele.

⁴³ On this matter, see the relevant analysis in Doublier, *Ein Reich ohne König?*

⁴⁴ Wickham, "The 'Feudal Revolution'"; Wickham, *Sonnambuli verso un nuovo mondo*, 17; Fiore, *Il mutamento signorile*, 53 and 157-8.

⁴⁵ Bresslau, *Die Urkunden Heinrichs II. und Arduins*, doc. 278, 328; doc. 303, 377.

⁴⁶ As at the time of Matilda's deposition as marchioness of Tuscany in 1080 and then at her death in 1115 – when diplomas for cities within the Canossian sphere of influence increased – in 1081 we find the diplomas for Lucca and Pisa (above, n. 33), in 1116 those for Mantua, Bologna, and again Lucca. Provisional editions are available in the MGH database: <https://data.mgh.de/databases/ddhv/> (docs. 174, 179, and 192). For the rise in the number of diplomas granted to communities from the 1080s onwards, see Doublier, *Ein Reich ohne König?*, 65-74.

⁴⁷ Tabacco, *Sperimentazioni del potere*, 136-7; Tabacco, "La sintesi istituzionale di vescovi e città."

⁴⁸ Reuter, *Medieval Politics*, 347; see e.g. the rituals studied by Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, especially 259-401.

An important change occurred precisely between the 11th and 12th centuries, highlighted by a very specific feature. As early as 1970, Alfred Gawlik – in a study that seems not to have circulated widely⁴⁹ – emphasised the transition from *intervenientes* to witnesses, initiated under Henry IV and completed under his successors. Essentially, until the mid-11th century, imperial diplomas lack witnesses, and in the proem the sovereign often declares that he grants goods and rights through the intervention of certain great figures of the court (the empress, the chancellor, prominent bishops...). From the end of the century onwards, and especially under Lothair III, diplomas regularly include lists – often lengthy – of witnesses.

We can certainly assume that already in the Ottonian and early Salian periods diplomas were normally issued within an assembly framework,⁵⁰ and on a diplomatistic and legal level witnesses were obviously still unnecessary in a royal diploma, whose validity was guaranteed by the sovereign's will and by chancery forms. On the other hand, it is on the political level that the change must be understood: the *intervenientes* were mediators of the petition addressed to the imperial authority and prompted the sovereign to hear it; the witnesses, by contrast, were guarantors not of the deed and its legal validity, but of its publicity and thus its political effectiveness. The transition from *intervenientes* to witnesses brings to the fore the collective and networked nature of imperial power, which found its fullest expression in the ceremonial of the assembly.

Understanding imperial power between the 11th and 12th centuries in terms of network thus requires a partial shift in the framework through which we read diplomas: the prevailing focus on recipients, contents, and ideologies must be complemented by a systematic consideration of political ceremonial, expressed both in the places and contexts of drafting and in the assembly of those who stood beside the emperor, attending to, or more accurately participating in, the ceremonial of granting the diploma. This approach seems to me the most appropriate for interpreting loyalty to the Empire as a political practice: what matters is not so much identifying who was formally a vassal of the emperor, but rather who made this dependence visible and turned it into a determining factor of their own political action.

In conclusion, two key notions have run through my paper: mediation and vindication. They offer useful lenses for understanding the changes that reshaped imperial power. The mediation once guaranteed by royal officials and bishops entered into profound crisis, and the Empire struggled to formulate alternative means of securing its presence in Italy. The imperial response was articulated above all in terms of claim, on three levels: jurisdictional, by asserting royal centrality within the political-military apparatus; ceremonial,

⁴⁹ Gawlik, *Intervenienten und Zeugen*; I owe this reference to Étienne Doublier.

⁵⁰ Settia, "Pavia carolingia e postcarolingia," 109. The convergence of the aristocracy around the king is evident, for instance, in Otto III's diploma for Hugh of Tuscany of 994: *Die Urkunden Otto des III.*, doc. 147, 557-8.

through the assemblies that marked the emperors' intermittent presence in Italy; and patrimonial, through actions aimed at recovering assets of fiscal origin. On these bases – and indeed along these same lines – Frederick I was able to act in the following decades. His intervention, however, had to unfold in a context in which both the political actors and the rules of the game had changed compared to the age of Henry IV (the last phase of intense imperial presence in Italy). This difficulty is vividly expressed in Otto of Freising's famous passage,⁵¹ in which he describes Italy as a world turned upside down, where the cities dominated the princes: a difficulty in reading Italian political geography, and a difficulty in understanding the rules of the game. This is one of the clearest signs of the deep rift between the emperors and the Kingdom of Italy – a world which, in the first decades of the 12th century, they controlled only marginally and understood even less.

The relationship between the Empire and the great Italian aristocracy thus constitutes a specific vantage point, but also a key element for grasping the balances and functioning of 11th-century politics. The decades between 1000 and 1040 marked a first, important phase in the aristocracy's estrangement from the sovereigns – both in terms of the effectiveness of imperial coordination and of the aristocratic willingness and ability to influence imperial power. But this process underwent a further and evident acceleration from the last decades of the century: amid harsh conflicts, a redefinition of the nature and limits of imperial power, and above all a profound crisis of imperial presence in Italy, aristocratic powers repositioned themselves around the Empire in new ways, recognising both their own wide spaces of autonomy and the limited effectiveness of imperial coordination – understood increasingly as a hierarchical relational network. It is not possible here to delve into depth in the wide-ranging debate on the global impact of the 11th-century Reform⁵², but two points seem to me beyond doubt: first, the profound impact of the late 11th-century conflicts in redefining imperial power in Italy; and second, the need to situate these conflicts within a broader context, encompassing a multiplicity of processes and a more extended chronology, as this book as a whole seeks to do.

⁵¹ Ottonis et Rahewini *Gesta Friderici I. imperatoris*, l. II ch. 13, 114-7

⁵² The debate has been widely discussed – often with polemical overtones – especially in France: Barthélemy, “Domination seigneuriale et réforme grégorienne;” Henriët, “Le pangrégorianisme et ses excès;” Mazel, “Réforme grégorienne;” Henriët, “De quelques assertions fausses.” The starting point for this discussion is Mazel, *Nouvelle histoire du Moyen âge*.

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Luigi Provero
Università degli Studi di Torino
luigi.provero@unito.it
ORCID: 0000-0002-4151-1507

Mutations and resilience of a political society: Southern Italy in the 11th and 12th centuries

by Vito Loré

The aim of this article is to describe the primary changes in southern Italy's political society between the end of the 10th century and the 12th, focusing on the Normans' impact on the Byzantine provinces and the Lombard principalities.

L'obiettivo di questo articolo è descrivere i principali cambiamenti nella società politica dell'Italia meridionale tra la fine del X secolo e il XII, concentrandosi sull'impatto dei Normanni sulle province bizantine e sui principati longobardi.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Southern Italy, Bari, Salerno, Capua, Lombards, Byzantine Empire, Normans, Counts.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Italia meridionale, Bari, Salerno, Capua, Longobardi, Impero bizantino, Normanni, conti.

Vito Loré, Roma Tre University, Italy, vito.lore@uniroma3.it, 0000-0002-5843-5432

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1. *Introduction*

The political history of southern Italy between the 11th and 12th centuries has been covered by a rich tradition of studies.¹ To give a measure of its great complexity, it is sufficient to briefly recall this narrative's main stages: the advent of the Normans as mercenaries at the beginning of the 11th century; their gradual military development and their first autonomous political initiatives; the disappearance of the Lombard principalities and the end of Byzantine domination in the years 1058-1077; the birth of Norman political institutions and the simultaneous spread of rural lordships; and finally, the foundation of the Kingdom of Sicily after a long period of war, being led by Roger II against the aristocracy of continental southern Italy, between 1127 and 1142. In the following pages I will attempt to identify the main avenues of change in macropolitical structures that underlie these events, thus outlining a possible periodization. My attention will be limited to continental southern Italy: the long period of the Muslim domination of Sicily requires us to consider it in its own right, as has been carried out in recent years with excellent results, framing the conquest and construction of Norman power within the framework of the Arab administration.² The main prism through which I will look at these transformations is the spread of local powers and their relationship with the centre. I will start from the last decades of the 10th century; this is necessary in order to describe the different starting points as well as the different evolutions, which were perhaps interrupted before being made homogeneous by the Norman conquest in two distinct phases.

2. *Lombard Capua and Benevento*

Let us start in the north. The principality of Capua and Benevento was a unitary political entity until 981; in that year, it split into two autonomous political entities following the death of Prince Pandolf. From the 940s onwards, territorial districts with an urban base and governed by counts multiplied. The title of count gradually replaced that of gastald: this is a sign of a growth in the prestige of the officials, who constituted only a small group. These counts were almost all related to princes and transmitted their title to their descendants, often retaining control of the same district for two or three generations: it was not the rule, but it happened frequently.³ These counts were largely autonomous: according to a shared principle, they generally held

¹ Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard*; Taviani-Carozzi, *La terreur du monde*; Becker, *Graf Roger I. von Sizilien*; Houben, *Roger II of Sicily*.

² Johns, *Arabic Administration*; Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*.

³ See a recent overview in Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 9-33. See also Loré, "I conti nel Mezzogiorno longobardo" and Di Muro, "Ancora sulle contee."

the public property within their territories.⁴ Yet the category of ‘privatisation of power’, which has been used in this respect by Jean-Marie Martin,⁵ does not seem entirely adequate to express this delicate and unstable balance between officials and principles. These counts shared power with princes and, in extreme cases, acted as princes as well. The counts of Teano had their own judges, donated public lands without the prince’s consent, and went so far as to mint coins.⁶ On some occasions, however, exceptionally powerful officials – the same counts of Teano, for example, or those of Avellino – ran for the principality: they evidently felt, and indeed were, part of a unitary group;⁷ many of them habitually resided in the capitals, in Capua or Benevento.⁸ Moreover, the great abbeys of Montecassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno rebuilt – or constituted – their great landed estates with the support of the princes, just as the counts saw their power increase: as Martin himself has noted,⁹ this was the fruit of a precise design which balanced comital power with the return of the two monastic communities to their original seats, after the destruction wrought by the Muslims at the end of the 9th century and their subsequent ‘exile’ in Capua and Teano.

The counts made up a small political society: each of them held a share of power. This consortial conception of power finally became based on agreements. In the final Lombard phase, the relations of the counts and even of some princes with Montecassino were regulated by oaths of non-aggression: these oaths sanctioned the central position assumed by the monastery and the subalternity of the princes.¹⁰ In general, the way the counts understood their power tended to be uniform, was shared by the whole group, and did not depend on whether or not their particular district became dynastic.¹¹ Reference to a particular conception of power is not enough to give an idea of this situation, however: in the final Lombard period, a real dispersion of public prerogatives is evident. Perhaps it was more rapid in Benevento than in Capua, as Jean-Marie Martin thought¹² on the basis of various clues: comital

⁴ Loré, “Beni principeschi e partecipazione al potere,” 21-30.

⁵ Martin, “Éléments préféodaux.”

⁶ Di Muro, “Le contee longobarde,” 17-20, 20-1 and note 252.

⁷ Laidulf, Count of Teano, Prince of Capua (993-9): Cilento, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 173, note 35 and Thomas, *Jeux lombards*, 86; Landulf of Sant’Agata, Prince of Capua (999-1007): Hoffmann, *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, II, 15; Pandulf V, Count of Teano, Prince of Capua (1022-6): Thomas, *Jeux lombards*, 327-30; Adelferius, Count of Avellino, Prince of Benevento (1003-5): Thomas, *Jeux lombards*, 228-9, 302-5.

⁸ There are a couple of references to this in Loré, “Limiti di una tradizione documentaria,” 225-6; however, the best example of the enduring relationship of the counts with the capital cities is probably the late document edited by Petrucci, *Codice Diplomatico*, doc. 35 (1045?): Count Tasselgard donated the town of Gaudia, at the mouth of the Fortore River, to the monastery of Santa Maria of Tremiti; among other things, the citizens of Gaudia were to undertake to provide Tasselgard with two horses each time Altruda, his wife, had to go to Benevento.

⁹ Martin, “Éléments préféodaux,” 574-7.

¹⁰ Martin, “Quelques remarques.”

¹¹ Loré, “Beni principeschi,” 21-30, and above.

¹² Martin, “Éléments préféodaux,” 575, 579; Martin, “Aristocraties et seigneuries,” 232-3.

districts, rights of levy, and justice dispersed through perpetual concessions;¹³ bitter military confrontations between princes, Montecassino, and the counts of Aquino and Alife;¹⁴ and in a few cases, the autonomous construction of numerous castles on lands owned by the counts (although in Molise in the first decades of the 11th century, the Normans had already settled in the area and the climate had changed by then).¹⁵ It is important to note, however, that this dispersion remained until the very end of the Lombard era within a perimeter determined by the public power, to the benefit of those officials and monasteries that were protected by the princes. The autonomous appropriation of public prerogatives by other subjects is absent in the principality of Capua-Benevento until the end of the Lombard period.

3. *Lombard Salerno*

The evolution of the principality of Salerno is in this respect only partly similar and is certainly later. In Salerno, the stability of the public power framework seems absolute until the mid-11th century. Here, the counts' autonomy appears much less pronounced, even if one has to take stock of the documents: the prestige of the counts is 'hidden' by the customs of the Salerno notaries, who evoke them in a uniform manner while managing their personal affairs: name, title, and patronymic, but without any reference to the personal prestige and public role they actually played. In this way the eminent position of the sole *dominus*, the prince, stood out.¹⁶ The fragments of a peripheral archive and the enhancement of a few scattered records, have changed this perspective somewhat, however. In the Salerno principality's inland areas, the prestige of certain counts who were often relatives of princes was exhibited by elevated titles, and public lands were in turn attributed to the official who controlled that area, according to the same principle which held sway in Capua-Benevento.¹⁷ Thus, the comital group – which was large, growing, and open to external contributions – was much more varied than the notaries allow us to see at first glance. In Salerno, however, concessions of justice and military rights are practically absent – apart from a very few exceptions, almost all of which are in favour of the Salerno bishopric¹⁸ – and we have no evidence of the counts in the territory carrying out autonomous military activities. In this area we seem rather to witness a familial articulation of princely power, as a response to an abrupt political change. With the

¹³ Martin, "Éléments préféodaux," 575-9.

¹⁴ Hoffmann, *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*, 167, 240-1, 304 and ff. on Aquino, 176 (see Martin, *Registrum Petri Diaconi*, doc. 314) on Alife; Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 10-3, 24.

¹⁵ Di Muro, 30-2.

¹⁶ Loré, "Limiti di una tradizione;" Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana."

¹⁷ Loré, "Limiti di una tradizione," 209-20.

¹⁸ Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana," 70; on princely concessions to bishops, see Di Muro, *Mezzogiorno longobardo*, 212-21; Di Muro, *Terra, uomini e poteri signorili*, 17-29.

decisive help of Norman mercenaries, Guaimarius IV had managed to subdue Capua in the 1040s and had even tried to conquer Bari, the centre of Byzantine administration in southern Italy; Salerno's expansion probably followed lines of economic integration which were already active between Campania and Apulia.¹⁹

Guaimarius lost Capua in 1047, and in the following months began to divide into real shares a large landed patrimony which he had hitherto shared with his two male brothers, Guido and Paldulf. The division of this patrimony was not just an economic act, but sanctioned Guido and Paldulf's growth as well as the informal division of the principality into three areas of political-military influence. In the deeds of division the prince's brothers bore the title of *dominus*, which had hitherto been exclusively attributed to the prince, and in the years immediately following they assumed new roles: Guido became count of Conza, an important centre on the Apennine ridge, while Paldulf built his own lordship in Capaccio, at the gateway to Cilento.²⁰ In my opinion, this division of wealth as well as the brothers' political rise should not be read as a centrifugal movement: rather, it seems to me to be a coordinated move, probably a response to the Normans' new role, who after the failure of Guaimarius' 'imperial' policy had settled in the Salerno area. The difference between Salerno and Capua-Benevento thus concerns not only the timing, but also the quality of the 'dispersion' of public powers: in the former it was the limited effect of a revision that had been agreed upon at the top as a response to an external change; namely, the transformation of the Normans from mercenaries into rural lords. In any case, the experiment lasted only a few years: the death of Guaimarius in 1052 as the result of a conspiracy brought the Normans to the spread, and the princes' freedom of action was drastically reduced: Gisulf II, Guaimarius' son, was left with only Salerno, as well as some areas near the city and part of Cilento.²¹

4. *Byzantine Apulia*

Apulia is the best-documented part of the Byzantine provinces, and its situation was different from the previous examples for three reasons: the fact of it belonging to an imperial political formation with a distant capital, the presence of several urban centres with politically active citizenries (not only Bari, the seat of the regional government), and finally the central role of taxa-

¹⁹ Delogu, "La terra del latte e del miele," 11; Travaini, *La monetazione nell'Italia normanna*, 14-9.

²⁰ Morcaldi, Schiani, e De Stefano, *Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*, vol. 7, docc. 1083 (1047), 1115 e 1116 (1049); Volpini, "Diplomi," docc. 3-4 (1047); Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté*, 857-65; Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana," 74-6; Loré, "Obblighi di lavoro," 337-9.

²¹ Loré, "L'aristocrazia salernitana," 76-8; also Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 35-40 and Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté*, 981-5.

tion in the Empire.²² From the beginning of the 11th century the sources clearly show the active role of citizen leaders, then of citizenries sometimes united against imperial rule and at other times divided into factions with opposing orientations; citizens fought to gain more favourable positions to face the Byzantine Empire, but acting within a broad scenario reaching as far as the Germanic Empire.²³ The conflict within the cities found its material expression in the numerous tower-houses, which were focal points of the military confrontations between the various factions.²⁴

As Vera von Falkenhausen noted some years ago, the Apulian subjects did not aspire to become entirely independent,²⁵ nor to build autonomous territorial domains. In fact, there is nothing to suggest a fragmentation of the territory into autonomous centres prior to the Normans' definitive establishment in the region: the hypothesis of an explosion into seigniories in Byzantine Apulia was elaborated by André Guillou on the basis of the *sigillion* of the Catepan Eustatius (1045), with which he ceded the public revenues of the village of *Pholinianon* to the judge Bisantius. It is an exceptional document, but it witnesses a widespread practice in the Empire and cannot be read as an indication of a seigneurial development.²⁶ The phenomenon that Francesco Carabellese called the 'Apulian commune' should nevertheless be reconsidered in a comprehensive manner.²⁷ It is true that there are no traces of communal-type institutions in Apulian towns; furthermore, when autonomy found an institutional form in the first decades of Norman domination, the towns turned towards the principality: the best-documented case is that of Grimoald, prince of Bari. Despite this, there were many episodes of political self-determination and armed struggle between factions in the Apulian towns between the mid-11th century and the 1220s, which continued until the final establishment of the Norman kingdom.²⁸

²² Cosentino, "Rileggendo un atto pugliese del 1017."

²³ Falkenhausen, *I Bizantini in Italia*, 66-8, 77-8, 114, 121-3; Eadem, "Bari bizantina", 82-3. On Bari in the 11th century, see also recently Galluzzi, "Una storia senza fine," and Skinner, "Room for Tension" (on the 11th and 12th centuries).

²⁴ On this point Delogu, "I Normanni in città," 187-90, and now Carocci, "Nobility, conflicts, and buildings."

²⁵ Falkenhausen, "Bari bizantina," 83: "Nonostante l'opposizione e le varie insurrezioni della nobiltà locale contro il governo imperiale, non si sono mai sviluppate a Bari istituzioni corporative o di autogoverno. Una delle ragioni di questo sviluppo mancato potrebbe risiedere nel costante orientamento verso Costantinopoli del ceto dirigente barese." Here the scholar seems to correct the opinion previously expressed in Falkenhausen, "I Bizantini in Italia," 121, where she mentioned the possibility that the rebels aspired to autonomous rule over the region.

²⁶ Lefort-Martin, "Le *sigillion*;" Martin, "Aristocracies et seigneuries," 235-6.

²⁷ Carabellese, *L'Apulia ed il suo comune*.

²⁸ Wickham, "City Society in twelfth-century Italy;" Oldfield, *City and Community*, 27-81 (46-9 on Bari and Grimoald), 124-62, 165-83 and Carocci, e Loré, "Accedere alla comunità," notably 36-43, with a somewhat different perspective from Oldfield's. On Bari, see now also Galluzzi, "Una storia senza fine."

5. *The norman conquest*

In the transformations I have described, the Normans were in part already there. They were part of the picture, even as troops of the Byzantine army, according to some recently revived and newly-articulated hypotheses, certainly as mercenaries in the pay of one or another of the protagonists. They were 'unforeseen', as Ovidio Capitani wished,²⁹ but their irruption into the southern scenario and the success of their work of conquest were probably not accidental: the Normans were employed as mercenaries in a context which in some respects were similar to that which had seen the Muslims take part in the conflicts between Salerno, Capua, Naples, and Benevento in the 9th century.³⁰ Southern political formations fought each other for supremacy, driven by an aspiration for political integration that had to meet profound economic needs.³¹ The absence of vassal-type relations³² and the relatively intense circulation of money³³ probably led to weakness in the Lombard peoples' armies, which were in fact limited to the populations of the larger centres;³⁴ it may also have led to the imperial army being supplemented by foreign troops.³⁵ The Normans thus responded to a structural need in the southern societies, but they gradually became autonomous political actors, taking advantage of the same weakness that had offered their first opportunity. I believe that a similarity of substratum may explain the profound analogy between the theatres of the 'Norman' conquests, southern Italy, and England: in both cases, kings and princes holding power with a strong public character³⁶ exercised effective control over regional spaces which nevertheless tended towards mutual integration through frequent military confrontation. The systematic use of mercenaries gave them the opportunity to erode the old powers and establish themselves as autonomous political subjects. Even the English kingdoms, prior to 1066, had been subdued and unified by the Danes, who had arrived as mercenaries

Yet, although the Normans had already been present in southern Italy for some time, their definitive establishment turned the tables. The end of the Lombard principalities and Byzantine provinces brought with it a general affirmation of local lordships, which was an effect of the conquest: Norman military leaders established themselves as lords, and even some powerful

²⁹ Capitani, *Storia dell'Italia medievale*, 270-5.

³⁰ Regarding this argument, see recently Di Branco-Wolf, "Terra di conquista," Di Branco, 915. *La battaglia*; Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 231-40.

³¹ Delogu, "La terra del latte e del miele," 8-11.

³² Martin, "Éléments préféodaux," remains the main work on this point.

³³ Martin, "Economia naturale ed economia monetaria," 216-9; Loud, "Coinage, wealth and plunder."

³⁴ On this point, the best examples come from Westerbergh, *Chronicon Salernitanum*, 42-9; Loré, "I gastaldi nella Puglia longobarda," 266-70; Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 156-9.

³⁵ On this topic, see recently Violante, "Alle origini della conquista," with further bibliography.

³⁶ Wareham, *Fiscal Policies*.

Lombards adapted to the new situation.³⁷ It was an abrupt change, occurring in the years 1050-1070, but only became evident in the documentation from the late 1070s onwards, after a redefinition of the relations between the papacy and the Normans. At that time, the series of donations being made by Norman leaders to the monasteries and bishop's churches changed. Until that time, their donations had shown their separateness, and were directed almost exclusively towards those monasteries which had been founded by Norman monks; from the 1070s, these donations were directed also towards bishoprics and monasteries of local origin and grew exponentially in number and importance.³⁸

We have seen that in the previous period lordships were already present, but at this moment there was a leap in scale: rural lordship asserted itself in a short time over the entire southern countryside. These were no longer experiments born in the shadow of public power, but a systemic change, the result of a military conquest: lordship was everywhere. Precisely for this reason, the affirmation of rural lordship also brought with it a new aristocracy, which spread throughout the territory and possessed a strong military character, and also indicated weakness in the central power.³⁹ In earlier decades, the subjects exercising seigneurial powers were few. They were rarely subversives, more often being recipients of princely concessions: there were some large monasteries, emanations of the princely summit, or public officials such as counts – or sometimes gastalds. In this ancient Lombard-Byzantine panorama, which was dominated by public officials, the only exception I know of a seigneurial power that was held by subjects neither ecclesiastical nor endowed with a comital title was the Borrelli family, although they came from the Abruzzi, and thus from an area of Frankish political tradition.⁴⁰

After the Normans' definitive establishment, the holders of seigneurial powers called themselves *seniores*, *domini*: these titles expressed autonomy, rather than inclusion in an institutional hierarchy. The comital title – the only one expressing a privileged relationship with the summit – was reserved for a few, and was often directly related to the dukes; it did not always imply an effective superiority over other lords, however, nor a consistently peaceful relationship with the dukes themselves. I doubt that the counts of Sarno, for example, were more powerful than Roger of Sanseverino, and certainly the relations between Henry of Lesina and Monte Sant'Angelo and the dukes were always conflictual.⁴¹ The new rulers were self-made men, and were not legitimised from above: each held the space they had taken with their own

³⁷ Loré, "Sulle istituzioni," 50-5; Loud, "Continuity and Change," Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 35-61; Canosa, "Le conseguenze della conquista."

³⁸ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 41-50. Loud, *The Latin Church*, 84-114.

³⁹ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*; Loré, "Coesione aristocratica e competizione politica," 338-41.

⁴⁰ Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 29-30, with further bibliography.

⁴¹ On Norman counts, see recently Canosa, "Le conseguenze della conquista", and Fernández-Acevez, *County and Nobility*, 13-26 on the ducal period. On Richard the Seneshal, Roger of

followers and weapons. As soon as the conquest was complete, the power of the duke, Robert Guiscard, was drastically reduced, because the need to coordinate the military conquest no longer existed;⁴² Robert's successors counted even less. An expression of this seigneurial dominance and of the dukes' increasing marginality can be found in the administration of justice. The duke continued to hold effective judicial authority in the urban centres directly under his control. When the conflict concerned powerful subjects in the countryside, however, such as lay lords and monasteries, the dispute was handled by a college of peers, who induced the parties to an agreement – one often stipulated in the presence of the duke.⁴³ The dukes were reduced to urban princes, such as William, Guiscard's nephew: in Salerno's private documents, along with the title of duke the notaries gave him that of prince, which had been proper to his Lombard predecessors and ancestors.⁴⁴ Within this new framework, bishops were an element of continuity: they continued to play a marginal role at a political level; they were rarely endowed with seigneurial prerogatives in the countryside; they were never holders of civic powers (as was the case in those areas where the Frankish tradition held sway), and even less so of military ones; and they lacked autonomy vis-à-vis the political power at the top, by which they were appointed according to ancient tradition. They were thus politically irrelevant figures except in very peculiar cases and moments, as in Bari and Salerno in those years which saw the transition to the new Norman power.⁴⁵

6. *The birth of a kingdom*

The date 1127 marks the accidental start of a profound change, which at its climax marked a decisive reversal. In that year, the death of Duke William, who left no heir, led to a dynastic crisis which Roger II of Sicily took advantage of in order to reclaim his rights to the duchy.⁴⁶ This is a well-known story, but insufficient attention is often paid to the effects of this 15-year conflict, which was necessary in order to render Roger's authority effective, once it was extended by the royal title to the whole of southern Italy. Roger was ruthless with his opponents and often eliminated them physically, sometimes dramatically, via a conscious, political use of terror.⁴⁷ The killing of opponents also entailed the acquisition of their dominions, which was probably the main

Sanseverino, Henry of Lesina and Montesantangelo, see especially the short profiles in Martin, *La Pouille*, 740-1; Drell, *Kinship & Conquest*, 187-8; Martin, *La Pouille*, 722-4.

⁴² Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 57-61.

⁴³ Loré, 91-5, 100-15; Loré, "La Trinità di Cava nel 1111".

⁴⁴ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 115.

⁴⁵ Delogu, *Mito*, 180-90, on Salerno. Falkenhausen, "Bari bizantina," 94-101, with further bibliography.

⁴⁶ Houben, *Roger II*, 41-50.

⁴⁷ Delogu, *I Normanni in Italia*, 145-9.

instrument in the forging of a new, supra-regional political entity with a huge royal demesne and new governing structures.⁴⁸

A recent re-reading from a completely new perspective of the *Catalogus Baronum* has allowed Sandro Carocci to show the public character of the realm's sovereign authority: the feudal character of the relationship between king and territorial aristocracy did not exist until at least the end of the 12th century.⁴⁹ Despite a recent attempt at reinterpretation,⁵⁰ it also seems to me that the royal ability to control the aristocracies, starting with marriage policies, remains indisputable.⁵¹ In general, royal power was extremely effective: this is confirmed by the creation of centralised forms of administration,⁵² the creation of an inventory such as the *Catalogus*, and the ability of rural communities to appeal to royal justice.⁵³ I would also like to evoke two other useful indicators for defining the strength of royal power, one indirect and one direct. The first is the end of the great cycles of aristocratic donations in favour of the monasteries: they evince unstable political relations, as the history of southern Italy amply demonstrated from the early Middle Ages.⁵⁴ The second indicator is the very peculiar outcome of the Church's reformation in the southern kingdom. The appointment of the Count of Sicily as papal legate (in 1098) had the paradoxical effect of constituting an element of continuity with the previous period, going beyond the specifically Sicilian sphere, where the network of a Roman Church had to be built from the ground up after centuries of Muslim domination and Greek Christianity. The eminent position of the Count of Sicily, and later of the king, gave an institutional framework to the ancient practice and allowed it to continue for decades, crystallising it on the basis of a new legitimacy: bishops continued to be appointed by kings for a long time, although royal control was more nuanced than previously thought.⁵⁵ Of course, this was possible because the assumptions differed: in southern Italy, as I have already mentioned, bishops had never had civil powers, and for this very reason, the kingdom remained outside the investiture debate.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Houben, *Roger II*, 41-75; Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, especially 231-8 (it. ed. 220-6), on the great extension of the royal demesne, partly out of confiscations from Roger's enemies in the years after 1127.

⁴⁹ Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, chapter IV: *Monarchy and Feudalism*.

⁵⁰ Fernández-Acevez, *County and Nobility*.

⁵¹ Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, chapter V: *King and Lords*, 167-200 (it. ed. 159-90).

⁵² Takayama, *The Administration*, remains the best overview of this topic. On Arabic Sicily, see the works cited above.

⁵³ On the last point, see Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, 192-200 (it. ed. 183-90).

⁵⁴ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 128-32; Loré, "Poteri locali e congregazioni monastiche;" Loré, "Coesione aristocratica e competizione politica," 341; Zorretta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, 130-40.

⁵⁵ Kamp, "Der unteritalienische Episkopat," Loud, *The Latin Church*, 265-78.

⁵⁶ Panarelli, "Tyrannus rex imperator," 61.

7. *Times of change*

The times and modes of change are quite clear. In the first phase, movements with different timings and characters (which were earlier and more widespread in Capua, while being later and more restricted in Salerno) led to a disarticulation of central power. In Capua, however, these were partial evolutions: they did not affect the political scene as a whole, which continued to maintain traditional traits. Instead, the change affecting Salerno is probably a response to a systemic change which was induced by the Normans. In either case are these movements to be defined as centripetal: they both start from the centre, either in a spatial sense – the seat of power – or in a familial sense. From this perspective, the outcome of the Norman conquest was radical and unifying: local powers asserted themselves on a large scale, in an abruptly centrifugal movement. The dukes were not actors in this dispersion: they did not make concessions, nor did they in any way direct the establishment of local powers; instead, the spread of lordship severely limited their authority. This phenomenon led to the formation of an aristocracy that was structurally different from that of the previous period: it had a strong military character, was widespread throughout the territory, and had no structural ties to the capitals. The ‘old’ imperial and Lombard aristocracy was instead composed of a group of officers, or functionaries. In this new world, official roles were reserved for second-class positions, especially in the major cities of the Byzantine tradition.⁵⁷ In some respects, the spread of the Norman military aristocracy throughout the territory was the precondition for a revival of the countryside.

Within this framework, two essential points of contention remain. Should the broad assertion of lordship be understood as having been in (relative) continuity with the most recent developments of the Lombard-Byzantine era, or as a clear break? In other words: could it have gone differently? Once again: downstream from this complex evolution, does anything remain of the previous political structures in the Norman kingdom? I will answer the second question first: in the Norman kingdom, the tendency of political societies to orient themselves towards the centre, which was then expressed in a much larger and more articulate political organism, remained, or rather reappeared after the vacancy of the ducal period. In the ducal period, the weakness of the political centre perhaps favoured the ‘supplanting’ role played by the great monastic congregations, which constituted a point of equilibrium in the political society of the time; counter-evidence for this interpretation is their modest affirmation in Sicily, where the comital power was immediately an effective reference point.⁵⁸ After the kingdom’s founding, Palermo, its capital,

⁵⁷ For example, Martin, *La Pouille*, 765-6.

⁵⁸ On comital power in Sicily, see Johns, *Arabic Administration*, 39-90; Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner*, 252-60.

was the centre of an intense and contentious court life in which the interests of aristocracies with different origins and characteristics converged and confronted each other: the military and the civil aristocracy, the latter often being from the larger cities (the best example of this is Maio of Bari).⁵⁹ On the other hand, the main cities also played a fundamental role from an administrative point of view, and not only as recruiting grounds for officers; I am thinking in particular of Salerno, the probable seat of the *Dogana*.⁶⁰ There also remains the completely subordinate role of the bishoprics to royal power. I am not referring to the absence of any civil power held by the bishops, which was by then becoming the norm across Europe, nor to their personal political irrelevance: on the contrary, bishops could personally hold prominent positions at court, as in the case of Romuald of Salerno.⁶¹ I am instead referring to the enduring practice of the appointment of bishops by kings.

It remains more difficult to answer the second question: could it have gone differently? Here I will note only two things, one general and the other more anecdotal. Where veritable lordships were established before the advent of the Normans (I will not take into consideration the autonomy of the counts of Capua in the 9th century, which was an expression of a particular way of interpreting public power), the Lombard lords built castles in great quantity and small size, albeit on lands which were directly controlled by them. The clearest example of this is that of some Benevento counts who were active in the first decades of the 11th century. These families built numerous castles on a land base of likely varied origin, but which was by then entirely allodial.⁶² To make use of ancient categories, it appears to have been a land-based lordship.⁶³ The lords of the Norman era, on the other hand, focused on the foundation of a few large castles, and their power was generally defined in a territorial sense: they ruled over an area, a tendentially-defined space, that did not depend on the extent of their land base: in central Apulia, as Jean-Marie Martin has pointed out, the Norman lordships even lacked a land base.⁶⁴

In the years following the Norman conquest of Salerno, the descendants of Paldolf and Guido, the brothers of Guaimar IV, still held large shares of the ancient princely patrimony as well as the lordship of several centres between what is today Campania and Basilicata. Paldolf and Guido were also directly related to the Norman dukes. They were thus in a position to preserve the eminence their fathers had gained in the final Lombard phase in this new context. Yet this did not happen, because their shares of the princely patrimony were quickly ceded to churches and monasteries, but above all because the descendants of Guido and Paldolf interpreted their lordly presences in a

⁵⁹ Loré, "Coesione aristocratica e competizione politica," 342-4, with an essential bibliography.

⁶⁰ Takayama, *The Administration*, 154.

⁶¹ Loud, *The Latin Church*, 388.

⁶² Di Muro, "Le contee longobarde," 31; Loré, "Alle radici dell'incastellamento laico."

⁶³ See for example Carocci, "Signori e signorie," 412-6.

⁶⁴ Martin, *La Pouille*, 306-17.

strictly patrimonial form; indeed, they were the only ones from among the Norman lords known to me to have done this: they divided them up into identical shares among their heirs, fragmenting them over the generations. The last descendants of Paldolf known to us, who lived in the mid-12th century, resided permanently in Salerno and had by then been completely reabsorbed into the urban notables: their attraction of the city and their inability (I do not know how else to define it) to manage their presence in the territory from a non-patrimonial point of view weakened each other, leading to the extinction of a very numerous and ramified lineage.⁶⁵ This 'patrimonial' way to lordship seems to me to have been characteristic of the late Lombard world, and in the Norman period it found its place of evolution in the monastic lordships where, in my opinion, the relationship between the land base and the exercise of power remained structural.⁶⁶ In this sense, the Norman conquest really steered the course of events: it favoured a much more rapid affirmation of rural lordship, but in forms which were probably different from those that the original arrangement would have spontaneously generated.

⁶⁵ Loré, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, 87-90, with further bibliography.

⁶⁶ Loré, 155-60, 163-7, on late Lombard Salerno and the monastery of Cava in the Norman era; Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, 105-9, 292-305 (it. ed. 97-102, 280-92), on *defisi* and *affidati* on ecclesiastical lands.

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Vito Loré
Università degli Studi Roma Tre
vito.lore@uniroma3.it
ORCID: 0000-0002-5843-5432

III

Forms of Lordship

Violence between legitimation and the symbolic dimension of power (central-northern Italy, 11th 12th centuries)

by Alessio Fiore

This article examines the transformation of local power structures in central-northern Italy during the 11th and 12th centuries, focusing on the dual role of violence as both a practical tool and a symbolic language of authority. It highlights how violence became central to the legitimation and self-representation of rural elites, marking a shift to more militarized forms of dominance. Beyond analyzing these established dynamics, the article opens new research avenues: it calls for a systematic comparison of how different political actors – rural lords, urban elites, and imperial authorities – used and represented violence, suggesting that their self-images and legitimizing discourses diverged in nuanced ways. Furthermore, the article proposes investigating the underexplored topic of sexual violence as a structural element of lordly power, emphasizing the need to understand its representation, social memory, and the mechanisms of its omission from our sources. These new directions aim to deepen our comprehension of the interplay between violence, power, and collective memory in medieval society.

L'articolo analizza la trasformazione delle strutture di potere locale nell'Italia centro-settentrionale tra i secoli XI e XII, soffermandosi sul ruolo duplice della violenza come strumento pratico e linguaggio simbolico dell'autorità. Il testo mostra come la violenza diventi centrale nella legittimazione e nell'autorappresentazione delle élite rurali, segnando il passaggio da forme di dominio ecclesiastico a modelli militarizzati. Oltre a ricostruire queste dinamiche, l'articolo propone nuove linee di ricerca: invita a un'analisi comparata e sistematica delle diverse modalità con cui attori politici – signori rurali, élite urbane, autorità imperiali – hanno esercitato e rappresentato la violenza, suggerendo che le loro immagini pubbliche e i loro discorsi di legittimazione differivano in modo significativo. Inoltre si indica la necessità di approfondire il tema

Alessio Fiore, University of Turin, Italy, alessio.fiore@unito.it, 0000-0003-0983-6325

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poco esplorato della violenza sessuale come elemento strutturale del potere signorile, ponendo l'accento sulla sua rappresentazione, sulla memoria sociale e sui meccanismi di rimozione dalle fonti. Queste nuove prospettive mirano a chiarire più a fondo il rapporto tra violenza, potere e memoria collettiva nella società medievale.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, lordship, violence, sexual violence, collective memory.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, signoria, violenza, violenza sessuale, memoria collettiva.

In this chapter I will consider the transformation of the forms of representation and the expression of local power in the Italian countryside in the decades straddling the 1100s (and in the following period), focusing mainly on rural lordship. I will discuss some of the key features of this process, concentrating on violence. Insofar as it stands at the junction between concrete acts of power and the representations of that same power, violence provides a privileged vantage point for grasping these dynamics of change, as I hope to show in the following pages. To this end, in the first part of the text I will discuss, more or less briefly, some of the main lines of research that have emerged in recent years in relation to these issues, attempting above all to highlight the broad interpretive frameworks underlying the investigations. In the second part, I will move away from the already known and familiar paths in order to suggest some possible (and largely unexplored) lines of research that can be seen, at least in part, as developments of some of those discussed above.

1. *Languages of violence and socio-political discontinuity: an overview*

A first preliminary consideration concerns a general assessment of all the languages of power used in the Italian countryside. This is closely linked to the questions posed by the editors of the present volume, which aim to verify breaks and continuities in the delicate transition between the 11th and 12th centuries. Indeed, it is possible to detect a clear degree of discontinuity between the system of languages in use during the first half of the 11th century and those already active in the decades at the turn of the 1100s: a discontinuity linked to the general reorganisation of the structures of local power and the forms in which it was exercised, linked above all to the generalisation of territorial lordship, but also to the new forms of power exercised by urban communities in the countryside.¹ The clear change in social and political structures, with the disappearance of a system of power whose roots go back to the Carolingian period, corresponds to an overall reorganisation of the system of pre-existing political languages.² What took place was a genuine reconfigu-

¹ For an in-depth discussion of this issue, I will refer to Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*; on cities, see Wickham, "The Feudal Revolution;" and Wickham, *Sleepwalking*.

² An important new investigation of this break, centred on the relationship between the royal leadership and local political actors and with a focus on political discourses, is Doublier, *Ein Reich ohne König?*

ration of the constellation of discourses, with some previously central ones losing their importance in favour of others that had hitherto played a secondary role in expressing and legitimising the power of the elites. From this point of view, we can see, for example, that the use of delegation by royal power – whose basic instrument was the royal charter, which was very important around 1000 – declined after 1080 and practically disappeared around 1100–20, while a language such as the pact (both between lords and between subjects and lords) acquired completely new significance.³ This change does not only concern the relevance of the various languages, however: we also witness an internal reconfiguration of the individual languages, which change and modify themselves in order to adapt to a profoundly new context. Within this complex system, I have chosen to focus my analysis on a specific language, that of violence, which I hope to show is crucial to understanding the phase in question from an ideological as well as a practical point of view. The localisation of power was a chaotic process, strongly marked by endemic warfare in the decades after 1080, and this affected the role of violence in the society of the Kingdom of Italy. As we shall see, violence stands precisely at the junction between discourses and practices of power, between legitimising languages and concrete actions. Violence was crucial not only for the affirmation of the new local powers in the decades around 1100, but also for their social reproduction in the period following the spread of this model of power. Seigneurial violence must be seen as a way for political actors to assert themselves politically against their neighbours and to preserve their autonomy, but also to re-define (sometimes abruptly) the power relations within the space they control in order to construct new and heavier forms of domination, and eventually to perpetuate this situation.⁴ In other words, political actors made structural use of violence against their competitors, but also against their subjects: a dual dimension of violence on which scholars have shed considerable light in recent years.⁵

In such a context, the ability to take independent military action, to manage organised violence, becomes the very criterion for the selection of autonomous political actors. In short, *domini loci* are such because they are able to mobilise armed forces in sufficient numbers to protect their possessions from their neighbours and to impose their power (by force) on their subjects. The centrality of the capacity for independent military action becomes very clear when we move away from the specific seigneurial context and consid-

³ The reference work on the crisis of royal legitimacy is now Doublier, *Ein Reich ohne König?*; on pacts, see Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*, 178–98.

⁴ While my perspective will be mainly territorial, we must bear in mind that personal relationships within the seigneurial world also became more violent than in the past. After all, while territorial lordship is the most visible form of power, the role of personal forms of lordship – present also and above all in contexts in which the *dominatus loci* was less structured – can in no way be underestimated. On these issues see Carocci, “The Pervasiveness of Lordship.”

⁵ Collavini, “Sviluppo signorile;” Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*, 226–47; Provero, “Le forche del priore.”

er the case of the Val di Scalve, which was studied by François Menant and Chris Wickham, among others.⁶ The valley's inhabitants, united in a compact valley community, took advantage of their military aptitude around 1100 not only to successfully defend themselves against the bishop of Bergamo's attempts to impose his lordship on the area, but even to subjugate some villages in the neighbouring valleys. In some ways, the inhabitants of the Val di Scalve actually seem to have been even more brutal and violent than the lords of the time, as we can see from a detailed *querimonia* which shows them in the role of villains, engaged in constant and bloody raids against their neighbours.⁷ It was precisely this aggressiveness that allowed them not only to maintain their autonomy from the powerful bishop of Bergamo's lordship, but also to impose their power on some neighbouring communities, thus creating an area of domination in the Alpine valleys of Lombardy for several decades. The capacity for autonomous military action on the part of a rural community was the key element that allowed it to be recognised as an independent political actor, even by the local lords.

Violence is thus an instrument of action, but also increasingly a fulcrum around which the legitimating identity of local power and its holders is structured. But while violence is crucial from a practical point of view, it also becomes central from the perspective of the representation of power and its holders, with a strong emphasis not only on the activity of warfare in the strict sense, but also on a whole range of violent practices carried out against one's enemies – but also, more generally, against low-status individuals; a topic to which I will return later. The emphasis on violence as an everyday practice is associated with a strong militarisation of the seigneurial group's identity. A fundamental sign of this, to which Simone Collavini has drawn attention, are the nicknames that many aristocrats proudly bear (Guerra, Pelavicino, Malaspina, Del Guasto) and which are linked to the semantic field of war and violence in general. These sobriquets are often so strong and connotative that they are passed on from father to son, becoming actual surnames over time.⁸ Onomastics is a fundamental window into the Italian aristocratic world's self-representation, and I will return to this specific point later, from different points of view. Another privileged vantage point for grasping this transformation is provided by certain monastic chronicles, such as those of Farfa, Subiaco, and San Michele della Chiusa.⁹ In texts such as these, which were written by monks to celebrate the virtues of their monasteries and rulers, we see that the abbots of the decades straddling the 1100s are often described as warriors, engaged in a series of continuous warlike activities, which for the

⁶ Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 493; Wickham, "Justice in the Kingdom of Italy," 239-49.

⁷ Lupo, *Codex Diplomaticus Bergomatis*, 775 (a. 1091).

⁸ Collavini, "Sviluppo signorile."

⁹ Morghen, *Chronicon sublacense*, 12-8; Gregorio di Catino, *Il Chronicon Farfense*, 230-2; Bethmann, *Vita Benedicti*. On this topic, see the discussion in Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*, 242-5; Fiore, "Il ruolo degli abati."

chroniclers are not a cause for embarrassment, but rather for pride. In short, an abbot is a good abbot when he builds castles to counter his neighbours' ambitions, imposes his power on his subjects, and militarily defeats rival aristocrats at the cost of incessant military campaigns. This depiction of abbots and their action contrasts sharply with that typical of texts written only a few decades earlier, such as the *Chronicon* of Novalesa, and gives us a sense of the profound changes in the aristocratic fabric and in the elite's new relationship with organised violence.¹⁰

Within this identity-building perspective, one aspect that I consider crucial to understanding the new centrality of violence among political actors is the change in the forms of the petrification of local pre-eminence and their practical and legitimising function. Until at least 1060, we can observe a significant investment by lay elites in the construction and control of churches and monasteries (which in many ways were the fulcrums of local action), in the context of a public power that saw the church as one of its structural components. In the decades that followed, this kind of investment became much more limited (except in the cities and the territories most closely linked to them) and was abruptly replaced by a massive investment of resources in the construction of castles.¹¹ The latter became more numerous and more imposing, and were made of durable materials, specifically stone and brick. Building castles (or destroying them) became the preferred way of expressing, claiming, or contesting local power. The effectiveness of this strategy is also shown by the attitude of the subjects, for whom the presence of a castle was a crucial element in legitimising seigneurial claims.¹² From this perspective, the material structure of a castle can be seen as a way not only of monumentalising an existing local power, but also of aggressively asserting that power in a fluid and conflictual context. A castle is the representation of its holder's military capacity, so much so that the act of building a castle was perceived at the time as an unambiguously militaristic and aggressive action, akin to a military expedition. Indeed, several sources describe the building of a castle as being carried out by contingents of workers heavily escorted by *milites*.¹³ From a symbolic point of view, the role of stone towers in the new castles was fundamental. The tower gave the castle visibility, emphasising its overtly military nature, and had a strong impact on the local 'skyline', asserting control over the surrounding space.¹⁴ It is no coincidence that the most important lords invested in the construction of particularly tall and visually imposing towers in the centres where they resided. When the bishop of Ravenna transformed the small castle of Argenta into his main rural residence at the end of the 11th century, he built a gigantic tower there that made a strong impression

¹⁰ Alessio, *La Cronaca di Novalesa*, 338.

¹¹ Fiore, "Building the Feudal Revolution."

¹² As in the well-known case of Casciavola, not far from Pisa: see Petrucci, *Lettere originali*.

¹³ This is clear from the evidence analysed in Collavini, "Il principato vescovile."

¹⁴ I have discussed this topic in greater detail in Fiore, "Qui levat castellum."

on his contemporaries.¹⁵ Similarly, the Gherardeschi built a huge tower in Donoratico that dwarfed the old church that had previously occupied a central position in the original castle.¹⁶ A type of power that entrusted its material expression to towers and castles, such as the one that emerged from the late 11th century onwards, is clearly different in terms of its self-expression from the type of power typical of the previous phase, which expressed itself through the establishment of monasteries and churches.

Violence, however, as mentioned above, was not only directed outwards (against competitors), but also inwards, and was linked to the construction and social reproduction of local power by the lords. This also applies, albeit with some nuances, to urban communities, at least as far as their exercise of power over the countryside is concerned. In this regard, it seems useful to me to consider which traditional practices related to the language of violence were taken up and re-articulated in the new social and political context at the turn of the 1100s, as this brings out continuities and breaks very clearly. I wish to focus in particular on the use of physical violence to define power relations. Violence was already common in Carolingian and post-Carolingian times as a means of defining the relationship between *dominus* and *servi*, i.e. between masters and slaves. This was the most intense and strongest power relationship in the entire social and legal spectrum: significantly, the (not especially forbidden) dream of every Carolingian *potens* was to turn his free tenants into slaves. After all, the strongest possible form of control in the Carolingian social and juridical order was control over slaves. This relationship was symbolically marked precisely by physical violence: the possibility of freely inflicting violence on the body of a *servus* was what expressed the relationship and distinguished it from the relationship between a landowner and his tenants, which was far less marked and intense.¹⁷ In several cases, this possibility was translated into concrete actions aimed at publicly demonstrating the relationship of domination. The collective and public beating of *servi* at the end of *placita*, in which their legal status was recognised, should be interpreted in this sense. Similarly, in a legend that was widespread in the Susa Valley at the beginning of the 11th century, but which was much older, a master's act of taking possession of new local *servi* was sanctioned by a re-sounding slap (*colafus*) in the face.¹⁸

What seems interesting to me is that with the process of power transformation that began around 1100, this series of violent practices that were associated with the defining of servile status came to mark the relationship between the new lords and the communities over which they sought to impose their power, regardless of the personal status of their members, who were mostly free. Beatings, which on rare occasions could be so severe as to result

¹⁵ Deusdedit, "Libellus contra invasores," 330. Bernold of Konstanz, *Chronicon 1054-1100*, 533.

¹⁶ Bianchi, "Archeologia di un cantiere."

¹⁷ Devroey, *Puissants et misérables*, 307-10.

¹⁸ Alessio, *La cronaca di Novalesa*, 154-5.

in the death of the subject (as happened several times near Alba at the hands of the local bishop and one of his officers), became a means of marking not only the lord's dependence, but sometimes even the dependence of a rural community on an urban one, as some examples in the border area between the territories of Piacenza and Pavia show.¹⁹ This tendency was so strong that in Casciavola, the lords went so far as to beat the unborn during labour, before they had even emerged from the womb. What does all this mean? The power that the incipient new lords sought to impose on their incipient subjects (indeed on all their subjects, whatever their personal status) was meant to be as harsh and absolute as that of the Carolingian *potens* over his slaves. This is why the violence exercised upon their subjects was highly spectacular and had a strongly public, visible nature: it was an act of possession. This reading is also confirmed by lords' nicknames that specifically refer to the violence wreaked upon the weak as well as upon their subjects, such as Pelavicino (Skinstheneighbour), Manducalomini (Eatsmen), and Sforza (Rapes).

The fact that this control over bodies tended to be absolute, at least from the seigneurial perspective, is attested by the punishments inflicted on recalcitrant or rebellious subjects, which could occasionally be as severe as mutilation and death by torture.²⁰ From this point of view, even the seigneurial administration of justice itself could become an instrument for publicly reasserting absolute control over bodies, as Luigi Provero has shown in a recent essay based on some sources from the Susa Valley.²¹ The local lord, the prior of the monastery of Novalesa, turned punishment into a macabre and horrific spectacle: someone who had stolen a hive of bees was made to parade naked through the main street of the village with a beehive on his head while being whipped; another thief was forced to amputate his accomplice's foot; another still was led to the gallows, only to have the punishment changed to a (very hefty) fine at the last second – and so on and so forth, in a parade of practices imbued with obvious sadism.²² Beyond this lord's personal proclivities, however, what is structurally remarkable is that the punishment became a moment in which the lord spectacularly reaffirmed, before the entire community, his absolute control over the bodies of his subjects, who were virtually transformed into puppets at his complete disposal for staging sadistic fantasies of control.

Violence is thus a practice, but it is also a political discourse that seems to reflect the view of power relations that is most characteristic of the aristocratic world. This view is not the only one since, as mentioned at the beginning, lords also tend to use other discourses in their relations with other

¹⁹ Milano, *Il "Rigestum comunis Albe"*, doc. 179 (aa. 1200-1 c.), 285-8; on the villages between Pavia and Piacenza see the witnesses edited in Bollea, *Documenti degli archivi di Pavia*, nos. 45-58 (a. 1184), 72-193. On this last text see Opl, *Zwang und Willkür*.

²⁰ On the *Frangipane*, in this perspective see Carocci, "La signoria rurale."

²¹ Provero, "Le forche del priore."

²² Chiaudiano, *Le curie sabaude*, docc. 13-4 (1276), 90-7.

autonomous local political actors and their subjects, such as discourses based on pacts or fidelity, in order to construct a legitimising framework for their power.²³ But, as Simone Collavini has pointed out, the kind of violence that we can define as 'seigneurial' and that is linked to the exercise of power in the countryside has a structuring function. At least until the end of the 12th century, not only is it not concealed by ideological and rhetorical devices, as it will be later, but it is even complacently flaunted by those who exercise it, as shown by the 'bad' nicknames mentioned above, which emphasise precisely the most unpleasant dimension of violence, namely that exercised against the weak.²⁴ To some extent, the language of violence also serves to counterbalance the pact-based and reciprocal aspect of the relationship between subjects and rulers, as reflected by pacts and *sacramenta*. It ensures that the peasants do not forget their condition and status, helping to reaffirm and naturalise aristocratic dominance in the countryside in the subjects' eyes.

But the lords were not alone in exercising violence against their opponents and the peasants' bodies; assisting them were their warriors. If in the Carolingian age and the 10th century the strong dividing line within rural society had been between freemen and *servi*, and to a lesser extent between allodiaries and tenants, after the militarisation of society the main dividing line was instead between *milites* (mounted fighters) and actual peasants. The *milites*, who somehow became the lowest rung of the aristocratic world, were of very different social origins, sometimes even servile ones, but it was precisely the exercise of violence that brought together and united lords and 'knights', marking a very clear boundary between them and the villeins, i.e. between those who exercised violence (a veritable 'band of brothers') and those who suffered its consequences upon their bodies. Violence strengthened the cohesion of the world of the powerful (in the broadest sense of the word) and expressed their difference and (almost anthropological) superiority over the mass of the rural population.

I could, of course, continue by listing and briefly discussing some of the other lines of research that have been pursued in recent years, but I think that what has been said is quite sufficient, on the one hand, to verify the profound break in the role of violence at the turn of the 1100s, and on the other to delineate its new role in the reproduction and representation of rural power. Moreover, I do not want an overview of this kind to leave the reader with the impression that this is now a well-defined and perfectly known field of research, in which all that remains to be done is to work out the details. On the contrary, I believe that there are still many areas that need to be explored, in part or in full, in order to better understand the systemic role of violence in the Italian medieval countryside after 1100. I would therefore like to conclude

²³ I have discussed the complex interweaving of these discourses in Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*, especially 250-3.

²⁴ Collavini, "Sviluppo signorile."

my overview by mentioning, purely by way of example, two of the many possible research paths into violence (and in particular its role as a nexus between practices and representations of power) that have yet to be explored, at least in part, and which I believe to be very promising.

2. *Languages of violence and political actors*

The first research path is related to the differing use of the language of violence and violent practices of power by different political actors during the 'long 12th century'. I believe it is important to systematically analyse how different political actors – i.e. local lords, the imperial authorities, and urban (and non-urban) communities – related to violence. Indeed, different profiles correspond to different attitudes towards the legitimation of the use of violence, but also towards the concrete ways in which power is exercised. A better understanding of these differences can, in my view, provide an excellent lens through which to view the different images that autonomous political actors have of themselves and seek to project to the outside world. So let us briefly compare the rural lordly elites with the urban elites, starting with onomastics. We have seen that among the former there is a widespread presence of onomastics linked to war (with names such as Monferrato, Guerra, and Guasto), but also, more generally, to the exercise of violence and oppression against the weak (Manducalomini, Sagittaclerico, Sforza, and Pelavicino). It is important to note that there is a partial overlap with the nicknames used by the urban elites of the time, who were elites of *milites* and sometimes owned castles.²⁵ Here, too, we find (although fewer in number) nicknames linked to warfare, such as Robacastello (Stoles-the-Castle) or Caschifellone (Let-the-Traitor-Die); nicknames linked to violence against the weak, and to the 'bad' behaviour typical of the rural lordly aristocracy, are (almost) completely absent. The onomastics of the urban elites of this period is thus entirely consistent with the highly militarised image of social eminence, which finds perfect correspondence in the militarisation of civic identity itself in the inscriptions and sculptures that adorn civic churches and city gates from this period.²⁶ Take, for example, the well-known representation of the urban community of Verona on the portal of San Zeno, dating from around 1130: the community is divided into knights and foot soldiers, united by the tutelary figure of the holy bishop, and as a whole is represented as an army.²⁷ The military dimension – with the exercise of violence that it entails – is central to defining the image of the urban political community and its members, but this image is

²⁵ On onomastic differences see Menant, "Une forme de distinction;" Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World*, 21–55.

²⁶ Fiore, "La pietrificazione."

²⁷ On the decoration of the portal, as well as the identity-defining role of the church of San Zeno, see the essays in Butturini and Pachera, *San Zeno Maggiore*.

formulated differently from that of the rural lords and their gangs. What is the relationship between this different mode of self-representation and the concrete practice of power? Let us try to answer this question by restricting our field of observation to the countryside, so as to be able to make a comparison with the rural lords, who have been better studied in this respect. When we look at narrative and documentary sources, we often get the impression that the power exercised by citizens in the countryside was less brutal. Urban consuls and *milites* seem to have exercised violence, but not in the same systematic and brutal way as the lords.²⁸ However, if we look more closely and turn to some (rare) sources that are more explicit on such matters, this opinion becomes much more problematic to support. Let us take, for example, an episode recounted by the Genoese chronicler Oberto in his *Annales*, dating back to 1169.²⁹ The chronicler tells us that at that time the inhabitants of several villages in the Genoese countryside stopped paying *census* and rent to the city's landlords, and even forcibly prevented them from visiting the parish churches where they owned property. This act obviously caused great concern among the urban elite, since it affected their economic interests. The elite's response was therefore particularly strong and decisive: the consuls led an expedition to restore justice by punishing the tenants. In recounting the events, the chronicler mentions not only confiscations and heavy fines, but also the fact that knights chopped off the hands and feet of the unruly rural tenants. He smugly remarks that after this punitive expedition, no one dared to refuse to pay their dues.³⁰ This is undoubtedly a rather exceptional testimony, but one that should be valued because it is perhaps representative of more widespread practices that were (perhaps) censored by communal observers who were more uncomfortable with violence (at least on an ideological level). In the light of testimonies such as these, in which brutality and its perception by those exercising it does not seem so different from that which was typical of the seigneurial world, one wonders whether its difference from that of the lords – at least as far as the practices of power in the countryside are concerned – was not so much in the way in which violence was exercised, but in the type of self-image that was intended to be conveyed.³¹ A systematic study from this specific perspective would therefore be needed to understand the relationship between the various actors who were operating in the rural

²⁸ As in the countryside between Pavia and Piacenza; see Bollea, *Documenti degli archivi di Pavia*, nos. 45-58 (a. 1184), 72-193.

²⁹ Belgrano, *Annali genovesi*, 219-21 (s.a. 1169).

³⁰ *Et factis coram omnibus consulibus hic inde multis clamoribus, inter multas vindictas, quas nominatim scribere non possumus, fecere quibusdam pedes quibusdam manus truncari, aliis rerum dampna intulerunt et quosdam in carcerem posuerunt et pecuniam ultra solidos mille adduxerunt in civitate; et hoc tantum terrorem intulit reliquis maleficientibus [...]. Unum quidem non decet nec etiam oportet nos silere, quod dicendo hos consules ad laudis maiora noscitur prouehere* (220-1).

³¹ See also Giovanni Codagnello, *Annales Placentini*, 1-3 (a chronicle); *Documenti degli archivi di Pavia*, nos. 45-8 (a. 1184), 72-193 (a long roll of testimonies).

context (and beyond), and thus grasp their relationship with violence and how this evolved over time (in both ideological and practical terms).

3. *Sexual violence and aristocratic power*

We now come to the second possible research avenue, which concerns peasant society as the victim of lordly violence. This is a line of research that I am personally exploring and which I will therefore discuss at some length. It is linked, on the one hand, to the problem of the representativeness of sources on violence, which I also mentioned earlier when discussing internal violence in village societies, and on the other to the relationship between bodies, control, and violence. The problem of the representativeness of sources is a classic one that historians face all the time. Obviously, the topic of violence is no exception, but it is necessary to understand the specific mechanisms of the distortion and obfuscation of reality that are at work, and the logic to which they respond. In order to do this, I would like to begin with a text from the first decades of the 12th century that has been mentioned several times in different contexts, but which Sante Bortolami and the other scholars who have mentioned it have considered to be exceptional: a curiosity to be remembered, but which, precisely because of its abnormality, is not worth discussing in depth.³² In my opinion, however, this is a source that can and should provide the starting point for investigating and discussing certain aspects of power relations that have so far remained outside the scope of investigation, namely those related to the specific aspects of the violence exercised by lords on the bodies not of their subjects in general, but specifically on women. The text in question is a *querimonia* concerning the *advocatus* of the cathedral chapter of Treviso and his misdeeds in the village of *Silvarosa* (present-day Salvarosa, near Castelfranco Veneto).³³ In addition to listing the (usual) seigneurial misdeeds, this source unusually lists acts of systematic sexual abuse against peasant women. I will quote the short passage in question literally: *Equos suos ponit per domos rusticorum a singulis rusticis per singulas noctes pas-cendos cum scutiferis suis. Et cum ipsi scutiferi violenter adulterent uxores rusticorum non curat advocatus nec inde iusticiam facit.*³⁴ It is this reference that makes this text so peculiar: rape is always absent from the list of 'seigneurial' acts of violence mentioned in witness statements and appears in very few *querimoniae*. In the Treviso text, on the other hand, rape is mentioned so systematically that it could almost be classified as a local *mala consuetudo*. In Salvarosa, the hospitality that peasants were expected to provide

³² See Cammarosano, *Italia medievale*, 126-7, which indeed does not discuss this specific point.

³³ The document is preserved in Archivio capitolare di Treviso, Rotoli senza data, sec. XII, *breve recordationis* (aa. 1100-35 c.); for a good transcription see Biscaro, "La polizia campestre," 51.

³⁴ Biscaro.

to the warriors/collaborators of their lord included not only a meal and a bed in their own homes, but also sexual access to their wives. Here, too, there is an obvious symbolic meaning behind the violence: everything belongs to the lord (and his cronies). Nothing the subject owns is really his, not even the women of his *domus*. In short, the only real limit to lordly impositions is the will of the lord himself.

A document such as this, with its routine dimension of brutality, nevertheless leads us to investigate more closely the role of sexual violence in the seigneurial context. If rape is such a defining act in this specific context, why does it not appear in other 'judicial' texts? In particular, to the best of my knowledge it never appears in the numerous and detailed collections of witness statements given at trials (mostly by peasants) that provide our main avenue for reconstructing local power practices from the mid-11th century onwards.³⁵ Is the Treviso document thus exceptional because it attests to a practice that was exceptional in its brutality, or rather because it is exceptional in that it is a written record of something that was far more common in practice?

I will try to sketch out a possible answer here, with the caveat that this is, however, an unfinished research project, and therefore the results must be seen as hypotheses that have yet to be fully verified. Firstly, references to sexual violence perpetrated by aristocrats against peasant women appear in other types of sources from the period: for example, in poetic texts produced in 'aristocratic' contexts, and thus expressing a lordly and chivalrous (in the broadest sense of the term) view of the subject, such as the so-called *pastourelles* composed in *langue d'oïl* and *langue d'oc* and also circulating in Italy.³⁶ These are poems in which a lone knight meets a low-status girl in an isolated place in the countryside (often a forest) and, after a lively dialogue, overcomes her initial protests and persuades her to have sexual intercourse with him: a very different outcome compared to contemporary poems in which the object of male attraction is a woman of the aristocracy. It is even more significant that in several *pastourelles* (a minority, but still a significant percentage), the act is consummated by force with the woman struggling to escape, meaning that it takes the form of actual rape. We find references to sexual violence in some *querimoniae* (one from Treviso, another from Umbria, and possibly one from Le Marche).³⁷ They also appear in seigneurial onomastics (with the nickname *Sforza*, i.e. 'rapes') – and, as we have seen, onomastics is 'realistic' and based on the concrete practices typical of the seigneurial aristocracy of the time. Moreover, rape is also mentioned in texts

³⁵ The first important series of witness statements on seigneurial rights is the one pertaining to Ostiglia, dating back to 1151: for this specific perspective, see Fiore, "Ostiglia around 1100." An important overview of witness statements from the late 12th and early 13th centuries is provided by Provero, *Le parole dei sudditi*.

³⁶ Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, 104–21.

³⁷ Hageneder, und Haidacher, *Die Register Innocenz' III.*, doc. 377 (a. 1198), 570–3 (Umbria); Gregory of Catino, *The Regest of Farfa*, doc. 1213 (aa. 1099–1119), 204–5 (Marche).

such as Andreas Cappellanus' very popular *De Amore*, which even goes so far as to say that, unlike courtly love, the way in which an aristocrat 'loves' peasant women can only be of an exclusively sexual nature, disregarding any form of consent on the woman's part: *Si vero et illarum te feminarum amor forte attraxerit [...] si locum inveneris opportunum, non differas assumere, quod petebas et violento potiri amplexu*.³⁸ Exactly the same reasoning informs the *pastourelles* just discussed.

Finally, if we move south of the borders of the kingdom of Italy, we find a document that allows us to shed further light on the spread of such practices. This is the charter of *franchise* issued in 1190 by the abbot of Montecassino to the large village of Pontecorvo, in southern Lazio.³⁹ The text is also concerned, through a series of prohibitions and rules, to limit the abuses of power exercised by the large community of local *milites* over the *populares* of the castle, and in particular over the (male and female) peasants who were personally dependent on each knight. Prominent among these prohibitions was the one that forbade a *miles* to *violenter corrumpere* a woman employed by him or to have sexual intercourse with the wife of one of his male employees.⁴⁰ If he did so, he would lose his personal *dominium* over those subjects. It is interesting to note that this prohibition appears in a whole series of regulations aimed precisely at limiting or prohibiting those forms of physical violence that were so widespread in the Kingdom of Italy's countryside, such as beatings inflicted *sine culpa*.⁴¹ Regulations such as these appear in an exceptionally revealing context with regard to local power practices, such as the charter of *franchise* of Pontecorvo, in which those issuing the grant sought to protect subjects of lower status from an intermediate power (the castle's *milites*) in order to prevent peasant discontent from causing internal problems in the most populous of the castles under the monastery's lordship. The rules thus tended to delineate a situation in which the *populares* enjoyed a special degree of protection, preventing (at least in theory) practices of power that must have been quite widespread elsewhere, including the sexual abuse of female subjects by lords and *milites*.

So why are rapes never mentioned in witness statements? One plausible answer is that in witness statements, the various witnesses (almost always men) were speaking in front of members of the local community. To say that one's wife, daughter, or sister had been raped would be humiliating (and more importantly, an insult to one's honour) and would require a violent form of retribution against the perpetrator (which did indeed happen among peasants). At the same time, to say that the wife/sister/daughter of another member of local society had been raped would be insulting to the latter, triggering

³⁸ Andrea Cappellano, *De Amore*, 235-6 (chapter entitled *De amore rusticorum*).

³⁹ Fabiani, *La Terra di S. Benedetto*, 427-8. On this text see Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, 279-81.

⁴⁰ Fabiani, 428.

⁴¹ Fabiani.

a series of relational problems. As is well known, clinical psychology teaches us that when faced with an event that is perceived as deeply destabilising, human beings set in motion a series of defensive mechanisms: rationalisation, reactive formation, repression, and denial, to mention the most common ones.⁴² These mechanisms operate not only at the individual level, but also, to varying degrees, at the collective level. It can therefore be assumed that rape was deliberately removed from village society's social memory and public discourse, of which witness depositions were key moments: in short, people pretended that rape had never happened because such an event was too destabilising for the local social order.⁴³ This is true of witness statements, as the recorded testimonies were given publicly, in front of other members of the local society; and it is also true of texts written at the request of those who had suffered violence, such as the well-known *querimonia* of Casciavola. By contrast, it does not apply to those (much rarer) texts that were not produced at the direct request of those who had suffered violence, such as the *querimonia* from Treviso mentioned above: a text that was not written at the behest of the inhabitants of Salvarosa, but of the canons of Treviso, who claimed jurisdiction over the village. To the best of my knowledge, the same is true of practically all the documentary sources that speak of rape by lords in the period we are considering.⁴⁴ This distortion, due to the very nature of the documentation, would turn a (plausibly) widespread phenomenon into a very sporadic and occasional one in the sources that have come down to us. Significantly, in later sources that are the expression of peasant societies and which speak of the (often systematic) rape of peasant women by lords, such acts are linked to uprisings against these same lords, such as the Tuchinaggio revolt in the Canavese area, or the revolt that (allegedly) led to the establishment of the commune of Cuneo in the 13th century, or again, outside Italy, the great Catalan revolt against serfdom in the early 15th century.⁴⁵ In short, rape was something that was only reported if one could also report the reaction that such an action 'was bound' to provoke from the men responsible for protecting (and thus controlling) the bodies of their wives, daughters, and sisters.⁴⁶

⁴² For an overview, see Lingiardi, e Madeddu, *I meccanismi di difesa*.

⁴³ On these dynamics, see Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting."

⁴⁴ Hageneder, und Haidacher, *Die Register Innocenz' III.*, doc. 377 (a. 1198), 570-3; and in Gregory of Catino, *Il Regesto di Farfa*, doc. 1213 (aa. 1099-1119), 204-5.

⁴⁵ Bordone, "Ius primae noctis." On the *ius primae noctis* in Catalonia, in the framework of the great peasant revolt, see Freedman, *The Origins of Peasant Servitude*, 193; and Lluch Bramon, "La servitud i el dia a dia." From our point of view, it is not important whether these are faithful accounts or mere narratives (perhaps based on some highly distorted actual memories); what is important is that they speak of such acts by linking them to a revolt – that is, that they are spoken of as acts that cannot be tolerated.

⁴⁶ With regard to men's control over the bodies of the female members of their families (particularly women) in the period after the 12th century, a useful point of observation relates to the mockery rituals associated with the so-called *charivari*, in which men who were beaten by their wives were (among other things) mocked and seen as a reversal of the 'natural' order in which men were expected to beat women and control their bodies. See Le Goff, *Le Charivari*.

This research path can obviously be useful for better interpreting the control exercised by lords over village society. Not only that, but by shedding light on the control that lords (and also male members of individual peasant families) claimed over female bodies, it can help us to better understand how local societies functioned between the 11th and 13th centuries, since women are unfortunately highly under-represented in the documentation available to us.⁴⁷

What I have briefly tried to formulate, however, are only a couple of the many possible examples of research avenues that are available, which in my opinion not only show that there is still much to be done in order to fully understand the role of violence in the Italian countryside in the High Middle Ages (and beyond). In short, not least on the basis of what has been discussed, I believe it is possible to argue that the field of violence and its relationship with local power in the High Middle Ages is a field of research that is far from saturated. In fact, I think it is essential to investigate it even further and in a better way, if we want to understand what power really meant for those who exercised it with their bodies and for those who suffered it with their bodies.

⁴⁷ This under-representation can have a very distorting effect, as shown by some (rather late) exceptions to these patterns; see Maire Vigueur, "Quand les femmes s'en mêlent."

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Alessio Fiore
Università degli Studi di Torino
alessio.fiore@unito.it
ORCID: 0000-0003-0983-6325

Rethinking social and economic changes in the 10th-12th centuries: new approaches to aristocracy and local power in central-northern Italy

by Maria Elena Cortese

The essay offers an overview of the most recent and innovative research on the history of the aristocracy and the development of local powers in the Kingdom of Italy between the 10th and 12th centuries. Particular attention is devoted to the relationship between aristocracies and public power, the importance of the distribution of fiscal assets, family structures, the different modes and intensities of affirmation of territorial lordships, and, finally, a critical analysis of the most recent hypotheses on the role of lordship in stimulating economic growth in the central centuries of the Middle Ages.

Il saggio propone una panoramica delle più recenti e innovative acquisizioni della ricerca sulla storia dell'aristocrazia del regno italico e lo sviluppo di poteri locali tra X e XII secolo. Particolare attenzione è dedicata al rapporto tra aristocrazie e potere pubblico, all'importanza della distribuzione dei beni fiscali, alle strutture familiari, alle differenti modalità e intensità di affermazione delle signorie territoriali e infine a un'analisi critica delle ipotesi più attuali sul ruolo svolto dai prelievi signorili nell'incentivare la crescita economica nei secoli centrali del Medioevo.

Middle Ages, 10th-12th centuries, Italy, aristocracy, fisc, public powers, families, territorial lordship, economy, economic growth, seigneurial levy, castles.

Medioevo, secoli X-XII, Italia, aristocrazia, fisco, poteri pubblici, famiglie, signoria territoriale, economia, crescita economica, prelievo signorile, castelli.

Maria Elena Cortese, Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Italy, mariaelena.cortese@unibo.it, 0000-0002-8908-6896

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1. *Aristocracies and public powers*

The structure of aristocratic society and the forms of local power are unavoidable themes in a volume that aims to examine both the continuities and the changes that occurred during the central centuries of the Middle Ages. This is all the more pertinent given that, – after a lively season of research on the aristocracies of the Kingdom of Italy beginning in the 1970s, followed by a certain standstill around the year 2000 – this prolific field of investigation has, in recent years, witnessed an increase in case studies and, above all, the emergence of new interpretative paradigms that are reshaping the way we view this period.¹

The first issue to be addressed is the profile of the 10th-century Italian high aristocracy. According to the traditional perspective, a new group of marquisal and comital families emerged after the disappearance of the so-called *Reichsadel*. From the outset, this group appears to have differed visibly from the Carolingian aristocracy in terms of family structures, landholdings, and, above all, its relationship with public authority. That is to say, it would have been characterised, already between the 10th and 11th centuries, by a precise physiognomy: a marked tendency towards the dynastisation of titles, privatisation of assets linked to the original offices, cohesion around patrilineal axes, localisation in relatively circumscribed and clearly defined areas, and the development of seigneurial powers.²

However, it should be first of all pointed out that at least some kin groups already prominent in the Carolingian period enjoyed continuity. Moreover, during the struggles for the crown in the first decades of the 10th century, many protagonists were eliminated or excluded from power as a result of their political defeats, rather than because of their ‘structural inability’ to reshape spaces and practices of action.³ Indeed – in contrast to the traditional view, which emphasised the aristocracy’s antagonistic attitude towards central power – an important aspect emerges from the most up-to-date studies: the persistence of a public framework within which the aristocracy operated, relating both to the sovereigns’ ability to redefine the institutional circumscriptions of the kingdom and to their influence in concretely shaping the

¹ This article was developed as part of the collective research project PRIN 2022HFMCCY *The Age of the Knights. Knightly Pre-eminence, Local Societies and Powers: New Perspectives on the Italian Countryside (11th-13th Century)*, coordinated by Sandro Carocci and Maria Elena Cortese: <https://sites.google.com/view/theageofknights/home-page>. For a guide to the historiography on Italian aristocracies up to the early 2000s, see Collavini, “Vito Fumagalli.” For more recent studies, refer to the following notes. For a comparative approach between the Kingdom of Italy and other European regions, see Cortese, “Aristocrazie e incastellamento.”

² Fasoli, *I re d'Italia*; Fumagalli, *Il Regno italico*; Fumagalli *Terra e società*; Violante, “Alcune caratteristiche;” Nobili, Sergi, “Le marche,” *Formazione e strutture*; Sergi, *I confini*; Cammarosano, *Nobili e re*.

³ Bougard, *Le royame*, 248.

composition of the ruling elite.⁴ Research has so far focused mainly on Hugh of Provence's reign, during which a considerable redefinition of aristocratic hierarchies took place – primarily through the promotion of *homines novi*, i.e. middle-ranking aristocrats who had previously built up substantial landed bases and later gave rise to lineages with very long histories.⁵ In my view, however, another significant turning point that deserves careful reconsideration is the redefinition of the Italian aristocracy undertaken by Otto I after his accession to the kingdom. Although this process was certainly partial – some kin groups underwent a significant downsizing, but never retained biological and power continuity – the new ruler's action appears effective as a whole and was coordinated with a renewed assertion of control over fiscal assets.⁶

As far as this last aspect is concerned, the new approaches emerging from a recent branch of studies – devoted specifically to the fiscal patrimony in medieval Italy – have led to a radical reassessment.⁷ Indeed, the idea of a substantial transfer of public property to the aristocracies is no longer accepted, and still less the notion of its privatisation by the end of the 10th century (even if the tendency of the *potentes* to appropriate it in order to consolidate the basis of their eminence is obviously to be regarded as 'physiological'). On the contrary, it can now be stated that large landed estates belonging to the fisc – and probably entire districts, some of them rich in important raw materials and productive activities, such as mining in Tuscany and the Alps or salt production in coastal areas – remained under royal control for a long time. This explains why the sovereigns, and some high officials who inherited public powers were able to limit the growing prominence of the aristocracies by distributing and recovering these huge resources.⁸ Perhaps the most emblematic example of these dynamics is a double dowry arranged in 937, on the occasion of the betrothal of Hugh of Provence and his son Lothair to Bertha of Swabia and her daughter Adelaide respectively. In practice, the king entrusted several major imperial abbeys and a large part of the fiscal estates in the Po Valley and in Tuscany – which remained under royal control in the

⁴ See the pioneering studies of Rosenwein, "The Family Politics," and Rosenwein, "Friends and Family," and the more recent works by Bougard, "Du centre," Collavini, "Mutazione," and Tomei, "Spazi politici."

⁵ Bougard, "Entre Gandolfingi," 21-2; Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*, 136-9; Tomei, "Chiese," Vignodelli, *Il Filo a piombo*; Vignodelli, "La competizione."

⁶ For the Veneto: Castagnetti, "Le due famiglie;" Castagnetti, "Le famiglie comitali;" Castagnetti, "La titolarità." For Lombardy: Fumagalli, "I cosiddetti;" Pauler, "I conti;" Provero, "Spazi politici." For Piacenza: Bougard, "Entre Gandolfingi." For Emilia: Fumagalli, "Origini." For the Exarchate: Manarini, *I due volti*, 86-8; Cortese, "Sui sentieri." For the March of Tuscany: Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*, 132-5, Collavini, *Honorabilis*.

⁷ I refer to the PRIN 2017 research project *Fiscus. Fiscal Estate in Medieval Italy: Continuity and Change (9th-12th centuries)*, <https://www.sismed.eu/it/progetti-di-ricerca/fiscal-estate/> and the related database <https://fiscus.unibo.it/en/>.

⁸ Loré, Le Jan, et Bühner-Thierry, *Acquérir, prélever*; Collavini, et al., *Beni del fisco regio*; Bougard, et Loré, *Biens publics*; Collavini, Tomei, "Beni fiscali;" Collavini, Tomei, "Tra le città;" Lazzari, "Dotari;" Lazzari et al., "Beni e diritti;" Tomei, "Il sale;" Vignodelli, "Berta e Adelaide."

Ottonian period (and later, in Tuscany, under the authority of the marquises).⁹ It is also noteworthy that Otto I – despite the fact that the *Privilegium* theoretically restored the pope's rights over the Exarchate – assigned the *districtus* of Ravenna and the *comitatus* of Comacchio to Queen Adelaide, thereby excluding both the Roman pontiff and the archbishop of Ravenna, and bringing an area of great strategic and economic importance back under imperial control.¹⁰ Moreover, the policy of withdrawal and reorganisation of ecclesiastical property pursued by Otto III in the Italic kingdom from at least 997 onwards is becoming increasingly clear in the most recent research: the emperor's action thus appears less and less as the ideal dream of *renovatio imperii* and more and more as a decidedly concrete project.¹¹

Thus, the aristocracy in the 10th century – and well into the 11th – was by no means autonomous from public authority, since it needed to gravitate towards the courts in order to obtain lands, wealth, and power from them. The persistence of a 'centripetal' political action, in fact, largely depended on the circulation of fiscal assets, which rested primarily on revocable concessions and was thus subject to constant negotiation within the circle of those closest to the rulers.¹² This dynamic management of public assets meant that the concessions, even when granted by means of *diplomata*, did not ensure definitive possession: they could be reassigned to others and then returned, or even shared between different beneficiaries. This gave rise to fierce competition and, therefore, first, the need to secure confirmation of these assets through the issuing of a royal precept each time the sovereign changed; and second, a succession of disputes and judicial proceedings.¹³

Similarly, offices and the titles associated with them were not controlled continuously through transmissions from father to son, but were often held alternately and in competition with others very close to royal power. Only a few family groups succeeded in making their titles hereditary early on and converting at least some of the fiscal assets associated with the original public office into private property. For example, in Tuscany, offices appear to have been distributed among a large number of families and individuals in the middle of the 11th century, many of whom cannot be traced back to kin groups with a recognisable genealogical continuity.¹⁴

This new way of observing aristocratic behaviour and attitudes ultimately disrupts the prosopographical reconstructions of traditional historiography, which were rigidly conceived in dynastic terms and characterised by conventional family names constructed *a posteriori*. Emphasis is instead placed on

⁹ Bougard, "Les biens;" Vignodelli, "Berta e Adelaide."

¹⁰ Cortese, "Sui sentieri."

¹¹ See *Poteri, patrimoni, scritture* (in particular the essays by Cortese, Isabella, and Vignodelli).

¹² See note 8.

¹³ Lazzari, "Sugli usi;" Collavini, "Mutazione;" Cortese, "Tra Ravenna."

¹⁴ Several case studies in: Collavini, "Mutazione;" Cortese, *Signori*, 32-5; Tomei, "Famiglia, potere;" Tomei, "Adriatico Tirreno."

power networks, horizontal connections between kinship groups, and proximity to the kings. In this sense, current research marks a shift in perspective and invites us to consider the aristocracy, for most of the 11th century, not so much as a collection of cohesive and well-defined families, but as “a set of individuals who shared a social status and a network of relationships centered on the court, which allowed them to access positions and fiscal resources renegotiated in an assembly context”.¹⁵

Over the last two decades, there has also emerged an awareness that it is fruitful not to limit analysis to the high aristocracy alone. Attention has therefore been directed – in this period especially in Tuscany – to the broader level of the intermediate aristocracy, which becomes visible in Italian sources from the second half of the 10th century onwards.¹⁶ Despite variations in landed wealth among the kin groups, this was a clearly identifiable milieu, defined by shared forms of behaviour, family structures, spheres of political action, and, above all, close ties to public power.¹⁷ Furthermore, the case of Lucca – thanks to the abundance of surviving sources – has made it possible to evaluate certain turning points: in particular, the importance of entry into royal vassalage during the reign of Louis II, and the formation of marquisal vassalage, which benefited greatly from distribution of fiscal lands with the marquises Adalbertingi. For this social level too, the crucial conjuncture of the reign of Hugh of Provence is confirmed, while the crystallisation of the group can be identified in the Ottonian age, when the phase of enrichment and consolidation of the middle aristocracy reached its peak and it assumed a stable physiognomy that remained substantially unchanged until the final decades of the 11th century.¹⁸

While the picture is now fairly comprehensive for Tuscany, we can discern parallels in other regions of the kingdom, even reinterpreting cases that have already been studied in the past. For example, in the Milan area – where no comital or marquisal lineages had become consolidated – public powers lay in the hands of the very powerful archbishops. These figures, who came from the local aristocracy but were often elected with the decisive support of the royal power, maintained relations with some of the largest families of the Italian kingdom and took part in the redistribution of its resources.¹⁹ The families of the middle urban and rural aristocracy – the well-known *capitanei* – received from the archbishops lands and incomes, including tithes, scattered throughout various parts of the diocese.²⁰ They therefore possessed a ‘multi-zonal’ patrimonial structure, operated in a framework centred on the city, and

¹⁵ Collavini, “Mutazione,” 356.

¹⁶ For a classification of aristocratic levels, see Collavini, “Spazi;” Cortese, *Signori*.

¹⁷ Cortese, *Signori*; Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*; Delumeau, *Arezzo*; Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

¹⁸ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

¹⁹ Del Tredici, “Castelli,” in particular for the families *de Intimiano*, *de Besate*, and *de Arsago*.

²⁰ Violante, *La società*; Keller, *Signori e vassalli*.

formed an elite “fully embedded in the hierarchies of the Italian kingdom”.²¹ Another clear example is the well-known case of the *da Bariano/da Maleo* in the Cremona area: an important kin group that, until the mid-11th century, had a multifocal structure, was active in urban contexts, and participated in the distribution of fiscal resources.²²

The consonances between the models developed for the middle Tuscan aristocracy and those of aristocratic society in areas formally outside the kingdom are also significant. I refer first of all to the Roman “old aristocracy”, that is, the dominant families in the city and territory between the 8th and the first part of the 11th century. Here too we find a clearly identifiable group, which produced the pontiffs themselves, had an assembly-based structure, and revolved around the Lateran Palace, from which emanated the principle offices, both secular and ecclesiastical. The landed wealth of this group was founded not so much on allodial properties as on emphyteutic concessions of land belonging to the urban churches, which in turn had received substantial donations of fiscal estates from the popes.²³ If we then turn Ravenna, the similarities are again striking. In the 10th century the Ravenna aristocracy gravitated around the archbishops – the holders of large amounts of former fiscal land – and based its power mainly on emphyteutic leases of land scattered across the Exarchate, which were granted by archbishops and urban churches. This situation seems to have taken shape in the third quarter of the 8th century – unfortunately the least documented period for Ravenna – when the region became independent of the Byzantine Empire and, at the same time, was not incorporated into the Frankish kingdom, but formally attributed to the Church of Rome. It is therefore plausible that the archbishops and the Exarchal aristocracy – which produced the archbishop as *primus inter pares* – shared the vast resources once administered by the Byzantine officials, chiefly through internal competition.²⁴

The recurring ‘attraction to the centre’ also prompts a reconsideration of the supposed early propensity to sever ties with the cities. It should be borne in mind, in fact, that the chronology varied considerably according to place and family. In Tuscany, for example, the trend towards ruralisation began in a few cases as early as the end of the 9th century, but the process continued over the following two centuries, and only from the late 11th century onwards can we consider the counts to have been firmly entrenched in the countryside.²⁵ In Piedmont, the shift from the rural district of Auriate to the *comitatus* of Turin enabled the Arduinici to construct an ambitious sphere of power, whose political and administrative focus remained the city until Adelaide’s death in

²¹ Del Tredici, “Castelli,” 13; see also the PhD thesis of Berardinello, “I capitanei.”

²² See the analysis by Violante, “Una famiglia” and the new interpretation by Tomei, “Ritorno.”

²³ Wickham, “Iuris cui existens;” Wickham, *Roma*.

²⁴ Cortese, “Patrimonio fiscale.”

²⁵ For Tuscany, see the considerations already expressed in Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*, 142-5. On this topic, see also Sergi, *I confini*, part II, chapter 5, and Provero, “Terre e case.”

1091.²⁶ In the area between Piedmont and Lombardy, the counts of Pombia – despite their incipient subdivision into three branches – continued to play an active role in urban life until the first half of the 12th century, placing members of their family on episcopal thrones in territories where they held extensive possessions and seigniorial rights.²⁷ In the March of Verona, the counts' public functions persisted for a long time, as did their presence in the cities as participants in judicial sessions until the first decades of the 12th century.²⁸ In eastern Lombardy, it was only after the crisis following the destruction of the imperial palace in Pavia that the Giselbertini counts abandoned their multizonal structure and concentrated their political interests in the territory of Bergamo; the same chronology can be observed for the *da Bariano/da Maleo*.²⁹ Finally, with regard to the middle aristocracy, studies on the March of Tuscya reveal the persistence of the situation crystallised in the previous century. This group continued to orbit around the traditional higher powers and – with only a few exceptions – to operate mainly within the cities, although it appears to have been increasingly interested in consolidating its landed holdings in the countryside. In fact, as already mentioned, until the crisis of the March in the final decades of the 11th century, the marquises retained the authority to revoke and to grant concessions of fiscal lands and offices.³⁰

2. Family structures

What has been said so far is further illuminated by the studies on family structures, which in recent decades have profoundly renewed basic concepts and methodologies. In the Italian historiography over the past century – beginning with the reconstruction presented by Cinzio Violante at an important conference held in Paris in 1974 – the idea has taken hold that in the Kingdom of Italy, unlike in the rest of post-Carolingian Europe, an early structuring into lineages, already clearly organised according to male privilege, occurred as early as the mid-9th century.³¹ However, several studies from the 1990s observed that most kinship groups maintained a relatively open and fluid structure. Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that the Italian genealogies reveal the absence of systematic forms of single-branch privilege and, more generally, the rarity of practices that deviated from the rule of egalitarian division among sons.³² In the new millennium, a distinctly fresh approach to the organisation, identity, and representation of aristocratic kinship has

²⁶ Sergi, *I confini*, part I, chapters 4 and 5.

²⁷ Andenna, "I conti," 58-61.

²⁸ Castagnetti, "La feudalizzazione," 731-2.

²⁹ Menant, *I Giselbertini*; Tomei, *Ritorno*.

³⁰ Cortese, *Signori*; Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*; Delumeau, *Arezzo*; Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

³¹ For the traditional approach see Violante, "Alcune caratteristiche;" Violante, "Le strutture."

³² Tabacco, "Regno, impero;" Carocci, "Genealogie."

taken hold in Italian historiography.³³ Subsequent research has confirmed that such kinship groups cannot be understood through the models of the late medieval nobility, but rather appear as broad and flexible networks, not yet rigidly organised around vertical and agnatic ties: indeed, they often associated apparently unconnected groups and individuals who shared a presence in the public sphere and participation in the distribution of fiscal resources. If we turn to the intermediate level of the aristocracy, such practices become particularly evident. Once again, Tuscany offers a clear picture: before the 12th century, the horizontal expansion of genealogical trees is striking, and no limits seem to have been placed on this proliferation. Consequently, a dense network of patrimonial entanglements connected groups and individuals who apparently had no blood ties, yet were closely linked, probably through shared interests in the possession of clusters of fiscal assets.³⁴

Finally, onomastics also constitutes a litmus test for the fluidity of family structures. In Tuscany, for example, it was for a long time based on stocks of names that were anything but coherent. Furthermore, the adoption of toponymic surname became widespread at the end of the 11th century, whereas previously they were found only in few cases.³⁵ In northern Italy, among comital families, surnames appeared only when the lineages split into branches and each branch controlled only a portion of the original patrimony. This, however, occurs only in the late 11th century and, in some cases, not until the 12th century.³⁶ Even for the intermediate aristocracy, the idea of a clearly defined onomastic system as early as the end of the 10th century should be reconsidered, particularly in relation to the adoption of toponymic designations derived from castles – a phenomenon often linked to the earlier development of lordship compared to Tuscany.³⁷ Indeed, the sources present a highly varied picture, as fluctuations in the toponymic designations associated with different members of the same kin group were frequent, making it impossible to identify an unambiguous surname for the family.³⁸

Within this framework, the role of women and female relations – long underestimated by traditional historiography – emerges as particularly significant, both in the division and transmission of wealth and prestige and in the formation of alliances within circles close to public power. Among the middle Tuscan aristocracy, for instance, endogamous marriages were a crucial instrument for structuring political networks, transmitting wealth and status, and consolidating the sense of being to an elite group. For a long time, substantial family wealth was in fact granted to women through the *morgincap* and their

³³ Bougard, “Les Supponides;” Lazzari, “La rappresentazione;” Lazzari, “Una mamma.”

³⁴ Cortese, “Signori;” Cortese, “L’aristocrazia;” Cortese, “*Potens*;” Delumeau, “Arezzo;” Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

³⁵ Collavini, “I cognomi;” Cortese, “Signori;” Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

³⁶ Menant, “Les modes.”

³⁷ Menant, “Les modes;” Collavini, “I cognomi.”

³⁸ Guglielmotti, “I signori;” Tomei, “Ritorno,” and Tomei, “Famiglia.”

access to portions of both paternal and maternal patrimony. The middle aristocracy, moreover, appears to have been more conservative in these practices than the comital group: female agency, therefore, does not seem to have completely declined until at least the first half of the 12th century.³⁹

3. *Seigneurial powers*

To summarise what has been said so far: the 11th century is now generally interpreted as a phase in which aristocratic structures established in the previous century persisted in many respects, owing to the enduring influence of late Carolingian institutions. The moment of transformation – namely, the modes and timing of the development of autonomous seigneurial powers – has also been the subject of extensive study. It is therefore not my intention, nor would it be possible, to offer an exhaustive review of the historiography.⁴⁰ I will limit myself to noting that, in recent decades, research has produced a broadly shared understanding of this issue. In general, seigneurial rights did not fully develop as private powers between the 10th and 11th centuries, but later: that is, once traditional public powers had entered into a definitive crisis. Undoubtedly, therefore, in today's prevailing perspectives, the spotlight falls on the decades around the turn of the 1100s as a period of rapid political, social, and economic transformation across central and northern Italy.⁴¹ These conclusions clearly introduce a different chronology both with respect to the 'mutationist paradigm' of French historiography – which located around the year 1000 a marked rise in violence and the disintegration of public institutions of Carolingian origin – and with respect to the Italian historiography of the last century, which regarded territorial lordships as already widespread and consolidated over large areas of the Kingdom of Italy by the early decades of the 11th century.

However, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of flattening such broad and complex phenomena. In my view, it remains fruitful to attend to the nuances of the picture and to resist proposing an overly comprehensive and unarticulated model. The reconfiguration of local power, in fact, did not occur uniformly, and even its outcomes – the emergence of a well-defined and widespread territorial lordship – varied considerably. Firstly, two large areas of northern Italy stand out for the absence of significant territorial lordly powers: the principality of Trento and especially the patriarchate of Aquileia, where a strong continuity with Carolingian institutional and social structures can still be discerned.⁴² In Tuscany and Umbria, moreover, there were consid-

³⁹ See note 33 and Faini, "Aspetti for the middle aristocracy."

⁴⁰ See the overviews in Carocci, "Signoria rurale;" Carocci, "Signori e signorie;" Provero, *L'Italia dei poteri*.

⁴¹ The overall picture of this change is outlined in Fiore, *Il mutamento*.

⁴² *Il Patriarcato*; Fiore, *Il mutamento*, 23, 272; Castagnetti, "Le comunità;" Castagnetti, *Il comitato trentino*; Castagnetti, "Da Verona."

erable differences in the strength and diffusion of territorial lordships, which were particularly weak in the areas surrounding cities such as Pisa, Lucca, and Perugia. In these areas, forms of dominion appear increasingly to have been based on land concessions and on the control of peasant families bound by a heavy form of dependence that combined territorial and personal lordship (*homines, manentes, coloni*, etc.).⁴³ A similar situation can be observed in Romagna: a limited development of jurisdictional prerogatives among the comital lineages, a substantial absence of references to seigneurial levies, and a marked weight of personal dependence.⁴⁴ In Latium, across the vast area of the Agro Romano – an area as large as the entire *contadi* of some towns in Tuscany and the Po Valley – the development of seigneurial powers and the construction of castles did not occur until the end of the 12th century and beyond.⁴⁵ Finally, another extensive area, the territory of Milan, has come to light only recently. Here – contrary to a historiographical tradition “inclined to emphasise the lordly profile of the Milanese aristocracy” and to regard the *capitanei* “as holders of strong rural lordships” – seigneurial rights are scarcely documented, and it is difficult to identify lordships extending far beyond the original castle of origin, even in the more peripheral parts of the *contado*, whether among comital families, or within the group of *capitanei*.⁴⁶ More generally, however, it is important to emphasise – even in those areas where the seigneurial character of the aristocracy appears more evident – that the territorial dimension of lordship was not always fully developed. For instance, doubts arise when sources merely report that the owners of a castle were able to impose certain tributes on all those who sought refuge there.

In a close connection with the observations just made, I would like to conclude my essay by dwelling a little longer on the relationship between the development of territorial lordship and the rate of economic growth – a topic that has been examined in Italian historiography only over the past decade or so.

4. *Territorial lordship and economic growth*

It is generally accepted that, at least until the second half of the 11th century, the economic pressure exerted by landowners on their dependents remained relatively weak. Indeed, the aristocracies sustained themselves primarily through the direct management of landed estates and a relatively loose levy, mainly based on the collection of rents and tithes.⁴⁷ The exercise of sei-

⁴³ Collavini, “I signori;” Cortese, *Signori*; Cortese, *L’aristocrazia*; Tiberini, *Le signorie*; Tomei, *Milites elegantes*; Wickham, “La signoria.”

⁴⁴ Pallotti, *Castelli*.

⁴⁵ Wickham, “La mutacìon” and Wickham, “The origins.”

⁴⁶ Del Tredici, “Castelli,” 41, with references to recent historiography, in particular the studies of A. Rapetti, P. Grillo, and S. Bernardinello.

⁴⁷ Carocci, “Signoria rurale, prelievo;” Carocci, Collavini, “Il costo.”

gneurial rights, by contrast, represented a means of extracting a greater share of the surplus produced by peasants and of securing sufficient revenues to uphold the aristocratic status of kinship groups. As is well known, Duby had already emphasised the positive role of lordship in the expansion of the European economy, arguing that the new levies compelled peasants to increase production while providing the aristocracy and its entourages with the resources needed to stimulate demand for goods.⁴⁸ In the last decade, however, the crucial role of seigneurial pressure on peasants as one of the main drivers of economic growth has been reconsidered for Italy, with a substantially revised chronology – shifted forward by about a century in connection with the *mutamento signorile*. When the old public powers that had sustained the traditional redistribution system were severely weakened, the mechanism designed to ensure wealth and social prestige for a court-centred aristocracy collapsed. Consequently, landlords were compelled to exploit local resources in new ways in order to intensify the extraction of agricultural surplus. Recently scholarship has therefore emphasised, on the one hand, the rapid and irreversible privatisation of major landholdings and fiscal resources;⁴⁹ and, on the other, it has been observed that, from an economic point of view, it was not so much the imposition of new levies on dependent peasants that increased the mass of seigneurial revenue, but rather the extension of certain fees to the entire rural population, including allodiers who were previously exempt (of which there were many in Italy).⁵⁰ French historiography, for its part, has recently argued that the introduction of new seigneurial levies arose from the need to compensate for the loss of control over tithes, beginning around 1070, under the pressure of the Reform movement.⁵¹

It cannot be denied, however, that it is very difficult to quantify the weight of territorialised seigneurial levies through written sources and somehow ‘measure’ seigneurial economic pressure. Yet very few detailed studies have attempted a quantitative analysis based on data from written sources. Thus, a proper history of the seigneurial economy and the relative weight of the different forms of levy remains to be written, as does an analysis of the levy’s ability to adapt to peasant productivity.⁵² This is why hypotheses on the economic aspects of ‘seigneurial change’ have sought support in archaeological data. In particular, the relationship between the development of rural lordships and the transformations observed in castles has been examined. This is, firstly, because the level of investment in castle structures offers an indication of the economic resources available to the lords; and secondly, because it was

⁴⁸ Duby, *Le origini*.

⁴⁹ Collavini, “Mutazione.”

⁵⁰ Wickham, *L’asino*, cap. VI.

⁵¹ Overview in Mazel, “La réforme;” this idea is taken up for Italy in Fiore, “Building.”

⁵² See as general references the volumes *Pour une anthropologie* and *Calculs et rationalité*. Specific studies for Tuscany: Casini, “Le entrate;” Collavini, “Le basi;” Cortese, “I destini;” Tabarrini, “When did clerics.”

precisely around castles that the new system of levies was organised – one that assumed, or at least sought to assume, a territorial character. Scholars have therefore focused on the changes that marked the transition from an initial generation of modest castles – built mainly of wood and other perishable materials – to fortifications where stone construction became widespread, residential areas for the lords were established, and traces of more prestigious goods can be discerned.

These aspects have been emphasised especially for Tuscany, the most extensively studied of the Italian regions. They have been interpreted as signs of seigneurial mutation, namely the movement of many aristocratic families from the city to the countryside and the development of stronger local ties, which increased their ability to exploit the productive surplus between the late 11th and early 12th centuries.⁵³ In several recent overviews, moreover, the impact of new forms of levy that stimulated peasant productivity has been identified as an important factor in the economic development of central and northern Italy, a process made most tangible in the changing material structure of castles.⁵⁴

The argument is indeed fascinating. However, I believe that the connection established between rapid political/institutional developments and economic transformations reflected in the material structures of castles has perhaps been too simplistic. This is based on data that is not yet solid enough. Firstly, if we review the results of the archaeological excavations comprehensively, it becomes clear that the material data relating to the castles is inconclusive. The chronologies in the excavation reports are often vague, failing to distinguishing between the beginning and the end of the 12th century, and sometimes fluctuate considerably.⁵⁵ Above all, in most cases, these developments cannot be dated with certainty to any period earlier than the last decades of the 12th century.⁵⁶ The alignment between economic growth and the evolution of castle structures – as well as the development of new exchange circuits between the countryside and the city – thus seem to characterise the phase that Sandro Carocci proposed calling ‘third *incastellamento*’ rather than ‘sec-

⁵³ The rupture occurring in the decades between the late 11th century and early the 12th centuries has been particularly emphasised by Bianchi, Collavini, “Risorse,” Bianchi, “Archeologia della signoria,” Fiore, *Il mutamento*, 63 and ff., Fiore, “Building.”

⁵⁴ Carocci, “I tanti incastellamenti,” Carocci, “Nobiltà e pietrificazione,” Del Tredici, “Castelli,” Wickham, *L’asino*, chapter 6.

⁵⁵ A collective research, coordinated by Giovanna Bianchi, is addressing this issue: *The Times of Castles. Multidisciplinary Researches for a New Chronology of the Building Sites of Incastellamento (11th-12th centuries)*.

⁵⁶ This can be deduced, for example, from a review of the numerous castle excavation reports published in *Archeologia medievale*. Prevalent datings to the 12th century and beyond can be found in *Costruire lo sviluppo; L’incastellamento* (particularly the papers by Benente, Saggiaro and Varanini, Mancassola); *Mondi rurali; Il paesaggio pietrificato* (particularly the papers by Cantini and Cagnana). The initial results of the research *The Times of Castles*, mentioned in the previous note, are also showing that the 12th-century building phases in the castles are neither clearly visible nor monumental (Workshop held in Siena, 6-7 novembre 2025).

ond'.⁵⁷ In other words, many castles underwent a further evolution, marked by an effort to reshape settlements by selecting and expanding certain sites, accompanied by a wave of new foundations of large castles based on urban architectural models.⁵⁸ In short, the times do not coincide, and the transformation of ancient 'light' castles into more imposing, complex structures does not appear to be attributable to the phase known as *mutamento signorile*, with which there is a gap of at least three generations.

Secondly, the full development of stone architecture in castles by the beginning of the 12th century would not be consistent with the gradual growth of the regional economy in central and northern Italy, as detailed in recent studies. In fact, it is only after the mid-1100s, and often in the first half of the 13th century, that a new general economic complexity in the countryside becomes clearly perceptible. This can be estimated through a wide set of indicators, such as monetary circulation, elite consumption, production and trade of pottery, the presence of machinery and production facilities, and peasant material culture.⁵⁹

Thirdly, it should be noted that the hypothesis of an increase in territorially-based seigniorial levies as a crucial growth factor for the economy does not fit well with certain areas that experienced early development in Italy, such as those around Pisa and Milan. As already mentioned, much of the Pisan territory, for example, lacked territorial lordships altogether, while those of the Milanese *contado* were unusually few (and weak) ones.⁶⁰

More generally, I believe caution is required when connecting changes that could swiftly alter existing structures (over a period of a few decades) to the rate of economic change, which, during this period, would instead require a longer accumulation period before becoming effectively perceptible (over a period of several generations). As a first step, it seems essential to me to try to date the changes in the castles' structural and economic characteristics more precisely: should they be attributed to the end of the 11th century or the beginning of the 12th century, or rather to the middle of the 12th century, or even the beginning of the 13th century? These data could, of course, significantly affect some of the reconstructions proposed so far. It is equally important to identify and map the areas where such changes did not occur at all. For example, this issue has recently been raised for the Milan area, where written sources – though abundant – provide little evidence of monumental transformations in castles built during the previous period (unfortunately, archaeological data for this area remain scarce).⁶¹

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I believe that we should evaluate the economic weight of territorial lordships, which scholars have focused on

⁵⁷ Carocci, "Nobiltà," 94-5.

⁵⁸ Cortese, "Castrum."

⁵⁹ Wickham, *L'asino*, chapter VI.

⁶⁰ See note 46.

⁶¹ Del Tredici, "Castelli."

because they are more evident in our sources, in relation to the ‘extensive’ impact of numerous and pervasive, yet understudied, forms of domination within castle and village communities.⁶² I am referring to the pressure exerted on peasant production by local elites, particularly those who had transformed themselves in the context of the *mutamento signorile* by acquiring military status. This social group is much more visible in sources from the mid-12th century onwards, and was numerous, complex, and at the heart of social, economic, and political relationships – relationships that were highly significant yet remain little investigated. Still, we gain the impression that, in many places, it was precisely through knightly domination over villages that the most effective and cohesive forms of control and the most systematic levying of dues from peasants emerged.⁶³ In this regard, attention has been recently drawn to the countryside surrounding Milan, one of the areas experiencing the most tumultuous economic development in the 12th century.⁶⁴

Research on this social stratum, however, remains largely to be undertaken. The domination exercised by knights over the peasantry in the very countryside where they lived remains a vast and largely neglected issue in Italian and European historiography.⁶⁵ Yet a thorough investigation is necessary to achieve an accurate assessment of the forms of power and the relationships that actually ran through the countryside. This holds true both on the social side and on the economic one.⁶⁶

To conclude, I borrow the title of a book published a few years ago: the question of economic growth in the central centuries of the Middle Ages is undoubtedly “a historical theme that has not yet been exhausted”.⁶⁷ And it seems to me that one particularly open question concerns precisely the role of lordship as a driver of economic growth itself. Of course, I am unable at present to offer an answer to such a complex problem, but I am convinced that it would be extremely fruitful for future research to pursue this line of enquiry.

⁶² For the concept of the pervasiveness of lordship, see Carocci, “The Pervasiveness” and the paper by Carocci in this volume.

⁶³ For many villages in southern Italy, see Carocci, *Signorie*. Similar prerogatives also appear in studies of central Italy, such as possession of a certain number of peasant families bound by a specific, heavy form of dependence that combined territorial and personal lordship: *homines, manentes*, etc.

⁶⁴ Del Tredici, “Castelli” and Wickham, *L’asino*, 687–8.

⁶⁵ There has been very little research conducted in Italy, so our knowledge is based on rare case studies and observations scattered across essays that focus more generally on lordship and rural society. A preliminary overview of southern Italy can be found in Carocci, *Signorie*; one of *milites* and *masnadieri* in central and northern Italy in Cortese, “Rural Milites” and Cortese, “Le frange.”

⁶⁶ This is the aim of the PRIN 2022 research project *The Age of the Knights*: see note 1.

⁶⁷ *La crescita economica*.

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Maria Elena Cortese
 Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna
 mariaelena.cortese@unibo.it
 ORCID: 0000-0002-8908-6896

Micro-lordship and pervasiveness

by Sandro Carocci

My article is divided into two parts. It deals with two related but not overlapping themes, which share the common feature of addressing aspects of local domination that have hitherto been little studied. It is part of a collective research project begun in autumn 2023. The effort is to move away from the world of middle and high aristocracies, and to direct the analysis further downward: on the one hand, observing forms of domination that, due to their minute, small-scale character, have often escaped the attention of historians (the micro-lordship), and on the other hand, investigating characteristics of domination relations that reflect more clearly the perceptions of subordinates rather than those of the lords (the pervasiveness). In both cases, we are dealing with very long-term phenomena: in addition to analysing the knowledge currently available, the focus of my article will be on the question of whether for pervasiveness and micro-lordships the history of the centuries considered in this volume was a history of change or continuity.

Il mio articolo è diviso in due parti. Tratta due temi correlati ma non sovrapponibili, che condividono la caratteristica comune di affrontare aspetti della dominazione locale finora poco studiati. Fa parte di un progetto di ricerca collettivo iniziato nell'autunno del 2023. L'obiettivo è quello di allontanarsi dal mondo delle aristocrazie medie e alte, e di indirizzare l'analisi verso livelli più bassi: da un lato, osservando forme di dominazione che, per il loro carattere minuto e su piccola scala, sono spesso sfuggite all'attenzione degli storici (la micro-signoria); dall'altro, indagando caratteristiche delle relazioni di dominazione che riflettono più chiaramente le percezioni dei subordinati piuttosto che quelle dei signori (la pervasività). In entrambi i casi, si tratta di fenomeni di lunghissimo periodo: oltre ad analizzare le conoscenze attualmente disponibili, il fulcro del mio articolo sarà la questione se, per quanto riguarda la pervasività e le micro-signorie, la storia dei secoli considerati in questo volume sia stata una storia di cambiamento o di continuità.

Sandro Carocci, Tor Vergata University of Rome, Italy, carocci@lettere.uniroma2.it, 0000-0001-9989-6780

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Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, micro-lordship, pervasiveness.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, micro-signoria, pervasività.

1. *Development of lordship, growth of pervasiveness?*

I will begin with the concept of lordship pervasiveness, because I have dealt with it on several occasions, and so I will be brief here and not make it the focus of my reflections.¹ By lordship pervasiveness I mean the ability of the lord to thoroughly penetrate the dominated world. It is a way of considering seigneurial rule that emphasises its impact on subjects and encourages us to view lordship from the perspective of those who endured it. In Italy and abroad, historians have mainly been interested in something different: the world of the lords themselves. Regarding the lords, we have investigated the nature and intensity of power, the geographical and social sphere in which domination was exercised, the elements on which it was based, the political culture it expressed, the reciprocal relations that lords maintained among themselves and with the state, the economic effectiveness of lordship, its symbolic and charismatic aspects, and other elements.

The theme of pervasiveness helps to reverse the view, forcing us to understand how much, and in what ways, lordship affected the world of the dominated. To what extent were the lords capable – and at the same time eager – to exert daily, conditioning control over their subjects? To what extent were they willing and able to infiltrate deeply into the dominated world, its social practices, and the organisation of settlements and living spaces? What factors enabled a lordship not only to be strong politically, militarily, territorially, and economically, but also to be truly pervasive for the dominated? It must be emphasised: pervasiveness and other elements of seigneurial rule were not at odds. Pervasiveness was supported by the characteristics we consider typical of strong seignories: a vast territory, full seigneurial possession of the rights of justice and command, a large military retinue, high levies, and seigneurial violence itself. But elements of another nature also – and perhaps above all – counted. For instance, the active participation of lords in productive activities mattered: pervasive lordships were often those that possessed large reserves and demanded many corvées from subjects, managed the exploitation of mines, or controlled irrigation systems. Military activity also played a role: lords who required peasants to perform extensive guard duty or even combat duty conditioned their subjects through military service, forcing them to de-

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¹ See Carocci, “The Pervasiveness of Lordship;” Carocci, “La pervasività.”

vote time and risks to these tasks. Then there was the lord's ability to maintain close ties with the most influential people among the subjects, or control marriages, successions, and other key moments in the subjects' family cycle. And of course, another vehicle of pervasiveness was the daily presence of the lords in the places of residence of the peasant communities under their rule.

Pervasiveness was not a universal feature inherent in all forms of domination. In some regions and periods, the lords with the greatest capacity for oppression were not necessarily the most politically or economically powerful – that is, those whom contemporaries would have identified as being at the top of society – but rather much smaller lords at village level, or even more modest ones. By and large, the lords with the greatest scope for shaping and closely monitoring the world of subordinates were the smaller lords, who needed to make the most of their modest domains and were in the best position to overcome practical obstacles to local control. Exercising deep influence over subordinates was both less necessary and more burdensome for the larger lords, for whom the very size of their territories made it more difficult to maintain a consistent presence on the ground. However, it would be wrong to establish an inverse correlation between the strength and pervasiveness of lordship. Many small lords had very few rights, while powerful lords could also be pervasive.

So how do we place our centuries from the point of view of the history of pervasiveness? Although in current studies the notion of pervasiveness is never explicitly formalised, it seems to me that the interpretative frameworks prevalent today take for granted a strong increase in it. I am referring, of course, to all the reconstructions that insist on 'seigneurial transformation' – that is, on a sudden and comprehensive change brought about, at a certain point in the 11th century, by the emergence of new seigneurial powers, for the first time fully established and capable of adopting practices destined to reshape dominated societies and alter the overall economic dynamic through violence and the imposition of exorbitant levies. The reference is, first and foremost, to Georges Duby and the entire French mutationist current, which places the turning point at the beginning of the 11th century; and, for north-central Italy, to the now prevalent view of seigneurial transformation triggered during the civil wars of the last decades of the century.² In this volume, Alessio Fiore argues that the sudden development of territorial lordships in north-central Italy led to a marked increase in "the violence exercised upon their subjects" which "was highly spectacular and had a strongly public, visible nature". "It was an act of possession" in a new situation in which "control over bodies tended to be absolute".

These new territorial lords, who imposed a 'harsh and absolute' power through violence, also seemed intent on establishing deep, pervasive control

² A good introduction to the vast bibliography on French mutationism is Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*, XVII-XX, which is also the most comprehensive expression of the line prevailing today.

over their subordinates. Intervening in the daily lives of peasants was the clearest proof of this new power, and perhaps sometimes it was an end in itself – as in a modern totalitarian state – allowing a lord to shine through the subordination of his subjects. The hypothesis, at present, is plausible. The impression remains, however, that this increase in pervasiveness, attributed to the emergence of violent territorial lordships, is often more assumed than demonstrated. Take, for instance, the issue of violence: lords who made violence on subjects a defining element of their practices and identity represented a profound novelty for those subjected to it, but they did not necessarily seek to police every moment of their subjects' lives. They could, so to speak, 'settle' for recognition of their supremacy and an increased share of the peasantry's produce. For lordship to become truly pervasive, the other elements I mentioned earlier were needed, such as the creation of vast reserves managed with *corvées* (attested only in very rare cases) or active forms of intervention in the organisation of production processes (also very rare, with the exception of some seigniories in mining centres). Perhaps less episodic, though certainly far from widespread, was the seigneurial pervasiveness generated by the imposition of military contributions on all subjects, as occurred, for example, with the Guidi in the 12th century. Simone Collavini has highlighted the cases of Monte Croce, Modigliana, and Rosano to show "the centrality of armed service" in the domains of the counts – a feature that characterised their lordship to such an extent that it resulted in lower economic pressure on subjects in return for military service.³ Another possible factor of pervasiveness introduced by the new lordships was the control and limitation of subjects' land transactions and inheritance practices: more widespread than military service, and certainly more frequent than the imposition of compulsory labour on large demesnes these seigneurial interventions, however, have never yet been the object of adequate analysis.

Certainly more studied, and at the same time undoubtedly widespread, is another area of potentially strong pervasiveness of territorial lords: *congregatio hominum*, i.e. operations aimed at forcing or convincing present or future subjects to move within castle-villages.⁴ Pierre Toubert has written, albeit referring to the 10th century and the first two-thirds of the 11th century: 'grouped in closed villages, the peasants then experienced new subjugations'.⁵ The castle-village was a new reality of tightly knit peasants, where family, religious, judicial, and more generally social subjection was very strong. It was an environment well suited to increasing the pervasiveness of the lords.

Even in this field, however, there are not many certainties. The geography and chronology of castle-villages are much debated. In Toubert's Latium, for

³ Collavini, "Le basi materiali," 27.

⁴ An overview of Italian research on castles is provided by Augenti, e Galetti, *L'incastellamento: storia e archeologia*.

⁵ Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 1357.

example, they appear to have spread later than was previously thought.⁶ Some clarification is necessary here. According to an interpretation that prevailed until very recently, from the late 11th century many castles underwent impressive transformations: masonry walls were built to enclose the summit area; robust towers, cisterns, and palaces were constructed; churches were founded and re-founded; and, more generally, the level of monumentality of castles – which had remained very modest until then – was raised. The exact dating of this sort of petrification of the new lordship, however, still needs to be established more clearly. Written sources show that from the end of the 11th century, the castle became central to the sphere of power, to the representations of social pre-eminence, and to the ways of organising the rural population.⁷ Yet, it is debated whether this change in the material configuration of castles really dates back to the late 11th century, or is instead one or two generations later.⁸ It is also doubtful whether it led to a large presence of peasant inhabitants within the walls. On the basis of evidence from southern Tuscany, Giovanna Bianchi has hypothesised that the castles of the late 11th century and the first half of the following century were, for the most part, intended only to house lords with their retinues.⁹ These castles were useful for violently subjugating the peasant population, dominating from outside and from above a population whose settlement structure did not change for the time being. Such a picture appears valid for many other regions, from southern Italy to Lombardy and Trentino. However, a precise geography is still lacking.

Much more solidly established, and attested in nearly all regions, is what I have called the ‘third *incastellamento*’: that process of foundation, re-foundation, enlargement, and settlement concentration which has early examples – such as the foundation of Empoli by the Guidi family in 1119 – but which above all characterises castles from the mid-12th century onwards, promoted by comital dynasties, noble lineages, cities, and even lesser lords or communities of inhabitants.¹⁰ On closer inspection, however, the significance of these material changes seems to run counter to the idea of a direct correlation between population concentration and the pervasiveness of seigneurial control. In medium-sized and large encastellated centres, the regulation of social, familial, religious, and economic behaviour to which individuals were subjected certainly became stronger; yet this appears to have been exercised less by the lord than by neighbours, kinship networks, and clergy. In fact, almost everywhere it is clear that the scale of material and political resources

⁶ This emerges quite clearly from the archaeological research: see Molinari, “Siti rurali e poteri signorili.”

⁷ Here I refer the reader to Carocci, “I tanti incastellamenti,” 526–8.

⁸ See what is noted in this volume, in Cortese’s essay, n. 53. A collective research project on the subject, coordinated by Giovanna Bianchi, is currently underway, the results of which are awaited: *The times of castles. Multidisciplinary researches for a new chronology of the building sites of incastellamento (XI–XII centuries)*.

⁹ Bianchi, “Archeologia della signoria.”

¹⁰ Carocci, “I tanti incastellamenti,” 530–7.

invested in these settlements did not yield an absolute lordly power, but rather fostered the development of dominations of a more consensual character (and, in perspective, communal governments). The new centres were relatively large, populated by notables, and difficult to control in their entirety. The very presence of subjects within the fortifications testified to collaboration, consensus, and negotiation – that is, as a young Chris Wickham put it, a domination exercised not over but through the subject world.¹¹ It is no coincidence that the castles which became more monumentalised in the late 12th century, and which remained hegemonic on the local scene, were almost always centres re-functionalised by local communities and elites rather than lords. For seigneurial pervasiveness, therefore, they represented a negative rather than a positive factor.

To recapitulate: if we want to consider the rise of violent and predatory territorial lordships as a salient element of seigneurial developments in the 11th-12th centuries, then an increase in pervasiveness can indeed be imagined in numerous situations, though it should not always be taken for granted. Adding to this caution is another point: I suspect that the emergence of violent and predatory territorial lordships has perhaps been overstated in recent research, as Maria Elena Cortese also observes in this volume. To clarify this impression, the theme of micro-lordship proves useful.

2. *Micro-lords of the South*

I begin this section with a clarification of terminology. I use the uncommon terms ‘micro-lordship’ and ‘micro-lord’ to denote those forms of rule exercised on a very small scale, involving only a modest number of subjects – ranging from a few units to a few dozen. I therefore avoid the term ‘personal lordship’, even though it is widespread in historiography and apparently anchored to concrete elements (such as oaths, acts of submission, residence on a specific piece of land). It was also theorised by contemporaries, especially from the late 12th century onwards, when canonical doctrine distinguished between peasants bound by contractual, and thus extinguishable, obligations, and those who were bound directly in person and could not free themselves from obligations.¹²

For the purposes of this study, however, speaking of personal lordship entails a twofold disadvantage. First, it risks oversimplifying the nature of lordship. If we examine the dependencies attached to the micro-lord (and indeed not to them alone), we see that at times they had a land basis, being linked to the entrustment of plots for cultivation; at other times they took on a more

¹¹ Wickham, “A che serve l’incastellamento?”, 39.

¹² Useful reflections can be found in Collavini, “I signori rurali,” 303-4; on canon law, Conte, *Servi medievali*, 156.

personal character, deriving from hereditary subjection or from contractual commitments undertaken by the dependent. However, in most cases the personal and the landed were intertwined, since the distinction between these two forms of dependence – so central to legal doctrine and to the legislators of the communes and the Kingdom of Sicily – often remained unclear to the world of lords and subordinates. Peasant subordination typically constituted a complex amalgam, often indecipherable in its original components, arising from land and personal relations simultaneously (and, in dominions larger than micro-lordships, even territorial ones). The cultivation of the lord's land entailed a personal relationship; conversely, a personal type of dependence was rarely separable from the allocation of land. Hence the formulas *pro persona et bonis*, *de persona et tenimento*, *de persona et terris*, and *pro personis et possessionibus*, which in the sources attest to the impossibility of distinguishing between the two forms of subjection.

The other reason why the notion of micro-lordship is preferable to that of personal lordship lies in the need to emphasise the specificity of those who dominated very small groups of dependents, as opposed to larger-scale lords. Personal lordship was in fact also widely practised by major lords – holders of medium and large territorial lordships – who chose to preserve or develop the personal dependence of part of their subjects in order to exercise tighter control and to secure the solid revenues guaranteed by personal domination. For instance, in the vast county of the Guidi there was a double level of lordship: territorial and political on the one hand, over all residents; landed and personal on the other, over the individual cultivators of the counts' lands and other families directly linked to them.¹³ This second, personal and landed, level of lordship is fundamental to understanding the counts' domination, but it risks flattening the distinction between lords of medium or high status and those of a far more modest level, on whom I wish to focus here.¹⁴

Having made these clarifications, my journey will begin with the South. The history of the *Mezzogiorno* is important not only because it covers more than a third of Italy, but also because it shifts our viewpoint and draws attention to dynamics often overlooked. This is true in many fields, yet for the study of small-scale lords the heuristic value of southern Italy is especially clear: between the 11th and 13th centuries, micro-lordships were not only particularly widespread but also, crucially, particularly well documented.

I summarise here the results of research carried out a few years ago.¹⁵ In almost all southern regions, the widespread presence of lords with at most two or three dozen subjects – more often just a handful, sometimes even only one or two – depended both on factors predating the Norman conquest, which were

¹³ Collavini, "Le basi materiali."

¹⁴ For the same reason, other terms developed in French historiography – and sometimes adopted in Italian historiography – such as 'domestic lordship' and 'village lordship', do not seem appropriate to define the phenomenon of micro-lordship.

¹⁵ Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, especially 277-324.

absent or less relevant in central and northern Italy, and on a broader transformation that, from the late 10th century and especially the 11th, strengthened aristocracies and, more generally, militarised social pre-eminence throughout Italy and beyond. Even before the Normans, especially in areas of Lombard tradition, immigrants were obliged to place themselves under the protection of the prince or a lay or ecclesiastical notable, and to accept some form of dependence. In Byzantine territories, and to a lesser extent in Lombard ones, other forms of dependence arose from concessions (*exkousseia*, *ius affidandi*) that allowed powerful churches and laymen to assume from the sovereign the right to demand taxes and public services from residents and immigrants. After 1030, the wars associated with Norman penetration and conquest greatly expanded these small-scale dependencies. The peasant population – let it be clear – did not experience mass confiscations, systematic expropriations, widespread subjugation, massive increases in levies, breaks in local customs, or the other calamities that the ‘mutationist’ tradition attributes to seigneurial rapacity. The major changes brought about by the Norman settlement did not radically alter the peasants’ condition, their freedoms, or the burdens placed upon them. With the partial exception of Sicily, we may even think that the vitality of rural communities was fostered by the conquest rather than undermined.

At the village level, the most consistent effect of the conquest seems to have been the increase in the number of knights and their privileges, which heightened peasant dependence. At the same time, the position of other important local actors – often closely connected to knightly families – was strengthened: monasteries, churches, and the elites of *boni homines* and *iudices*. These developments were decisive for the spread of client relationships within village societies. All evidence suggests that the *milites* already in possession of *villani*, if able to adapt to the new political order, kept them subjugated, exploiting the increased demands of war to expand both the number of their dependents and the obligations they imposed on them. They were then joined by new knights, of Norman as well as indigenous origin, along with churches, monasteries, and notables of various kinds. The wide diffusion of dependency relations attested in the 12th century was primarily due to this dynamic.

The rise of the monarchy has left us written records of these dependencies that are lacking elsewhere. Roger II and his successors had a particular interest in mounted fighters, who were essential to the kingdom’s military capabilities. Their assets, family policies, relations with subjects, and dealings with great nobles were subject to specific regulations and controls, as well as a general redefinition through feudal terminology. Enquiries were conducted, inspections carried out, and censuses compiled. The most famous of these, the *Catalogus Baronum* of 1150, records for certain areas of Campania, for example, the number of subjects held by each knight – revealing that 180 knights together had a total of 2,078 subjects.¹⁶ No comparable source was

¹⁶ Carocci, 273.

ever produced in central or northern Italy. Other information comes from royal grants of *villani* to individual *milites*, as well as from interventions by the kings to protect knightly micro-lordships against territorial lords who sought to deprive resident knights of their rights and dependents. Alongside these sources, compiled to safeguard the kingdom's military potential, other records of micro-lordships derive from policies designed to prevent royal rights from being undermined by the imposition of dependent relationships on inhabitants of the royal demesnes. Further evidence comes from Frederick II's extensive legislation on personal dependencies, which were at odds with his ideology of public power and its insistence on a direct relationship between the emperor and all inhabitants of the kingdom.

The bureaucracy of the sovereigns – and at times of the pre-monarchic states – shaped the documentary practices of certain lords, who drew up lists of dependents, such as the *platee* of the Calabrian bishops. Other documentation was more indirectly connected to royal power. My favourite example is a document from 1182.¹⁷ It describes in detail the lordship held by the *miles* Rainone da Sorrento in the royal demesne of Maddaloni, twenty kilometres north of Naples, and appears to have been drawn up both for management purposes and, perhaps, to protect him against possible intrusions by royal administrators. In Rainone's lordship there were no settlements or fortifications, so there was no territoriality. Instead, there were scattered lands and thirteen peasants who paid rents and performed a fifty to one hundred *corvées* a year, by virtue of personal and land subjection (*de persona et terris*). Rainone, however, was a prominent knight: he frequented the baths and other places where the aristocracy socialised; he had a squire to carry his cloak and silver cup, four subjects with ministerial roles (seneschal, bailiff, squires), and, above all, three vassal knights to whom he had granted land and peasants as fiefs. His was the typical lordship of the highest-ranking knights – without territorial powers, but in terms of assets not far from the lords of a small open settlement (*casale*) or a modest castle. His three vassal knights, in turn, exemplify the vast majority of the kingdom's roughly 10,000 knights, whose patrimony almost always consisted of control over a few peasants and their lands. The number of their dependents varied greatly, as did the command and levy rights they exercised. Usually, however – as in Rainone's case – these rights were quite extensive, including rents, the provision of numerous *corvées*, control over marriages, and certain rights of command and justice.

Much more could be said about the knightly lords of the South. It is worth noting the hostility with which they were regarded by the territorial lords, who sought to obtain revenues and *corvées* from the knights' subjects. Equally interesting are the challenges posed by the subject peasants to the knights: at times, they even organised themselves collectively to negotiate better conditions of dependence. This was the case at the beginning of the 13th century,

¹⁷ Giorgi, "Confessione di vassallaggio."

when the hundreds of *villani* subjected to *milites* and monasteries in Sorrento obtained the halving of certain dues; or in 1190, when the subordinates of the knights of Pontecorvo compelled the territorial lord, the abbot of Montecassino, to promulgate a *charta concessionis* – accepted by the knights – that curtailed the coercive powers of the micro-lord and prohibited a series of abuses and violations.¹⁸ Another point clarified by the southern sources is the gap between the reality of knightly micro-lordships – most of which counted no more than a dozen subjects – and the number of dependents that the royal bureaucracy and the knights themselves considered the optimal endowment of a mounted combatant: around thirty.¹⁹ More generally, the evidence shows how micro-lordships could profoundly shape economic, social, and, in certain respects, even political relations. Violence and abuses such as those forbidden by the *charta concessionis* of Pontecorvo, the heavy demands for labour – sometimes exceeding one hundred days per year – the judicial rights attributed to knights in several places, at times even including cases of blood crimes, were compounded by oaths of loyalty, the payment of *adiutoria* and dues in kind and money, control over the marriages of offspring, and restrictions on personal mobility. They were certainly stringent instruments of subordination and control. Yet their impact on local societies was amplified by the networks of protection and clientele that underpinned and accompanied these powers: land concessions, military obligations, solidarity in the courts, protection from the demands of royal officials or territorial lords, and economic assistance. In short, everything suggests that for the peasant, the role of the knight on whom he depended – and who exercised daily control over him – carried, in most cases, greater depth and weight than any other relationship of dependence, including those towards the sovereign, his officials, or territorial lords and their officers. Of all the forms of subjugation that burdened the peasant, dependence on the knight, when present, must have been the most pervasive.

The case of southern Italy also suggests that the economic factor must be taken into account, since it reveals a connection between the spread of micro-lordships of knights and other local notables and the low amount of resources drained by state taxation and by medium and great lords. It should be recalled that in the Kingdom of Sicily royal taxation only became exorbitant in the mid- and late 13th century, while the overall levies of territorial lords remained very low and were managed in ways that favoured local elites, because they were based on the contracting out of revenues and the delegation of authority to the most enterprising among their subjects.²⁰ The most common fee was just the tenth part of the harvest, and in some cases it is possible to calculate that – taxes and justice included – barely a fifth of the wealth pro-

¹⁸ Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, 278-82, 287-90.

¹⁹ Carocci, 269-75.

²⁰ Carocci, 413-46, 477-90.

duced by the peasants ended up in the lord's hands. Rural notables, especially the knights, could thus draw on the many resources that escaped both the tax authorities and the territorial lords. The large number of client relationships, including micro-lordships, that permeated the villages of the royal demesne and of territorial lordships was clearly tied to the volume of resources that remained within local societies. This provides an important point of comparison with the situation in central and northern Italy.

Finally, with regard to the initial question – whether continuity or change prevails in the history of micro-lordships – the South invites a nuanced answer. A certain number of micro-lordships already existed before the Normans, thanks – as we have seen – to the protection mechanisms for foreigners and immigrants, and the sovereign assignments of taxpayers exempted from public demands. There is no doubt, however, that it was the growing unrest and militarisation associated with the conquest that increased both the number and the prerogatives of knights and their micro-lordships. The stabilisation of Norman rule after 1080 and the creation of many territorial lordships led to further allocations in favour of military auxiliaries. From 1140 onwards, the emergence of a strong central government further stimulated knightly micro-lordships, reinforced by royal concessions to *milites* and, above all, protected from the pressure of the great nobility. Contraction set in only at the height of the Swabian age, with royal legislation against the proliferation of patronage and with the redefinition of knightly status, which excluded many mounted fighters with assets fell below those deemed indispensable for the rank (roughly equivalent, as noted, to thirty subjects).

3. *Knights and villages in central and northern Italy*

Two preliminary considerations are necessary to address the subject of knights and their micro-lordships in central and northern Italy. The first is the impossibility of mechanically transposing the southern situation to the rest of the peninsula. Lombard and Byzantine political and juridical traditions, followed by the Norman conquest, and – and above all – the establishment of a monarchy capable of conditioning local realities, influenced the southern knightly world and the small-scale dominations that sustained it in ways absent elsewhere. Yet many elements did unite the South with central and northern Italy. At present – and this is the second preliminary consideration – the southern distinctiveness may appear so pronounced partly because of a certain delay in scholarship. Research on central and northern seignories has tended to privilege those lords who held public powers and, above all, those able to exercise them outside their landed estates. In analyses that take the territoriality of lordship as the most important parameter, micro-lordship relations have received very little attention. For the most part, they have been treated as a form of 'land lordship' (as opposed to territorial lordship), an aspect of the concessions granted by territorial lords to their

clients, or a dimension of the legal status of peasants within the broader context of serfdom. So far, very little attention has been paid to the faculties and social physiognomy of small- and very small-scale lords.²¹ In this case, historians have focused on churches and monasteries, rather than on knights and other members of the rural elite. Similarly, we still know too little about the economic basis of knightly pre-eminence in the countryside, the extent of the landed estates that supported it, and their origin and nature. From the limited available data, it is possible to infer that the rural *militia* had an extremely varied profile in terms of assets and social prestige, even in central and northern Italy, just as has been established for the South.²²

No one doubts that many of the phenomena underlying southern micro-lordships were also present in central and northern regions. Of course, the world of rural knights – their origins, patrimonial arrangements, and relations with lords – still require adequate study, which is now the focus of the collective investigation already mentioned. There is one certainty, however, which I have already mentioned and has long been recognised by scholars: in the 11th and 12th centuries knights multiplied and came to constitute the upper layer of many rural territories. They even appeared in very small towns. Andrea di Strumi recounts that in the early 11th century, in the tiny village of Cucciago, some ten kilometres south of Como, Arialdo's parents were the wealthiest inhabitants and possessed subjects and horses, thereby clearly displaying a knightly status.²³

Mounted fighters, however, were not present everywhere. The detailed analysis conducted by Attilio Stella for the Veronese area reveals a complex picture, with some villages entirely lacking knightly elites, while in others they were well established and active. Several factors explain the absence of local knights: the small size of the population; the complete concentration of land ownership in the hands of a single territorial lord, as in Sabbion; or the early involvement in the villages of families from the town *militia* or from the clientele of great lords. Where these conditions were absent, however, we find groups of knights almost everywhere – indeed, even more widely than Stella himself claims.²⁴ Knights were also absent from those ecclesiastical lordships that chose not to develop a military dimension, placing themselves instead under the protection of a prince, a city, or aristocratic families. For example, the protection of the nobility of nearby Anagni and other local families enabled the monks of Villamagna to make a choice – quite unusual in Latium – that endured for centuries: to centre the identity of their lordship on the

²¹ As noted in Nobili's lucid historiographical review, "Piccola nobiltà di campagna."

²² Cortese, "Rural Milites."

²³ Andrea Strumensis, *Vita sancti Arialdi*, 1050, and the interpretation in Del Tredici, "Castelli, chiese, mutazione signorile."

²⁴ Stella, *Ai margini del contado*, is rich in data and interpretations. However, I disagree with the reductive view of figures such as the Bionde notables, who owned private fortresses, as 'aspiring' knights (243-8).

church and monastery, avoiding both the construction of a castle for the peasants and the recruitment of knights.²⁵

Mounted fighters were especially numerous in towns such as Guastalla,²⁶ which were more dynamic and developed earlier; in centres subject to weak seignories (e.g. Bionde and Cerea, also in the Verona area);²⁷ in localities belonging to vast consortiums composed of dozens of co-lords indistinguishable from other rural knights (e.g. Tevigio, in the Apennines between Piacenza and Parma, where at the beginning of the 13th century there were about forty *domini*);²⁸ and even more so in valleys and other territories ruled by groups of knights, such as the *milites Terre Pofane* in southern Latium.²⁹ To this one may add the knights assembled by large territorial lords – for instance, the abbey of Farfa, the *milites* of Racconigi under the marquis of Saluzzo, or the fifty *milites pulcherrime praeparati* who in 1208 escorted Count John of Ceccano to his meeting with Innocent III.³⁰ And yet *milites* also appear in a huge number of less prosperous, and sometimes tiny, localities, such as Cucciago.

While the process of militarisation of pre-eminence and the increase in the number of horsemen are well established, they still call for further investigation. In particular, the role of territorial lords in this growth deserves closer scrutiny, alongside an evaluation of the paths by which members of the local notability assumed roles as mounted combatants autonomously or semi-autonomously – much as seems to have occurred in the South. At present, however, the emphasis falls almost entirely on the lords.³¹ This historiographical approach already appears in *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, one of the most influential studies on the subject for the past fifty years. In Pierre Toubert's reconstruction, the abbey of Farfa, in the second half of the 11th century, incorporated knights into feudal structures and employed them in the wars triggered by the Reform. Some of these knights originated from the decline of small castle lords, who, because of succession fragmentations and the new climate of warfare, found it convenient to join Farfa's clientele. To a greater extent, however, the abbey's knights arose from the upward mobility of the

²⁵ Carocci, "Conclusions: A peasant village," 408; more generally, Fiore, "La signoria: l'esercizio del potere locale," 10.

²⁶ See below, footnote 41; for an analysis of the early development of some Lombard centres, to which Guastalla can be compared, see Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 489–94.

²⁷ In both centres, there are documented elites of clear knightly rank who built fortifications (in Bionde a *dugnonem et castellum cum fossatis*) and were entitled to collect one-third of the judicial penalties paid by their subordinates. For Bionde, see Castagnetti, 'Ut nullus', 42–54 and documents 132–6; for Cerea, see Varanini, "Società e istituzioni," 85–9, and the document published in Castagnetti, 'Ut nullus', 114.

²⁸ Falconi, e Peveri, *Registrum magnum*, 520–6.

²⁹ This group of knights included the consort lords of the castles of Ripi, Torrice, and Pofi, as well as other knights; in the absence of further studies, see the documents published in Theiner, *Codex*, I, 314–5, a. 1195 and 1200; Caperna, *Storia di Veroli*, 292–5, a. 1209; and Scaccia Scara-foni, *Regesti*, 50–2, a. 1230–2.

³⁰ For Farfa, see the following note; for Racconigi, see Pezzano, "Istituzioni e ceti sociali" and Pertz, *Annales Ceccanenses*, 296–8.

³¹ Among the few exceptions, I highlight the recent Lefeuve, *Notables et notabilité*.

wealthiest tenants – those *boni homines castrorum* who, at the beginning of the 11th century, are found participating in the abbey *placita*. These men later consolidated the patrimony granted in concession and, from 1060 onwards, when Farfa began to employ the feudal instrument to organise its military clientele, they became *equites cum fegis*, later known as *milites* and *fideles abbatie*. According to Toubert, they held patrimonies quite similar to those of ordinary peasant tenants, though exempt from all obligations save military service. Here, then, we are faced with a process of social ascent fuelled primarily by the territorial lord.³²

Countless sources show, in fact, that “more or less up to the last quarter of the 12th century, all the observable processes of rural social mobility pivoted on service to the lords”. Maria Elena Cortese, to whom we owe a particularly well-balanced synthesis, has emphasised – drawing on all the available bibliography – the path that led “the ablest and strongest youths coming from peasant families” to recruitment as squires. Thanks to military practice on horseback, proximity to the lord, and a new lifestyle this marked a move away from the *rustici*, consolidation at the top of village societies and finally, in the luckiest cases, entry into the group of true knights.³³ More peremptorily, Alessio Fiore maintains that “up until the third decade of the 12th century, being a *miles* was not a matter of social origin or personal wealth, but purely of being able to serve a lord militarily by fighting on horseback and of creating a particular bond with him through this kind of service, thereby gaining a privileged position within local society”.³⁴ More generally, in the central and northern regions, as in the South, the importance of service to the powerful – and in particular “participation in the exercise of seigneurial powers as minor officials”³⁵ (and, in the South, also in the local administration of the royal demesne) – was undoubtedly crucial for the formation of rural elites. Just as it appears beyond doubt that the centrality of lordship as a vector of social change came to end in the last decades of the 12th century, when “the intensification of economic growth and the commercialisation of the countryside led to the appearance of paths of social mobility in which the seigneurial structure was more a frame than the cause”.³⁶

However, there is a strong impression that in the central-northern regions the predominantly lordly origin of the sources that best document knights and rural notables has led to an excessive emphasis on lords, neglecting the formative processes of knightly groups that unfolded in substantial autonomy from territorial lords, even before the transformations brought about by the economic growth of the late 12th century. The observation is obvious in all autonomous rural communities, where we see the emergence of a knightly

³² Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*, 1103-76.

³³ Cortese, “Rural milites,” 336-7 and 341.

³⁴ Fiore, “Knights and peasants,” 54.

³⁵ Collavini, “Tra campagne,” 11.

³⁶ Collavini, 12.

elite, as well as in those subject to extensive knightly *consorterie*. In pioneering pages, Alessio Fiore has offered an initial sampling – one that requires considerable extension.³⁷ Just as it is obvious that the exponents of vast *consorterie* who collectively exercised a territorial lordship – but who individually held such small shares of it as to resemble simple knights – contributed to the growth of the knightly structure. Some *consorterie* arose from the fragmentation of ancient lineages through partible inheritance; many others concerned lordships that had already come into being as collective lordships through the action of groups of local notables, which over time underwent further fragmentation. This was the case of the aforementioned forty *domini* of Tevigio; of the many noblemen from the Marche, whom we shall see intent on associating to found new settlements; and of many others, such as the six *domini* who in the Umbrian village of Pomonte in 1193 each had between one and four dependents,³⁸ or the twenty or so *domini* of Torre Caetani who in 1180 divided the domination of a population of around two hundred families, with a larger share due to the most important nobleman.³⁹

The formation of a local knighthood, which results firstly from autonomous processes of ascendancy and is only incidentally connected to service to the lordship at a subsequent stage, also transpires in centres subject to medium and large territorial lordships. A notable example of this is the famous agreement between the abbe of San Sisto in Piacenza and the *homines* of Guastalla. In July 1102, the monastery in Piacenza – which, only a few weeks earlier, had obtained the near-complete transfer of the ancient fiscal *curtis* of Guastalla from Matilda of Canossa, endowed with an extensive territory and with revenues secured by trade along the Po River – regulated and restricted seigniorial rights, under terms that were further clarified and reaffirmed in 1116 by the abbot of the male community that succeeded the nuns. The *pactum et conventio* can be seen as a response to the demands of a dynamic and rapidly developing community, which secured the recognition of its own political organisation through the election of twelve representatives, among other things. Moreover, the privileged recipients of the monastic concessions were the notables, who were likely to lead the community and benefit most from the exemption from *ripatico* granted to all residents, as well as from the transfer of the *teloneo* on the river ports to the community. It is no coincidence that immediately after the trade concessions, the document records an explicit concession relating to the elites: those who would decide to own a fighting horse to defend San Sisto and themselves (but in 1116 the protection of Guastalla itself was prioritised: *ad terre, ecclesie suique libertatem tuendam*) obtained the right to hold their landed property under the favourable condition accorded to aristocratic possessions, namely that of *feudum cum omni onore*. In 1102, this concession was

³⁷ Fiore, *The Seigniorial Transformation*, 125-40.

³⁸ Fortini, *Nova vita*, 357.

³⁹ Caetani, *Varia*, 1-2.

addressed *omnibus curialibus* of Guastalla, an expression usually interpreted as referring to those who were already part of Matilda's vassal-like clientele and lordly retinue. More probably, however, the term *curiales* here designates all the notables of the *curia* of Guastalla, excluding the peasants (*agricole*); this meaning is confirmed by the 1116 redaction, which in several passages clarifies the earlier *conventio*, where the concession to knights refers to *curiales seu burgenses* – i.e. all the notables who lived in the castle or its borough, excluding the *rustici*. The concessions of 1102 and 1116 therefore show that the lords did not so much promote as seek to frame and harness the drive to increase the number of knights, which in dynamic and fast-growing rural centres such as Guastalla was very strong in those decades.⁴⁰

The initial chronology, however, remains to be ascertained. There is no doubt that the desire to increase the number of knights grew stronger in the last third of the 11th century, following the crisis of public institutions, civil wars, and the emergence of new, predatory seigneurial powers. During this phase, while the direct involvement of territorial lords in the formation of knightly groups, through concessions and recruitment, may not have been as extensive as historical accounts suggest, their indirect influence was certainly significant as driving forces of change towards a more localised and more violent world. Violence became a shared discourse, to the point that even rural communities built castles, while – in all likelihood, as we know from the South – relations of authority and subjection within them grew stronger and more coercive. This created the perfect context for the multiplication of mounted combatants and the militarisation of pre-eminence. The situation before the mid-11th century, however, appears different: the sources are less abundant, references to horsemen are much rarer, and the link between pre-eminent roles in local societies and the practice of mounted combat does not yet seem to be taken for granted.

4. *Knightly micro-lordships in central and northern Italy*

A large proportion of these knights held their own micro-lordships. Before discussing this, however, it is worth noting that central-northern Italy shows that, if the knights remained in the countryside rather than moving into the cities, they could establish domination over groups of peasants in various ways and perhaps pursue paths quite different from those of the micro-lordship. Cases such as Crema, and especially the famous pact of 1093 between the counts and knights of Biandrate, show how rural *milites* could accept the invitation to move to the castles of rising territorial lords, perhaps

⁴⁰ Falconi, *Le carte cremonesi*, II, 64-5 and 98-100. For the history of Guastalla, I refer to Tabarrini, "Tasse, rendite, guerra;" for the end of the female community, to Getschmann, "Monachos ob reformandam religionem."

forming a sort of noble commune, which in Biandrate was led by twelve consuls and exercised judicial powers over the knights' peasants.⁴¹ In central Italy, and particularly in the Marche, a 'dust cloud of small lords' – made up of groups of rural knights alongside minor territorial lords – decided in the second half of the 12th century to radically change the basis of their supremacy. Associated in sometimes numerous groups, small *domini*, *boni homines*, *maiores*, and *milites* of the countryside chose to abandon the dispersed villages and tiny castles where they held possessions and subordinates, and to move together to a different settlement – often newly founded – where in many cases they also brought their dependents.⁴² Sometimes, as in Matelica, the purpose of the initiative was to free oneself from the control of a territorial lord; at other times, as in Fabriano, the noble 'dust cloud' that took the initiative was initially free from any superior control. In all cases, however, the main motivation was the desire to "reorganise the power over men and equip themselves with more effective instruments of domination":⁴³ at first, the new centres remained under the control of knights and petty nobles, who retained their rights of levy and justice over the subjects they had transferred to the new settlement. For the knights of the countryside, we also glimpse paths other than those constituted by autonomous rule over small groups of dependants, adhesion to territorial lords, and grouping in large castles with proto-urban aspirations. Federico Del Tredici has shown that the knights of the Milanese area were not controlled by territorial lords – who were almost absent there – nor did they opt for domination over a group of neighbours: some remained outside the rural communities, while others valued their presence within them. This was a long-standing presence, well attested as early as the 11th century. For example, in the above-mentioned passage on the parents of Arialdo, Andrea da Strumi not only emphasises their chivalrous profile, but also their full membership of the Cucciago community and their respect for the *iuste conventiones* that regulated relations between *vicini*. As the 12th century progressed and the city's political and fiscal influence over the countryside grew, these knights' role seems to have primarily become that of intermediaries with the city. They derived political and social supremacy and economic wealth from this role, thanks to the substantial income they earned by anticipating community payments to the city's tax authorities.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Menant, "Aux origines de la société cremasque;" on Biandrate, the pact with the knights in 1093, and the contextual pact with the *rustici-homines* are published in Faccio, e Ranno, *I Biscioni*, 120-2 (the gaps can partly be filled in with a text from 1167: 133-5); among the vast bibliography, I only mention Andenna, "I conti di Biandrate," and Panero, *Servi e rustici*, 165-231.

⁴² The best analyses – often marked by a weak distinction between *domini castri* and *milites* – are Maire Vigueur, "Centri di nuova fondazione" (where the definition of "dust" is found); Luzzatto, "Le sottomissioni;" Pirani, *Fabriano*; Fiore, *Signori e sudditi*, 183-95 and 269-93; Bernacchia, *Incastellamento*.

⁴³ Maire Vigueur, "Centri di nuova fondazione," 91-2.

⁴⁴ Del Tredici, "Castelli, chiese, mutazione signorile;" Del Tredici, *Comunità, nobili e gentiluomini*.

What do we know about the micro-lordships of central and northern knights? Although the research is not yet complete, it leaves little doubt that, as in the South, the possession of dependent men and the land they cultivated seems to have been the standard endowment of most knights. There were, of course, many exceptions. We can imagine that some mounted fighters were maintained directly by the lord, either by residing in his mansion or through frequent donations. Already of secondary importance, their number must have dwindled steadily over the course of the 12th century. A share that is difficult to quantify – but certainly larger than that of those retained by the lord – consisted of knights who had no subordinate peasant families at all. As a result, they derived income only from land entrusted to peasants bound by purely economic relationships, which did not create a stable dependency (as in the case of leaseholders of individual plots), or from the work of labourers and sometimes even members of their own families. This type of knightly patrimony seems typical both of the less well-off mounted fighters and of those who lived within lordships of great strength and pervasiveness. A good example of the latter are the knights of the Roman barons of the 13th century – great lords who sought in every way to avoid sharing any power of command with other actors. They also opposed any authority of the knights of the lordship over those who cultivated the land granted to them: consequently, the *feuda nobilia* assigned to knights could reach considerable size, but with few exceptions do not seem to have included *vassals*, i.e. stable peasant dependents.⁴⁵

However, as I have said, the majority of knightly estates were based on the possession of subjugated workers. It is no coincidence that when a lord provided for his *milites*, he would typically assign them dependent peasants and the corresponding assets. The basic unit used to describe the granted estates was often the men themselves, who were variously referred to as *homines*, *massari*, *vassalli*, *villani*, *rustici*, *angariales*, *manentes*, *coloni*, *habitatores*, or *sedentes*. These terms had substantially similar meanings, even though they might refer to slightly different types of subjection, a distinction that historians have sometimes overemphasised.⁴⁶ Although this was left implicit, peasants were always assigned to the *miles* who received the concession together with their family members. In some cases, the presence of the family was explicitly stated in the description of the property granted, which was then referred to as *caseate*, *domus*, *mainate*, or *familie*. In other concessions, the basic units were instead peasant holdings, usually defined as *mansi*, which could also house more than one family; at other times, the adopted unit was the *sedimen* or *resedium*, i.e. the land on which the granted family's house and other buildings were built.

The examples are literally countless.⁴⁷ In 1105, the Bishop of Fermo granted twenty-one peasant families (*caseate*) to two rural *boni homines* in em-

⁴⁵ Carocci, *Baroni di Roma*, 220-4.

⁴⁶ There are a few exceptions, among which Collavini, "La condizione giuridica," stands out.

⁴⁷ In addition to those cited below, other examples are mentioned by Fiore, *Signori e sudditi*, 84-5.

phyteusis. In 1127, he made another concession of only four *homines*; in 1135, a third of twelve *mainate hominum*.⁴⁸ In the same period, or perhaps even earlier, the Veronese abbot of San Zeno granted Markesio of Ostiglia a series of *homines cum districto et honore*. In the same years, in nearby Nogara, the estates given as fiefs to knights by the Counts Gandolfingi and other nobles consisted primarily of *mansi* (and tithes).⁴⁹ In Isola Comacina, before 1113, Gotefredo della Martesana granted a group of brothers two *massari* as fiefs with *omnis districtus et albergaria et beneficium*.⁵⁰ Around 1160, when the pope, after conquering the Latium castle of Fumone by force, granted it back to the heirs of the ancient concessionaires with many restrictions and stringent pacts, he established, among other things, that he reserved the right to freely choose the knights to whom he would distribute the *feuda militum*. He immediately assigned to one of his own followers a *feudum unius militis* consisting of vineyards, two and a half hectares of arable land and, above all, ten *homines*.⁵¹ Before 1169, the abbess of S. Maria del Senatore in Pavia granted a fief in Voghera to a local personage, who also acted as her *gastaldo*. This fief consisted of *sedimina*.⁵² In 1178, the testament of Guido del fu Catenaccio Figuineldi bound all the goods assigned to him in fief to one of the knights of Figline *cum villanis, colonis, sedentibus et cum omni iure*.⁵³ Lastly, in 1183, two brothers from Marengo were invested by the abbot of the monastery of S. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro in Pavia with a fief consisting of ten *mansi* and some *sedimina* located in various localities, some of which were not close to each other. This fief had previously belonged to another local personage and his five consorts, each of whom owned fractions of the fief ranging from one to four *mansi*.⁵⁴

The possession of subjects could obviously have had an allodial character, which, however, emerges only weakly from the available documentary landscape, predominantly of lordly origin. Yet the two *massari* that Gotefredo della Martesana had granted as a fief before 1113 seem to have been an allodial possession, just as the majority of the subjects held by the *boni homines* and *milites* of Fabriano, Matelica, and many other centres in the Marche and Umbria, or by the large *consorterie* in which each member owned only a few subjects. It has been hypothesised that allodial possessions, together with the related peasant subordinates, increased during the 12th century, as the

⁴⁸ Pacini, Avarucci, e Paoli, *Liber iurium*, 506-7, 512-3, 536-7.

⁴⁹ Castagnetti, *Il processo per Ostiglia*, 367 and 353-4 (with comments 131-132, 147-8 and 219-20). See now Fiore, "Ostiglia around 1100."

⁵⁰ Pezzola, *Le carte dei monasteri di S. Maria dell'Acquafredda*, no. 22. <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/cdlm/edizioni/co/lenno-smaria/carte/acquafredda1113-06-00/>.

⁵¹ Duchesne, et Fabre, *Le Liber Censuum*, I, 401-2.

⁵² Ansani, *Le carte del monastero di S. Maria del Senatore*, no. 69, <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/cdlm/edizioni/pv/pavia-smariasenatore/carte/senatore1169-08-23/>.

⁵³ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Diplomatico, Riformagioni*, 1178, February 3 (= 1179), kindly pointed out to me by Maria Elena Cortese.

⁵⁴ Barbieri, et al., *Le carte del monastero di S. Pietro*, no. 154. <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/cdlm/edizioni/pv/pavia-spietro2/carte/spca1183-02-16B/>.

more fortunate knights accumulated resources.⁵⁵ This dynamic is plausible above all for knights of more modest origin, who were more closely tied to the lord, and certainly less so for higher-ranking *milites*, who already by the 11th century appear well endowed with allodial holdings. The visibility of allodial possessions was also obscured by the general tendency to define as a fief any aristocratic possession, as in the case of Guastalla in 1102, when all the possessions held in any capacity by mounted combatants were considered an honourable fief.

5. Honor privatus et specialis

It is difficult to establish when the possession of peasant families entailed powers of command and levy that we can consider lordly in nature, and how pervasive these powers were. As in the dominions of Roman barons, the rights of knights over peasants might not extend beyond the levy of a share of the crops. Other forms of subjection involved only symbolic donations and little else, and – as in the Mezzogiorno – seem to have had primarily a political-clientelistic significance, serving to increase a knight's local influence.⁵⁶ In the majority of cases, however, there seems to be little doubt: from their dependents, knights received tithes, donations, corvées, taxes, and judicial penalties, and their dominance was pervasive.

This lordly character present in most knightly dominations often emerges only with difficulty in the sources. As with every aspect of lordship, the most evident element is variability – the extreme diversification of domination practices according to regions, local contexts, and individuals. At this early stage of research, this makes any attempt to trace a geography of micro-lordships entirely impractical. For now, I will limit myself to noting an apparent difference between central and northern Italy in the type of information available: in central Italy the sources are quite rich in information on the levies in goods and labour made by the micro-lords, but more laconic on their jurisdictional rights; by contrast, in northern Italy we find less detailed descriptions of the levies and more information on the faculties of justice and command.

A representative type of central Italian sources is the series of notarial deeds recording the sworn declarations on the *debitalia servitia* owed by their subjects, made between 1198 and 1202 by the *boni homines* of Fabriano – i.e. the knights and petty lords who had decided to establish the new settlement a few decades earlier, moving there with part of their *homines*.⁵⁷ These documents are well-known and have been studied, among other scholars, by

⁵⁵ Fiore, *Signori e sudditi*, 89–90.

⁵⁶ Carocci, *Lordships of Southern Italy*, especially 305–9; Fiore, *Lords and Subjects*, 279.

⁵⁷ Luzzatto, *Rustici e signori*, 17–25; Archivio Storico Comunale di Fabriano, *Carte diplomatiche*, I, nos. 34, 35, 48, 49, 49bis, 59.

Gino Luzzatto, Francesco Pirani, and Alessio Fiore,⁵⁸ from whom I take this passage, relating to a 1199 declaration:

Of the twenty or so *homines* dependent on the three consorts (Alberto, Morico and Cencio), a dozen were subject to heavy dues (mostly in kind), as well as a few dozen days' work for the lord. A couple had lighter obligations, while half a dozen were subject to almost exclusively symbolic donations at festivals. A member of the first group, Raino di Bernardo, was obliged to pay two hams, half a dozen large flatbreads, a basin of mince, two cheeses, two bundles of wood for heating, and two *solidi* annually (on different dates). He also had to provide around 50 days of labour for the lord (six days for sowing grain, the same number for harvesting, two days for haymaking, two days for repairing canals, four days for pruning the vineyard, four days for weeding it, and the same number for harvesting grapes, etc.). On the other hand, the *filiu Iohannis Boni* were only required to provide two hams or, alternatively, two capons and two large flatbreads every year on the feast of St Stephen.⁵⁹

Adding to both the burden of the first group of subjects and the pervasiveness of the lordship was the requirement to lend oxen and donkeys two days a week for transport services, and, above all, to pay *adiutoria* in food and money on the occasion of the marriage of a female member of the seigneurial family, the adoubement of the lords themselves or of other relatives, and their summons to a trial – all *ad sensum et voluntatem* of the lords, but in accordance with what had been customary in previous decades. Very unusually, there was also a heavy military service of at least eight days a month whenever the lords engaged in a *war*.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Pirani, *Fabriano*, 75-9; Luzzatto, *Rustici*; Luzzatto, *Dai servi della gleba*, 234-42; Fiore, *Signori e sudditi*, 269-70, from which the passage quoted in the text is taken (English translation my own).

⁵⁹ Archivio Storico Comunale di Fabriano, *Carte diplomatiche*, I, 48: *In primis Raino de Berardo debet annuatim in festo Sancto Stephani Nativitatis I par spallarum porcine cum II focatiis magnis et II tracturas et in quadragessima I catinum macenate cum I focatia magna et in Sancte Marie augusti II casiatas cum II focatiis magnis aut antea quando domni precipere vellent et II sollos Lucensium et medium in foro magno Gaifane et IIII coltrinas et IIII paria boum ad refrangendum et VI paria ad seminandum et VI operas ad metendum et IIII operas ad aram et II operas cum somario et barastas ad portandum bladum ad aram aut cum bovis et I ad pallareum et debet commodare somarium et saccum ad portandum bladum domi dum necesse esset dominis, et II operas ad faciendam peraturam et II ad portandam eam ad vineam et IIII ad vineam potanda et IIII ad eam levandam et II ad ea palmandam et IIII ad vangandam et II operas ad vegetes et canales adtandas et IIII operas ad (ven)deminadum cum sporta et sporta relinquat dominis et II somas lignorum in yeme quando mitti iamdictis dominis petere vellent et hec omnia predicta servitia annuatim debet dare bonis predictis dominis suis. A total of 51 corvées were required, of which 22 were for the vineyard (the *peratura* or *paratura*, as well as the repair of barrels and *torcolari*, called *canales*), and 27 were for arable crops, 14 of which required oxen (the *coltrina* is a small plough used for fallowing).*

⁶⁰ *Suprascripti homines debent predictis dominis facere adiutorium ad placitum et ad nuptias et ad corredum de pane et annona et carne et pullis et ovis et tortocleis et denariis ad sensum et voluntatem predictis dominis sicut fecerunt a XXX annis usque nunc; et cum domini predicti haberent guerram quilibet suprascriptorum hominum debet stare cum eis saltim ad minus octo dies per mensem quando domini precipere vellent cum armis; et debent prestare iamdictis dominis duos dies in qualibet edomada boves et asinos in aliis et baractis eorum ad voluntatem predictis dominis. Less stringent on *adiutoria* for marriages and adornments are the pacts of 1198 (published in Pirani, *Fabriano*, 169-75) at the origin of the *servitia* declarations.*

Declarations of this type, along with other statements of peasant obligations, are quite numerous in Fabriano and other towns in the Marche region from the last decades of the 12th century onwards. They reveal, among other things, the individualised nature of these obligations, which often varied among the subjects of the same lord. This suggests that lords with a large number of subjects – sometimes more than thirty – based their declarations on some form of written record. Lords with fewer subjects (from one to fifteen), by contrast, seem to have lacked such records, and their declarations not surprisingly reveal doubts and second thoughts that forced notaries to make additions and changes to the declarations.⁶¹ A common obligation, at least for peasants burdened with numerous corvées and recognitive gifts, was the provision of *adiutoria* for nuptials, adoubements, and *placita*.

The rights of micro-lords also extended to coercive, judicial, and fiscal faculties. Around 1150 in Fonte Avellana, in 1198 in Fabriano, and in 1203 in the Assisi countryside, the agreements concerning the rights of *boni homines* included the faculty to prey (*predare*) upon subjects who failed to perform the *debitum servitium*;⁶² in the Perugino area, until the restrictions imposed by the city statutes in 1279, the local lord could even freely beat his subjects.⁶³ The sources, however, are not very explicit, and we often have to rely on formulations that are both elusive and evocative – such as the *omnis usus* owed to the church of Fermo *et decimas de ipsa et placitum et bannum de vobis et de vestris omnibus*, granted in 1135 together with twelve peasant families.⁶⁴ We do, however, have clear evidence of the ordinary and widespread nature of the judicial rights over subordinates in cases where the power of a territorial lord, the pressure of dependents, and above all the establishment of major settlements obliged the knights to cede the administration of justice to the lord or the rural commune; in return, they obtained a share of the proceeds. In the Latium castle of Cave, where around 1260 the Annibaldi had not succeeded in detaching all the subjects from the *milites* – as the Roman barons and the Annibaldi themselves normally did in their other dominions – the knights were entitled to a share of the judicial revenues and taxes (*de bannis, plazis et obfensis*) paid by their *vassalli*.⁶⁵ In the Marche, in Fabriano, where the administration of justice had passed to the commune, according to the 1198 agreements between the *boni homines* and the *plebei qui debent servire prefatis bonis hominibus* the micro-lords were entitled to half of the judicial revenues, tolls, and market taxes.⁶⁶ In 1205, the pacts established between the inhabitants of Ripatransone and the Bishop of Fermo stipulated that the

⁶¹ For example: Archivio Storico Comunale di Fabriano, *Carte diplomatiche*, I, 34.

⁶² Pierucci, Polverari, e Bernacchia, *Carte di Fonte Avellana*, 120-1; Pirani, *Fabriano*, 169-75, § 11-2; Fortini, *Vita nova*, 556-9, esp. 557.

⁶³ Tiberini, *Le signorie rurali*, 199 and 265; Fiore, *Signori e sudditi*, 274.

⁶⁴ Pacini, Avarucci, e Paoli, *Liber iurium*, 536-7.

⁶⁵ Carocci, *Baroni di Roma*, 221.

⁶⁶ Pirani, *Fabriano*, 169-75, § 10.

dominus of an inhabitant would receive half of the judicial punishments inflicted on his *vassallus*.⁶⁷

These provisions on the division of judicial revenues sometimes reveal realities deeply interwoven with pervasive micro-lordship. In 1194, in Montalboddo – a commune established under the superior seigniorship of the Archbishop of Ravenna – the murder regulations described a population largely composed of *minores* subject to the lordship of *maiores idest de generatione militum*: the *maior-miles* guilty of murder was fined 10 *libre*, while the *minor* lost all his movable property, half of which went to the archbishop, a quarter to the commune, and the remaining quarter to the knight who was his *dominus*, and who was also entitled to all the offender's immovable property (*possessio eius*).⁶⁸ Some fifteen kilometres further west, in Serra (probably Serra de' Conti), the population was completely divided between subjects and micro-lords, as evidenced by regulations stipulating that the three consuls, to whom the administration of justice had been delegated, should deliver half of the fines to offender's *dominus*. Additionally, legislation on murders stipulated that the culprit had to reimburse the dead man's *dominus*. If he refused, his *dominus* would take his entire patrimony and reimburse the deceased's *dominus*.⁶⁹

In northern Italy, as mentioned, the documentary landscape appears different. So far, research has not identified detailed listings of dues, works, gifts, and *censi*. On the contrary, references to judicial prerogatives occur more frequently. In reality, these are often generic – though nonetheless indicative – formulations: the assignment of subjects *cum discripto et honore et dabant michi fictum et decimam* obtained by Markesio of Ostiglia at the beginning of the 12th century;⁷⁰ the possession *de omni districto et albergaria et beneficio* claimed over two *massari* of Isola Comacina in the same years;⁷¹ the *ius districti et castellanie* retained in 1164 by the *milites* of Mongrando, near Biella, even over *mansi* donated *pro anima* to a church by any one of them;⁷² the right to take possession of anyone not already subject to the bishop – while also receiving from him *fodrum et drictum* – held in 1196 in the Asti area

⁶⁷ Pacini, Avarucci, e Paoli, *Liber iurium*, 205-8.

⁶⁸ Menchetti, *Storia di un comune rurale*, 121-4: *De omicida autem dicimus: si de maioribus, idest de generatione militum fuerit, unusquisque persolvat . x. libras consulibus et d(omino archiepiscopi); si de minoribus fuerit, omnia sua mobilia amittat: medietatem sit consulum et domini sui, equaliter dividant; aliam medietatem sit domini archiepiscopi. Possessio vero eius sit ad libitum domini sui.*

⁶⁹ Zonghi, *Carte diplomatiche fabrianesi*, 46-7 (checked against the original: Archivio Storico Comunale di Fabriano, *Carte diplomatiche*, I, 55): *si quis fecerit omicidum per totum districtum Serre solvat pro bando V libras et emendet hominem domino cuius est in arbitrio consulum, et si nollet omicida facere, omnia sua deveniant domino omicide et ille dominus emendet mortuum domino cuius est in arbitrio consulum.*

⁷⁰ Castagnetti, *Il processo per Ostiglia*, 367 and 353-4 (with comments 131-2, 147-8 and 219-20).

⁷¹ Pezzola, *Le carte dei monasteri di S. Maria dell'Acquafredda*, no. 22 <https://www.lombardia-beniculturali.it/cdlm/edizioni/co/lenno-smaria/carte/acquafredda1113-06-00/>

⁷² Faccio, e Ranno, *I Biscioni*, 140-3.

by the *milites* of Bene Inferiore;⁷³ again in the Asti area, in Vico, where high justice was a monopoly of the bishop, the knights (i.e. feudal lords) *faciebant racionem de suis hominibus*, and even minor judicial powers pertained to simple inhabitants over their sons and peasants of all kinds (*de suis filiis et de inquilinis et manentibus suis et de superficariis*);⁷⁴ again in the second half of the 12th century, the disputes over *honor et districtus* and *iurisdictio vel quasi iurisdictio* over peasants in Lumellogno, claimed by town owners and local allodiers are well known in the historiography;⁷⁵ and, finally, to close an already overlong list, the right to *suos homines tenere cum successione et curaia et placitis et bannis* was recognised in 1203 to the knights and *alii boni homines* of Carmagnola, at the end of a dispute with the marquis of Saluzzo, who only retained jurisdiction over major offences.⁷⁶ Even in the northern regions, when justice was administered either by the lord alone or by a community body, a share of the judicial revenues – and sometimes of the taxes – went to the micro-lord. In Bionde, Cerea, and other castles belonging to the bishop and cathedral chapter of Verona from 1137 onwards, for example, there is evidence of local notables, certainly knights, who were entitled to receive one-third of the judicial penalties paid by their peasants, and sometimes also of what was paid in *placita*.⁷⁷ In Biandrate in 1093, it seems that all judicial profits went to the twelve consuls drawn from the knights, and in Mongrando in 1164 jurisdiction over *mansi* alienated to churches was attributed to all the *milites* in general.⁷⁸

Two further elements confirm the diffusion of members of the knightly elite endowed with judicial rights over subordinates. On the one hand, we find cases in which the right to *distringere suos habitatores ante se ad racionem faciendam* also belonged to persons of less than fully chivalric status, such as the local notables who, in the ‘fiefs *de colmello*’ of the Padova area, were collectively responsible for providing a knight to the bishop.⁷⁹ On the other hand, witnesses and judicial disputes attest that the very spread of micro-lordship rights undermined the jurisdictional claims of territorial lords, creating situations that contemporaries themselves perceived as sources of conflict and confusion, and compelling jurists to introduce distinctions that were in many respects new.

Well known to historiography is the case of Lumellogno, a few kilometres from Novara, where from 1148 onwards we find evidence of a series of judicial disputes between the town canons – who appear to have succeeded in acquiring the territorial lordship of the village – and certain landowners, probably

⁷³ *Historiae Patriae Monumenta*. 6. *Chartarum*, II, 168–70.

⁷⁴ *Libro verde*, 43–51, esp. 47; for some context, see the bibliography in Provero, *Le parole dei sudditi*, 80.

⁷⁵ Andenna, “Formazione,” 127–42; Panero, *Servi e rustici*, 190–9.

⁷⁶ Menocchio, *Memorie storiche*, 197–9.

⁷⁷ Above, footnote 26.

⁷⁸ See above, footnotes 39 and 71.

⁷⁹ Castiglioni, *L'altro feudalesimo*, 265, 280 and 288.

knights of Novara, who claimed full lordship over the peasants on their lands. These landowners asserted rights not only to dues, *albergaria*, and *corvées*, but also to judicial faculties concerning offences committed both within their own group of peasants and externally, between their subjects and those of other lords. Widely diffused, moreover, was an oath of allegiance that was, so to speak, *ligia*, i.e. superior to the loyalty sworn to the canons. First the bishop and then the judges of the commune established the territorial nature of the canons' domination, but without denying the micro-lords' rights: they merely stated that the *honor et districtus* of the canons, extending over the entire territory, were superior (*pociores*) to those of the knights. The ruling exposes a structural difficulty in distinguishing different and clearly defined levels of lordship in rural life. For the inhabitants of Lumelloigno itself, after all, the situation was far less clear than the communal judges maintained. More than once, peasants who had received land in concession from the town landowners and obeyed them incurred the wrath of the canons – even to the point of the remarkable episode in which one peasant was harshly reprimanded by the canons' representative for daring to say that his lords (*domini mei*) were the town knights. As a result, disagreements resurfaced for generations, including with a wealthy local allodier, Alberto di Lumelloigno, who obstructed the canons in administering the *districtus*, claiming jurisdictional rights over his own subjects.⁸⁰

We also find a similar dispute in Codogno. Owned by the Bishop of Lodi since at least 1127, the large village had from the outset been partially enfeoffed to certain *capitanei*, who in turn made concessions in favour of town knights, mainly from the Vaierano and de la Pusterla families.⁸¹ By the mid-century, these knights were already in conflict with the bishop over the rights of *fodro*, *albergaria*, and *districtus* with respect to their villeins; the quarrels continued until 1180–81, when the judge of the *podestà* of Lodi heard the case concerning payments for grazing, which the bishop claimed as his exclusive competence as territorial lord. On that occasion, several village notables – each styled *ser* by the notary – were heard as witnesses. They were questioned in order to ascertain whether the bishop possessed jurisdiction over the entire territory (*honor curtis*), whether the *milites* really owned half of the *sedimina* in Codogno, and whether they exercised *honor* over the peasants living there. The testimonies and the ruling attest that roughly half of the peasant population was in fact subject to knights (of eight depositions, six answered positively and two negatively to the question). Among the knightly lordships, the largest by far appear to have been those of the Vaierano and de la Pusterla families, each encompassing about one-eighth of the peasants. Yet there were also members of the local elites involved – probably most of the

⁸⁰ I will only refer to Andenna, "Formazione," 127–42; Panero, *Servi e rustici*, 190–9.

⁸¹ Grossi, *Le carte della Mensa Vescovile*, nos. 40, 82–89, 137 (testimonies) and 145 (sentence). <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/cdlm/edizioni/lo/lodi-vescovo/carte/>. Federico Del Tredici provided me with valuable advice on these documents.

witnesses, and certainly *ser Petrus Zimellus*, who, when asked whether the entire *honor* on the territory belonged to the knights, replied laconically that his *massari* acknowledged his jurisdiction (*suum drictum*). Although the surviving testimonies are only those produced by the bishop, they nonetheless reveal hesitations that point to how overlapping and confused the distribution of seigneurial rights was in practice. While, as I have said, a large majority agreed that the knights held about half of the *sedimina*, doubts arose over the seigneurial nature (*cum honore*) of their possession of men, affirmed by four witnesses but denied by three; and confusion was greatest regarding the possession of the *honor curtis*, a question to which almost all the witnesses declared themselves unable to respond. It is therefore not surprising that, in his ruling, the *podestà*'s judge formulated a definition that was in many ways innovative: only the bishop was recognised as holding territorial lordship (*honor curtis*), but the knights were guaranteed the right to possess the *sedimina* and their inhabitants *cum onore privato et speciali*, which entailed the administration of justice and the collection of related revenues.⁸² *Honor privatus et specialis*: this may be taken as a contemporary definition of knightly micro-lordships.

6. Ongoing research

On all the issues addressed here, research is still ongoing. It remains necessary to map the geography of the attestations of knightly micro-lordships, to identify their local characteristics, and to attempt their interpretation. Further analysis of documentary practices is also required – for example, to explain why in the northern regions attestations of dues and corvées appear rarer, while references to justice rights are more frequent. In any case, certain elements are already clear for the central-northern regions: the widespread presence of mounted combatants in the countryside; the routine ownership of peasants by the majority of knights; their frequent exercise of jurisdictional prerogatives over dependents; and the crucial economic resources they derived from their subordinates.

Equally clear is the strong economic, social, and political significance that micro-lordship held for the knights. The possession of dependent men played a fundamental economic role, providing a steady flow of dues in kind, gifts, labour services, and money payments. It was also a visible and continually reaffirmed marker of status and pre-eminence. Moreover, it served as a tool to strengthen political relations: downwards, by mobilising one's clientele in local politics, and upwards, by forging relations of collaboration, service, and even opposition with higher-ranking lords. For the peasants, by contrast, it seems that the most pervasive domination – just as in the South – came

⁸² On the 1181 ruling, see the insightful remarks in Tabacco, *Dai re ai signori*, pp. 80-2.

from the knights, who could shape the social and economic life of their small groups of subjects far more directly than the great territorial lords. The right to *predare* upon and beat subjects was compounded by the frequent demand for numerous days of compulsory labour, the concession of family working lands, and countless other forms of constraint. The fact that the micro-lords often lived in or near the village was an additional and powerful factor of domination. Much to the irritation of the canons of Novara, and in spite of their claims to territorial lordship over Lumello, as we have seen, it was primarily the knights who were called *domini mei* by the peasants who cultivated and inhabited their lands.

At times the conditioning exercised by the micro-lords, and their potential pervasiveness, was also reinforced by a proximity that might almost be described as intimacy – based on the sharing of material culture and food tastes, on common labour, and on the experience of living in the same places. The *pacta* of 1180 for the subjects of the knights of Torre Caetani, in Latium, for example, distinguish between work obligations owed to the lord (*prestare domino*), the heaviest, and those simply involving *adiuvare dominum* (especially in domestic tasks such as supplying and transporting wood or repairing roofs). This suggests a collaborative working relationship between knight and subject.⁸³ At present, there is no clear evidence to the extent to which the impact of micro-lordships on local societies was multiplied by relationships of collaboration, protection, and clientele, as was largely the case in the South. A few clues, however, make this hypothesis plausible. In Torre Caetani, for instance, if the *dominus suus* invited a subject to form a *societas* with him for livestock breeding or other ventures, refusal was not permitted. The anger with which the lord of a small village in the Marche shouted at one of his subjects who had decided to move to the rural commune of Rocca Contrada – “from then on the sons of whores would defend him, since he was no longer his man (*ita filii pucte qui defendent te, non es meus homo*)” – is significant of how micro-lordships implied protection.⁸⁴ The same harsh legislation mentioned above, which in Serra and Montalboddo assigned all the assets of the murderer to the micro-lords, suggests some form of protection from municipal justice, given the likelihood that the lord would maintain the concession of assets, perhaps taking advantage of it to increase the burden.⁸⁵

From an economic point of view, there is little doubt that the knights were able to extract substantial resources from peasant labour. However, this was not only a heavy demand that absorbed a large share of peasant families' labour force and harvests, but also a significant drain on overall resources. In many regions, it was likely greater than that imposed by territorial lords, since knights were far more numerous, were present even in areas where ter-

⁸³ Caetani, *Varia*, 1-2.

⁸⁴ Villani, *Rocca Contrada (Arcevia)*, 226.

⁸⁵ See above, footnotes 67 and 68.

ritorial lordship had not developed, and, indeed, demanded more from each subject. It is also for this reason that, at the end of the first section, I suggested that the emergence of demanding territorial lordships may have been over-emphasised by recent research. One may wonder, for example, whether the sharp acceleration of exactions revealed by many material indicators in the mid-12th century depended less on the violence of territorial lords than on the pervasive local presence of *milites*.⁸⁶ This would be another distinctive – and highly significant – feature of the period under consideration.

As for the question that runs through this article, namely whether the history of micro-lordships was one of continuity or change, it is important, even for the central-northern regions, to provide a nuanced answer, distinguishing the 12th century from the 11th. In the 12th century, and with particular intensity from 1140 and 1150 onward, micro-lordships as a whole underwent strong expansion, partly for the same reasons, well-illustrated by Simone Collavini, that fuelled the broader growth of personal lordships of all kinds at the time, including those headed by citizens and great nobles.⁸⁷ One contributing factor, for example, was the fragmentations of territorial lordships through succession, with shares divided among heirs, each of whom was assigned a group of men. A stimulus to the growth of micro-lordships must also have come, on the one hand, from the imitation of seigneurial practices by rising figures and, on the other, from the reaction of lords to the new opportunities for physical and social mobility opened to peasants by economic growth and urbanisation. Some of the same elements that were at work in the South also played a role here, primarily the wealth being accumulated by knightly notables. However, the Lombard-Byzantine influences characteristic of the South, and later the presence of an effective monarchical power, were obviously absent in the centre-north. Much rarer, by contrast, appear those relations of domination arising from the protection of immigrants. The only evidence identified so far is in the *consuetudines* of Bene Inferiore, issued in 1196 by the Bishop of Asti, which allowed all *milites* to subjugate – by granting them possessions – immigrants (and indeed any *homo*) who had not previously been episcopal subjects.⁸⁸ Another important difference from the southern situation, where micro-lordships were sometimes headed by *iudices*, physicians, and other *boni homines* with no explicit military role, is the the apparently exclusive chivalric character of the central-northern micro-lordships. The only exception noted so far is again in the Asti area: the aforementioned judicial powers over their peasants granted to all the inhabitants of Vico.⁸⁹ This too

⁸⁶ See Del Tredici, “Castelli, chiese,” especially 43-5, and Cortese’s chapter in this volume, notes 60-62.

⁸⁷ Collavini, “I signori rurali”, especially 303-4, 310 e 314.

⁸⁸ *Historiae Patriae Monumenta*. 6. *Chartarum*, II, p. 169: *licet ipsis militibus de proprijs possessionibus homines sub se facere qui non essent prius homines Episcopi, in quibus dominus episcopus neque fodrum neque drictum debet habere*.

⁸⁹ See above, footnote 73.

is an aspect that requires further investigation, and is certainly linked both to the greater capacity of southern elites to build clienteles – guaranteed by the relatively small share of wealth subtracted from the rural world by state taxation and territorial lords – and to the weaker attraction exercised by cities on village elites.

One point, however, seems clear: if the expansion of personal lordship after the mid-12th century has rightly been attributed “a reactionary character”, as a response to the threats that social mobility and economic growth posed to domination over men,⁹⁰ the micro-lordship of knights appears instead as an older and more consolidated reality, where any such reactionary element was, at most, marginal. The impression regarding the central-northern knightly micro-lordships is that their growth began, as in the South, as early as the 11th century, and was consubstantial with rising levels of violence, the multiplication of knights, and the militarisation of pre-eminence. For the Marche, it has been persuasively observed that the seigneurial burdens described in detail in the sources from the late 12th century onwards correspond closely to practices already attested a century earlier.⁹¹ Certainly, it is likely that knights imitated the behaviour of higher ranking nobles in their claims to territorial lordship, benefiting from the hardening of rights of seizure and command; stimuli may also have come from the diffusion and conceptual clarification of personal lordship rights in the hands of great territorial lords and urban landowners. It is equally possible that the updating of documentary forms during the 12th century led to the first written codification of what had previously been oral and customary agreements – perhaps even involving upward renegotiations of levies – although there is no evidence that this was common practice among *milites*. This too remains an issue for ongoing research to clarify.

⁹⁰ Collavini, “Tra campagne,” 25-6.

⁹¹ Fiore, *Signori e sudditi*, 272-3.

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Sandro Carocci
 Università degli Studi di Roma 'Tor Vergata'
 carocci@lettere.uniroma2.it
 ORCID: 0000-0001-9989-6780

IV

Urban change

Beyond comparison: reconsidering the history of Italian city-communes (Pisa and Genoa, 11th-12th centuries)

by Alberto Cotza

Historiography has repeatedly emphasized the contraction of the spatial horizons of elite political action in 12th-century Italy. Within this framework of local geographies, cities and their territories appear as a constellation of small worlds undergoing transformation. As a result, scholarly debate has developed a research agenda grounded in the analysis of individual areas, subsequently subjected to comparison so that each investigation may acquire the analytical weight of a case study. Yet is this method sufficient to grasp the complexity of change in the central Middle Ages? Is it possible to conceive of an alternative approach to the study of 12th-century Italian geographies? Starting from an analysis of the formation of the communes of Genoa and Pisa in the mid-12th century, this essay reflects on one of the most significant consequences of central medieval transformation: the emergence of connected arenas. In examining urban elites operating within the same arena, comparative history proves to be an insufficient – and potentially misleading – tool. For this reason, the article argues for the development of new methodological approaches capable of producing a deeper understanding of the distinctive features of change in the central centuries of the Middle Ages.

La storiografia ha sottolineato a più riprese il restringimento degli spazi dell'azione politica delle élite nell'Italia del XII secolo. In un universo di geografie locali, le città e i loro territori appaiono così come tanti piccoli mondi in trasformazione. Il dibattito storiografico ha quindi sviluppato un questionario di ricerca basato sull'analisi di singole aree, da sottoporre alla comparazione perché ogni analisi acquisisca lo spessore di un caso di studio. È un metodo sufficiente per cogliere la complessità del mutamento pienomedievale? È possibile pensare anche a un'altra via per lo studio delle geografie dell'Italia del XII secolo? A partire dall'analisi della formazione

Alberto Cotza, Roma Tre University, Italy, alberto.cotza@uniroma3.it, 0000-0001-7834-8013

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dei comuni di Genova e Pisa attorno alla metà del XII secolo, questo saggio riflette su una delle conseguenze più importanti della trasformazione pienomedievale, cioè la formazione di ambiti di connessione. Nello studio delle élite urbane che si muovono all'interno di uno stesso ambito, la storia comparata non è uno strumento sufficiente e rischia di essere fuorviante. È necessario, per questo motivo, individuare nuovi metodi per capire più a fondo i caratteri originali del mutamento dei secoli centrali del medioevo.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Pisa, Genoa, comparative history, connected history.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Pisa, Genova, storia comparata, storia connessa.

1. *Introduction*

The spaces and temporalities of 12th-century communes constitute an indispensable topic for any volume devoted to the transformation of Italy in the central Middle Ages. This article approaches the issue through a guiding question: in what terms can space be considered a meaningful dimension for understanding the temporalities of these communes? It is useful to state at the outset what this study does not intend to do. It does not pursue an analysis of the communes based on a division of the *Regnum* into geographical areas within which to identify earlier or later communes, or different types of communes.¹ Much has already been written on this subject and, as will be argued here, it represents the outcome of a useful but traditional methodological perspective that now requires integration. Instead, this chapter investigates the geographies of the communes as a significant dimension for understanding the internal transformations of individual political communities.

This immediately raises a preliminary question: what were the communes' geographies? Beginning with the classic studies of Tabacco, 12th-century communes have come to be understood as a "local moment" in the history of the *Regnum Italiae*, within which communal history must be situated.² Historiography has repeatedly emphasized the local dimension of these communes, including in recent scholarship. In contrast to the already "provincialized" spatial range of action attributed to early medieval elites, the elites of the central Middle Ages are often thought to have operated within an even more restricted spatial horizon.³ With little problematization – and only a few exceptions – the 'local dimension' has thus been understood as a narrow sphere: the city and its surrounding territory.⁴

At the same time, historians have sought a methodological way out of the proliferation of analytical studies devoted to individual cases. Paolo Cammarosano has effectively observed that

¹ Cammarosano, "Città e campagna;" Keller, "Gli inizi del comune;" Wickham, *Sonnambuli*.

² Tabacco, "Vescovi e comuni." See also Bordone, *La società urbana*.

³ This is one of the major themes in Wickham's reconstruction in *Framing the Early Middle Ages*.

⁴ Wickham, "The Feudal Revolution."

*essa [i.e. the historiographical debate] non è ben attrezzata per la costruzione di una geografia dell'Italia comunale: ha oscillato invece sempre fra analisi di singole città ed aree, magari rivendicandone la peculiarità, e sintesi generali orientate per loro natura sull'assunto di fondamentali omogeneità di sviluppo: rispetto alle quali le situazioni specifiche sono state considerate alla stregua di varianti, anomali o magari nel rischioso segno interpretativo dell'arretratezza – che non è se non una maniera di prospettare uno svolgimento storico omogeneo, rispetto al quale le situazioni individuali si caratterizzano in funzione di un maggiore o minore stadio di avanzamento lungo una traiettoria data.*⁵

From this follows the need to develop comparative approaches. If the communes were indeed a local phenomenon – detached from wider networks and broader dynamics – then the reasons for their transformation must be sought at the local level, and comparison becomes the primary tool for achieving a deeper understanding of their genesis.⁶ Yet relatively little progress has been made, in the years separating Cammarosano's reflections from the present, with regard to comparative approaches. Nevertheless, the problem – more or less explicitly articulated – remains clearly present in the scholarship. Among the most significant contributions, the work of Enrico Faini deserves particular mention, insofar as it seeks, through the analysis of political lexicon, to identify the shared roots of a communal political culture.⁷

Perhaps, however, insufficient attention has been paid to the question of whether a comparative history of communal developments, taken on its own, truly constitutes the horizon within which the emergence of the communes can be most fully understood.⁸ As this chapter argues, the comparative perspective is not misguided. Nonetheless, a more articulated reflection on the

⁵ Cammarosano, "Città e campagna," 303.

⁶ Among studies that have problematized the spatial dimension, the work of Enrico Faini is particularly significant. Faini has recently explored the possibility that the spatial horizons within which the lives of urban elites were articulated may have been conceived as broader than the strictly local arena (Faini, *Italica gens*; Faini, "Letteratura e politica"). A careful assessment attentive to both the variability and the problematic nature of the 12th-century spatial lexicon is offered by Guglielmotti, "Definizione e organizzazione." Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri e cittadini*, 7-20, reflects on the problem of the strongly local character of studies on communal Italy as a specific issue within Italian historiography, through a comparison with the French and German models, which have favoured, respectively, the 'regional' monograph and the 'problem-oriented' monograph. In this discussion, however, the issues of comparison and connected history do not acquire a fully articulated methodological depth.

⁷ Faini, "Il comune e il suo contrario;" Faini, "I consoli: incunaboli del comune?;" Faini, "Una parola contesa."

⁸ An effective critique of comparison in relation to the documentary corpora of Lombard Italy – one that can also be extended to other chronological contexts – is offered by Loré, "Risks and Limits of Comparison." Medieval studies, however, have not debated the limits of comparison, nor explored alternative methodological possibilities, to the same extent as other chronological fields of the discipline, particularly modern and contemporary history. This seems to me a significant omission, especially given that one of the acknowledged founding figures of comparative history was himself a medievalist, Marc Bloch (Bloch, "Per una storia comparata"). It is precisely from Bloch that Sanjay Subrahmanyam departs, further articulating his perspective in the direction of connected history (Subrahmanyam, "Why Connected Histories?"). Although these problems arise at different scales for early modern and modern historians, a number of methodological questions are shared and would deserve more sustained discussion.

connections among city-communes, particularly in relation to their temporalities of formation, can render the picture more complex and open the way not only to comparison – which, as will be noted, has its own hermeneutic limits – but also to the identification of alternative spatio-temporal frameworks better suited to interpreting processes of transformation.⁹

In the following pages, this article addresses the issue by arguing that one of the causes – and at the same time one of the outcomes – of the transformations of the 11th and 12th centuries was the emergence of new arenas of interaction among urban elites, arenas that compel us to rethink what is meant by ‘local.’ This rethinking must avoid simplistic solutions. The challenge of defining space is not resolved by identifying broad and equally unproblematic dimensions within which to situate historical processes – such as “regions,” the “Mediterranean,” or the “world” – nor by the uncritical adoption of paradigms that privilege single aspects, such as interregional connections. Rather, this essay invites a more nuanced and conceptually rigorous engagement with the spatial dimension of social change.

Pisa and Genoa constitute two particularly suitable cases through which to develop this problem. At a specific moment in their history, in the 1130s and 1140s, both cities became key components of Pope Innocent II’s effort to assert papal authority in Italy during the years of the schism of 1130. Involved in a complex project of pacification following the wars of the first three decades of the century, the political dynamics linking the two Tyrrhenian cities with the papacy – and also with the Holy Roman Empire – defined a coherent arena of interaction. Within this newly configured space, it becomes possible to explain more effectively than has hitherto been done the chronologies of change in both cities, which shared certain common features while also exhibiting significant differences rooted in their earlier contexts. This was, of course, an arena defined in and for a specific moment; yet it may nonetheless possess paradigmatic value for the study of analogous cases.

It is useful to clarify the perspective adopted here. As anticipated, this essay is grounded in a critical rereading of the paradigm of comparative history. From a comparative-historical standpoint, each individual city and its territory are studied as self-contained realities, with the aim of comparing similar developments that nonetheless have distinct origins. This is a necessary analytical method and, in some cases, the only one capable of giving proper analytical weight to documentary corpora that would otherwise remain isolated. It is not, however, the only possible approach – especially when examining realities that display such marked similarities in their chronological trajectories

⁹ Cinzio Violante spoke of *ambiti*. See especially Violante, “Per una storia degli *ambiti*.” For a historiographical framing of the concept of *ambito*, see Varanini, “Cinzio Violante,” and Petralia, “Storie di strutture,” 252-3, where the history of *ambiti* is interpreted in relation to the history of structures and to the introduction – alongside the latter – of a specifically spatial dimension.

as to suggest that at least some causes of change should be sought, though not exclusively, within networks that transcend the local dimension and within political spaces other than those habitually regarded as the 'natural' framework of communal life.

Contrary to what might appear, this essay does not constitute a critique of the study of the local dimension of processes of change in central medieval Italy. On the contrary, it should be clear from the discussion that the local dimension is essential to understanding the communes and that, when approached from a more articulated perspective, it can be further enriched. Rather, the essay challenges the assumption that the spaces within which processes of change unfold are given from the outset. Local, regional, or supra-regional spaces are not abstract containers within which the lives of individuals and social groups simply take place. In 12th-century Italy, transformation was so profound that, at certain moments, spaces emerged that should be understood as new arenas of action, decisive for grasping the dynamics of change. These were not necessarily institutional spaces, nor were they endowed with a fixed or stable character over time. On the contrary, the definitional and chronological flexibility of these new arenas constitutes one of the key factors to be taken into account in order to capture the complex and nuanced nature of change in the central Middle Ages.

Research of this kind ought, in principle, to be extended to the entire *Regnum*, through the identification of those arenas that functioned as decisive nodes of intersection for understanding shifts from one phase to another. The aims of this essay, however, are necessarily more modest. As noted above, it therefore limits itself to an analysis of the cases of Genoa and Pisa, with particular reference to the period roughly between 1130 and 1160. In the historiography of both cities, this phase is generally regarded as the moment when communal institutions began to operate in a new, more formalized manner. Why did change occur precisely at this time? Should it be understood as the necessary outcome of a longer process of transformation, or is it possible to define the causes of change more precisely? In addressing these questions, both shared elements and, above all, differences between the two cases will emerge – differences that constitute a privileged field of application for broader historical reflection.

The essay is divided into three main parts. The first (§2) is devoted to Genoa, the second (§3) to Pisa. The third (§4) offers an overall assessment, synthesizing the results of the two case studies in light of the initial questions that guide the analysis.

2. Genoa

Genoa was one of the earliest cities in which consuls appeared. Attested by Caffaro from 1099 onwards, an implicit reference in a document of 1098 suggests that shortly before that date the city assemblies were already being

led by consuls.¹⁰ As in other cities of the *Regnum*, however, it is not always easy in Genoa to determine the precise scope of consular authority, despite the survival of relatively rich documentation. It should be emphasized that this documentation is largely “internal” in character and was assembled into coherent archival corpora only from the mid-12th century onwards, a process that inevitably introduced distortions of perspective. This is particularly evident in the case of Caffaro’s chronicle and the *Liber Iurium*, compiled in the second half of the 12th century.¹¹

One point, however, is reasonably clear. In the political vacuum created by the crisis of the *Regnum*, the Genoese consuls began to exercise judicial authority, in the form of the *lodo consolare*.¹² Such *lodi* are attested from 1104 onwards. The fragility of the power exercised by the Obertenghi margraves over Genoa contributed to a more rapid definition of new forms of authority than was the case in Tuscany under the Canossan margraves. The urban *vicecomites* themselves, organized on a consortial basis – as is evident from a well-known deed of 1052¹³ between the bishop and the viscounts concerning the collection of tithes on the *pievi* – entered the consulate from the outset, relinquishing forms of political predominance that can instead be identified in the trajectory of certain branches of the viscounts in Pisa.¹⁴

The bishops constituted a point of equilibrium among the various social and political forces. Although in Genoa, as in Pisa, they exercised no public rights by virtue of a prior imperial grant – as was the case in some cities of the Po Valley – the bishops nonetheless were, and remained throughout the 12th century, powerful and influential figures, not least because of the vassallic ties that bound certain *cives* to the prelate.¹⁵ It is no coincidence that attestations

¹⁰ The standard point of reference for the origins of the commune of Genoa remains Bordone, “Le origini del comune,” to which the following pages will refer for the reconstruction of the main developments. More recent research, which should also be taken into account for its reassessment of earlier scholarship, is provided by Filangieri, “Le ‘origini’ del Comune.”

¹¹ For Caffaro, see Schweppenstette, *Die Politik der Erinnerung* and Guglielmotti, “La cronachistica.” An edition of the *Libri Iurium* is provided by Rovere, *I Libri Iurium*; Pallavicino, “*I Libri Iurium*.”

¹² Wickham, *Sonnambuli*, 164–9; Ruzzin, “I lodi consolari.”

¹³ Edition of the document is provided by Calleri, *Le carte del monastero di San Siro*, 76–9. See also Polonio, Costa Restagno, *Chiesa e città*, 46.

¹⁴ The relationship between Genoa and the Obertenghi margraves in the 10th and 11th centuries cannot be reconstructed with certainty on the basis of the surviving documentation, which is extremely scant. Later, indirect testimonies offer only limited glimpses: for example, in the regulations concerning the location and number of slaughterhouses (1152), the urban *vicecomites* – who jointly held rights over the slaughterhouses – pledged to safeguard an otherwise unspecified *ius marchionum* (Petti Balbi, “I Visconti di Genova,” 688). The documentation and the scholarly debate concerning the Genoese *vicecomites* are considerably richer: see Petti Balbi, especially the discussion on the charter of 1052 (693–9); Bordone, “I visconti cittadini;” and Filangieri, *Famiglie e gruppi dirigenti a Genova*, 30–62. For a comparison with Pisa, see Ronzani, “Le tre famiglie dei visconti.”

¹⁵ The standard study on Arialdo and, more generally, on the Genoese episcopate is Polonio, “Tra universalismo e localismo.” Arialdo’s earlier career and his appointment to the episcopal see are discussed in Lucioni, *Anselmo IV da Bovisio*, 163–71.

of consuls become more regular from the beginning of the 12th century, when Arialdo, a canon from Mortara, was placed on the Genoese episcopal see by the Archbishop of Milan. Arialdo's decisive intervention likely made it possible to overcome the turbulent political situation of the final years of the 11th century through a process of internal pacification, one that must have borne some resemblance to what occurred in Pisa at the time of the famous *lodo delle torri* associated with Daiberto. In 1133, moreover, the Genoese bishops were removed from the tutelage of the archbishop of Milan and elevated to archiepiscopal rank, with the grant of several Corsican dioceses – a crucial turning point to which this essay will return.

That the balance established under Arialdo constrained consular action is indirectly demonstrated by the fact that, in the first three decades of the 12th century, Genoese consuls strengthened their authority precisely during periods when the episcopal see was vacant. It was in phases of *sede vacante* that the consuls most clearly defined the institutional structure of their organization. We know, for instance, that from 1122 onwards – during the three-year vacancy between Otto and Sigifred – the consuls began to hold annual mandates (beginning on 1 February), and that from the same date they established, or at least attempted to establish, a chancery through the appointment of *scribani*.¹⁶ A few years later, from 1130 onwards, following a decision evidently matured over the course of the previous year during the vacancy between Sigifred and Syrus, the consulate was divided into a *consulatus communis* and a *consulatus placitorum*, the latter articulated into district-based subunits. Each urban *compagna* – listed in detail by Caffaro in a passage of his *Annales* – thus had its own consuls of the *placita*, to whom complaints could be addressed in matters falling within their competence.¹⁷ These phases of institutional acceleration during episcopal vacancies were not particularly traumatic, and the resulting changes were accepted by the newly installed bishops, who found city-communes somewhat stronger than those of their predecessors. Limited negotiations may nonetheless have taken place at certain moments, as suggested by the absence of consuls of the *placita* in the first years of Syrus' episcopate and by their definitive establishment from 1133 onwards.¹⁸

Beyond this chronological threshold, the consuls' capacity to present themselves as guarantors of political and social order underwent a qualita-

¹⁶ Belgrano, *Annali genovesi*, 18. The sources, however, attest to the functioning of an early communal chancery only from a decade later than the date indicated by Caffaro.

¹⁷ Belgrano, 24-5. It is noteworthy that the manuscripts of the *Annali* preserve a brief *notitia episcoporum* covering the bishops from Arialdo to Syrus, which records not only their names but also the length of the *sede vacante* between successive episcopates. The text is edited in Belgrano, 93-4. A commentary on the text, possibly attributable to Caffaro, is discussed in Schwepenstein, *Die Politik der Erinnerung*, 73-5.

¹⁸ Caffaro himself informs us that the consuls of 1130 and 1131 were, like their predecessors, described as *de comuni et de placitis* (Belgrano, *Annali genovesi*, 26). The regular division between consuls of the commune and consuls of the *placita* begins only in 1133.

tive leap. It is to this phase that the first attestations of urban legislation belong - the earliest consular legislation in the entire *Regnum*, as emphasized by Chris Wickham.¹⁹ Even more significant for understanding the break with the previous phase, however, is the fact that consular power attained such a level of recognition that even holders of rights of public origin, dating back to the earlier period, entrusted the protection of their fiscal and political prerogatives to the consuls. As we shall see, this situation differs markedly from that of Pisa and has not yet received sufficient attention in the historiography.

A case that clearly exemplifies this development concerns riparian toll rights (*ripaticum*) between the late 1140s and the early 1150s. For the entire first half of the 12th century, there is no trace of the *ripaticum* in Genoa - a right that in other cities was traditionally public and managed by the *vicecomites*.²⁰ A first, belated reference appears in connection with a dispute between Pisans and Genoese datable between February 1149 and January 1150.²¹ In that year, the Pisans claimed exemption from paying the toll on certain goods (*lenae* and *sacri*) arriving respectively from Corsica and Sardinia. The matter was brought before the consuls, who decreed - on the basis of testimony provided by the *vicecomites* - that the Pisans were required to pay the toll. The fact that this testimony was produced by the *vicecomites* suggests that they themselves were among the interested parties, and that the right to collect the *ripaticum* had, at least in the recent past, been entrusted to them. Are the *vicecomites* to be identified with those who, in 1151, are described as *domini ripae*?²² In the years immediately following 1149, the consuls were able to lease out shares of the *ripaticum* in order to repay debts incurred by the expeditions to Almería and Tortosa.²³ Rights over slaughterhouses, attested in 1152 as a viscountal prerogative and remaining in viscountal hands until the 13th century, were likewise placed under consular protection; in that year, the consuls decreed the relocation of the stalls.²⁴ It should be noted that in Genoa the viscounts were part of the consulate. They were therefore in a position to make decisions concerning rights they exercised, or had exercised, in the past.

Partly different is the case of the rights to appoint notaries and to emancipate minors and serfs. These rights could be exercised by the consuls, provided that the acts were carried out with the *auctoritas* of Philip of Lambert.

¹⁹ Wickham, *Sonnambuli*, 167. Faini, "Il comune e il suo contrario," 270-7, discusses the internal political dynamics of Genoa and their transformation in this period.

²⁰ The register of the archiepiscopal curia of 1143 (edited in Belgrano, *Il registro*) records another toll levied on the port, the *decima maris*, which belonged to the archbishopric but was granted, for certain shares, to specific families of the Genoese elite from the episcopate of Arialdo (from 1111 onwards). The toll was collected exclusively on Genoese ships. On the *decima maris*, see Boyd, *Tithes*, 197-8. No updated study exists on this intriguing levy.

²¹ Rovere, *I Libri Iurium*, 15-6.

²² Rovere, 213-4.

²³ Rovere, 186-8.

²⁴ Rovere, 230-2.

Philip is a figure worthy of particular attention.²⁵ A multiple-time consul, he probably acquired this authority – explicitly attested for the first time only in several acts of Giovanni Scriba's cartulary (1153-5) and later in the *Breve della Compagna* of 1157, confirmed in 1161 – from Lothair III, Conrad III, or perhaps Frederick Barbarossa.²⁶ Philip never explicitly refers to an imperial mandate, but he could not have received rights of a comital type except from public authority. Only after his death, probably in the early 1160s, did the commune begin to act as the sole authority in emancipations, thereby incorporating Philip's *auctoritas* through a clear transfer of powers. Prior to this point, the commune had not explicitly claimed Philip's *auctoritas*; on the contrary, it had placed itself in a position of defending it.

In Philip's case, the turning point of 1147 was crucial – a veritable act of communal protection in his favour. In the spring of that year, shortly before the departure of the Genoese army for the conquest of Tortosa in the early summer of 1147, Philip was accused by a group of Genoese of having caused, in some manner, the loss of their goods in Sicily. Faced with this accusation, the commune and the archbishop jointly compelled Philip to withdraw from all public office; shortly thereafter, however, the commune abruptly reversed course and rehabilitated him. Philip subsequently emerged as one of the leaders of the successful expeditions against Almería and Tortosa, celebrated by Caffaro in a historiographical work of some interest. Through this experience, Philip appears to have grasped the central importance of consular protection.²⁷

The testimonies discussed above are significant insofar as they illustrate the consolidation of consular power through judicial practice. They also reveal the degree of trust placed in the consuls by individuals and groups who exercised public rights by virtue of communal authority and who, from a certain point onward, began to seek the commune's protection. At the same time, these testimonies remain sporadic: they surface only when one of the parties chose to appeal to the consuls.

Can we be more precise, then, about the period in which consular power had strengthened to the point that even rights of ancient public origin – held by influential family consortia such as the viscounts, or by prominent citizens such as Philip of Lamberto – were placed under its protection? A document that permits a more detailed reconstruction of the stages and nature of this process is a judgment of 1168. When carefully analyzed, it reveals that, in the perception of the protagonists themselves, the second half of the 1130s

²⁵ For a profile of Philip, see Filangieri, *Famiglie e gruppi dirigenti*, 114-21; information on Philip of Lamberto can also be found in Vitale, *Breviario* I, 27-8, II, 24-5.

²⁶ Rovere, *I «publici testes»*, 478, with n. 171 (here cited according to the pagination of the reprint). Imperiale di Sant'Angelo, *Codice Diplomatico*, 350-9 (see especially 355 for the passages concerning Philip of Lamberto). For a reassessment of the issue of *brevi* and statutes, see Guglielmotti, "Statuti liguri."

²⁷ The key stages of Philip's career would merit further investigation in a dedicated study. For the time being, see Filangieri, *Famiglie e gruppi dirigenti*, 114-21.

marked the moment at which communal political action had acquired a new and more robust form.²⁸

Issued during a period of intense factional conflict triggered by the rivalry between Fulco de Castro and Rolando Avvocato (1164-9),²⁹ the judgment allows us to observe closely the emergence of the commune in Genoa over the preceding three decades and the ways in which this process was perceived by the actors involved. The text – introduced by a lengthy preamble that presents it as a veritable political programme³⁰ – is divided into two main parts, each articulated into numbered sub-sections (indicated here for clarity). In the first part (1), the consuls affirmed the validity of judgments concerning minors and their property issued over the previous twenty-five years, that is, from 1143 (1.1), and, more generally, the validity of all judgments issued by them “in defence of one or more persons” over the preceding thirty years, thus from 1138 (1.2). In the second part (2), the judgment affirmed the validity of all sales or transfers of property (*dationes*) involving minors carried out *per consules et per consulatus* in the absence of a guardian or curator (2.1). These transactions had subsequently been regularized, at an unspecified later moment, either through the appointment of a tutor or curator or through the presence of the father (2.2).

The core of the judgment concerns jurisdiction over minors and over legal acts carried out on their property, either by the commune acting in its capacity as guardian or by tutors and guardians appointed by the consuls. The aim of the judgment was to protect this jurisdiction from claims by those whose rights over minors or their property had been affected by the aforementioned judgments and provisions. Indeed, at the conclusion of the first part of the text (3), the consuls state that the judgments are to be considered valid “even if the provisions therein are not rendered in the form in which they are rendered and now enacted” (3.1). This formulation reveals one of the arguments employed by opponents to contest the consular provisions. At the conclusion of the second part, the consuls assert that the sales or transfers in question are to be regarded as valid “as if they themselves [i.e., the minors], having reached the age of twenty-five, had sold or transferred those properties in full” (3.2). According to the reaffirmed principle of the validity of legal acts performed over the past twenty-five years, such transactions could still be legally challenged and annulled, provided it could be proven that had been carried out “for usury” or were “false” (3.3). They could not, however, be declared invalid on the grounds of an alleged lack of legal foundation as such.

²⁸ Rovere, *I Libri Iurium*, 292-3.

²⁹ For a reconstruction of the context of this serious internal crisis, see Dartmann, *Politische Interaktion*, 190-8.

³⁰ Rovere, *I Libri Iurium*, 292: *Quod ideo factum est quoniam per emendatores brevium qui pro comuni totius civitatis utilitate electi fuerant et consuetudinem civitatis reformaverant, iuramento coacti fuerunt secundum modum et tenorem superius diffinitum laudare et in registro hoc facere scribere ac testari.*

When the individual elements are disarticulated, the judgment can be reconstructed diachronically as follows. In a first phase – at least twenty-five years earlier, but probably extending further back – the commune had begun to exercise directly the role of guardian, curator, or *mundualdo* (2.1), taking decisions concerning minors or their property (1.1) in a documentary form different from that employed in the present judgment (3.1). In a second phase, some transfers were carried out with the appointment of a guardian or in the presence of the minor's father (2.2). Such forms of regularization could not invalidate the original decisions taken according to earlier procedures. The transfers were therefore to be considered valid, as if executed by adults (*tantum si ipsimet facti maiores viginti quinque annis legitime vendidissent vel in solidum tradidissent*) (3.2), and could henceforth be legally contested only on limited grounds (3.3). As is evident, this reconstruction deliberately sets aside the clause concerning the validity of judgments issued over the preceding thirty years (1.2).

The stratigraphy of the text allows the 1168 judgment with to be approached with particular precision. For the consuls, it was not merely a matter of certifying the legality of provisions concerning minors from 1143 onwards, but, more broadly, of securing their legitimacy to act as a public authority. It is in this sense that I would interpret the somewhat dissonant passage referring to all judgments *que a triginta annis retro facte sunt*. This clause introduces a broader chronological horizon – reaching back to 1138 – and does so without limitations as to subject matter. Inserted into a text otherwise concerned with other issues, it was clearly intended as a safeguard against further challenges. The apparent extraneousness of this clause to the main content of the judgment reflects the climate of anxiety in which the consuls were operating during the political crisis of the 1160s. Their concern was not limited to the possibility that provisions regarding minors or their property might be contested; rather, they feared that all judgments issued over the preceding thirty years could be challenged. It was in this context that the need arose to construct a legal instrument capable of defending the communal past.

What, then, had been the nature of consular power over the preceding thirty years? It consisted in a balance defined by the position of strength that the consuls' high social standing enabled them to exercise. The political crisis of 1164-9 exposed the vulnerabilities of a system that had already undergone a significant transformation in the 1130s-1140s and opened the possibility of alternative arrangements – arrangements that were not realized, but could have been. To be clear, this does not imply that prior to the 1130s-1140s the consuls exercised no power. As noted above, from the early 12th century they had already played a central role in conflict resolution – a marked contrast with contemporary cities in the *Regnum Italiae*. Yet it was only the specific conditions of the mid-1130s and 1140s that made possible a substantial strengthening of their position.

We are thus led to examine the context of the 1130s-1140s. What enabled the consuls to make a decisive leap in relation to the previous period, accumu-

lating sufficient prestige and authority to transform the nature of their power? The situation undoubtedly changed during the years in which Innocent II (1130-43) sought to impose peace between Genoa and Pisa. In order to bring an end to a war that had lasted for three decades, a broad and articulated cooperation within Genoese society was required – cooperation that only the consuls could ensure. At the same time, acting in close collaboration with the bishop, they became the point of reference for relations with the papacy, which now offered unprecedented opportunities for expansion in Corsica.

The process can be broken down as follows. The pacification concerned the wars between the two cities that had begun at the start of the 12th century over the granting of metropolitan rights over Corsica to the bishop of Pisa. Hostilities intensified particularly in 1127-9 following the decision of Honorius II (1126) to confirm the archbishop of Pisa's privilege as metropolitan over Corsica.³¹ This decision ran counter to Genoa's expectation that the annulment previously arranged by Callistus II (1123) would be upheld.³² Innocent thus felt obliged to bring about peace, not least because he bore the weight of his predecessors' failures. For this reason, the solution involved a new approach to peacemaking. Whereas earlier popes had attempted to resolve the Genoa-Pisa conflict by annulling or reissuing – on differing grounds – the original Urbanian disposition (1092) that had triggered the conflict,³³ Innocent instead positioned himself as a mediator between the two cities. He sought to establish a balance capable of satisfying both parties, while ensuring that each city determined the specific conditions under which the peace would be observed. The main phases of this programme were three:

1. The truce. Caffaro writes, with reference to 1130, that *eo tempore Innocentius fecit tregam inter Ianuenses et Pisanos per multa sacramenta ab utroque latere facta, donec a Francia papa rediret*. Despite its generality, this formulation points to the pope's explicit intention and to the direct involvement of the Genoese *militia* in enforcing the agreement, as suggested by the reference to *multa sacramenta ab utroque latere facta*. A reading of subsequent passages in the *Annales Ianuenses* supports this interpretation. In demonstrating the capacity of the city's political leadership to govern effectively, Caffaro notes that the consuls organized an anti-Pisan fleet in 1132, coinciding with Innocent's return to Italy, precisely as the pope had stipulated (*donec a Francia papa rediret*). Even the Pisan chronicles report no hostilities against Genoa in the years 1130-2.

2. The peace. With Innocent's return to Italy, the prospect of peace became concrete, facilitated in part by the election in Pisa in 1132 of Archbishop

³¹ References to these wars – mostly won by the Genoese – are found exclusively in the Genoese chronicles: Belgrano, *Annali genovesi*, 23-4.

³² For a brief summary of these events, see Ceccarelli Lemut, "La sede metropolitana di Pisa."

³³ Edited in *Patrologia Latina* CLI, 344-6. For the context of this privilege, see Ronzani, *Chiesa e 'civitas'*, 11-32.

Hubert, a Roman cardinal and early supporter of Innocent.³⁴ Through the mediation of Syrus and Hubert peace was concluded in Grosseto in 1133.³⁵ As is well known, a central feature of the settlement was the establishment of a new balance: the Urbanian concession was neither annulled nor simply reaffirmed, but rather reconfigured in key respects. The bishop of Genoa was granted the title of archbishop and metropolitan rights over half of Corsica, taken from Pisa in exchange for the submission of the diocese of Populonia and the legation over Sardinia.

3. Negotiations on conditions. In order to stabilize the agreement, in 1133 Innocent ordered the establishment of a commission elected by the Genoese but composed exclusively of Pisans – the party most dissatisfied with the loss of Corsica – tasked with assessing the damages inflicted by the Pisans on the Genoese, and vice versa. Only if this first commission failed was it envisaged that a corresponding body of Genoese, elected by the Pisans, would be appointed.³⁶ This second provision was eventually implemented, as demonstrated by the commitment made in April 1138 by the Pisan consuls to compensate for any damages, in the presence of both Pisan and Genoese witnesses who can be identified as members of the commission envisaged in 1133.³⁷ The Genoese representatives involved were all prominent consular figures: Bonvassallo di Oddone, Guglielmo Pevere, Guglielmo de Bombello, Guglielmo Piccamiglio, and Caffaro.

Unlike the efforts of his predecessors, Innocent's pacification penetrated society deeply and achieved a degree of stability that earlier initiatives had failed to secure. The direct involvement of the respective citizenries – from the oaths sworn in 1130 to the commissions operating in 1138 – also fostered processes of internal selection within Genoese society. In this sense, the consular *militia*, which played a key role in the negotiations, acquired credibility and trust through concrete action, thereby assuming a new political profile. The maintenance of peace was linked to opportunities for conquest in Corsica, which for the Genoese military elite as a whole represented a new prospect for enrichment. Around this nexus of peace and conquest, a new equilibrium emerged, marking a departure from the previous situation. Both the Pisan and Genoese chronicles report no conflicts between the two cities throughout Innocent's pontificate, a strong indication of the effectiveness of his initiative.

³⁴ On Hubert: Ceccarelli Lemut, "Per la storia della chiesa pisana;" Anzoise, *Pisa, la Sede Apostolica e i cardinali*, 174–95.

³⁵ The Peace of Grosseto is mentioned by Caffaro: Belgrano, *Annali genovesi*, 26. Insightful observations on the content and context of this peace can be found in Anzoise, *Pisa, la Sede Apostolica e i cardinali*, 88–92, to which reference is made for the essential bibliography.

³⁶ The text of the Peace of Grosseto can be found in Imperiale di Sant'Angelo, *Codice Diplomatico*, 75–7, in particular: *precipimus autem ut Ianuenses usque ad proximum Pentecostem absque malitia eligant quattuor Pisanos sapientes et discretos viros et precipimus ut illi quattuor iurent honorem, salvamentum et bonas antiquas consuetudines tam Ianueusium quam Pisanorum [...] Si vero de consuetudinibus questio emerit quod isti quattuor et alii quattuor qui Ianue similiter constituentur, omnes simul aut maior pars eorum laudaverit irrefragabiliter observetis.*

³⁷ Edited in Banti, *I Brevi dei consoli*, 114–6.

Within this horizon – supported by the pope and the respective militias – the position of the consular group in Genoa was strengthened internally. A similar process, with appropriate differences, occurred in Pisa.

3. *Pisa*

The case of Pisa differs in several respects. As in Genoa, it is important to recall the situation prior to the 1130s in order to understand the nature of subsequent change. Pisa was among the first cities of the *Regnum* in which consuls appeared: the earliest attestations date from 1080-85. It was only in the first decade of the 12th century, however, that the consulate acquired a ‘political’ significance.³⁸ Here too, as in Genoa, pacification promoted by the bishop – known as the *lodo delle torri* – played a decisive role.³⁹ The bishop established himself as the pivot around which political balances were constructed, acting as the guarantor of the “peace and concord” established in the *lodo delle torri*. Furthermore, he was the formal leader in Pisa’s expeditions against the Muslims of Al-Mahdia (1087) and the Muslims of the Balearic Islands (1113-5), effectively serving as admiral of a fleet that was also commanded by the consuls.⁴⁰

Unlike Genoa, the consuls in Pisa appear overall weaker and less influential. Sources from the first three decades of the 12th century indicate that they exercised no autonomous public rights. They did not collect taxes, which remained in the hands of the viscounts or the bishop, and, above all, they did not exercise justice in an exclusive manner, as was instead the case in Genoa.⁴¹ The *proclamatio* of the free men of Casciavola (securely dated between 1098 and 1106) shows that the civic assembly (*commune colloquium civitatis*) could be assigned an arbitral role in disputes, in accordance with the provisions of the *lodo delle torri*.⁴²

Conflicts among citizens could also be resolved through arbitration entrusted to individuals. Such a case is illustrated by an *arbitrium* recorded in a document of 1121.⁴³ In that year, Count Gerardo dei Gherardeschi and the archbishop of Pisa, Atto, were in a dispute over the ownership of parts of

³⁸ Ronzani, “Le prime testimonianze dell’attività dei consoli.” As in the case of Genoa, there is no monograph on the city. The most extensive treatment of the commune of Pisa is Ronzani, “L’affermazione dei comuni.”

³⁹ Edited in Banti, *I Brevi dei consoli*, 110-3. Commented on in Ronzani, *Chiesa e “civitas”*, 229-47.

⁴⁰ It is primarily the chronicles that inform us about these enterprises. A detailed analysis of this body of sources can be found in Cotza, *Prove di memoria*.

⁴¹ For an overview of indirect taxation in Pisa, see Cotza, “Il ripatico,” and the bibliography cited therein.

⁴² Testimonies concerning the assembly’s judicial function are extremely sparse. Reflections on arbitration as a means of asserting communal authority, with particular reference to the Pisan case, can be found in Menzinger, “Forme di organizzazione giudiziaria.”

⁴³ Scalfati, *Carte dell’Archivio Arcivescovile* 2, 121-2.

the *curtis* of Cecina. The matter was resolved through the arbitration of Azzo Marignani – who was also consul that year – and Lanfranco di Gerardo of the da San Casciano family. Azzo did not act in his capacity as consul, although that title undoubtedly conferred prestige and authority; rather, he acted as an individual enjoying particular trust on the part of both parties. The document also reveals another important aspect of the procedure: the dispute had been submitted to the arbitration of these two prominent figures precisely in order to remove it from the jurisdiction of Benzo and Ughiccione, judges who would otherwise have adjudicated the matter in the absence of the parties' consent to arbitration.⁴⁴ The litigants thus sought to avoid a formal judgment in favour of a negotiated settlement, which they ultimately achieved.

Another avenue of justice was the regular trial presided over by judges. Evidence for this procedure is limited but nonetheless significant. A judgment of 1105 has recently resurfaced, allowing us to observe a non-arbitral form of dispute resolution in the early decades of the 12th century.⁴⁵ The case involved the powerful monastery of San Michele in Borgo and several private citizens over lands located north of the city. The monastery prevailed and preserved the judgment. This is the earliest extant judgment illustrating how a 12th-century city resolved disputes (alongside a Genoese judgment of 1104-5). Particularly noteworthy is the composition of the judging panel, which consisted of a new type of legal expert, the so-called “judges of the Sacred Lateran Palace”. The designation itself signals the novelty of these figures within the urban judicial landscape. Whereas 11th-century judges bore titles common throughout the kingdom – typically *iudex* or *iudex sacri palatii*, referring to the royal palace at Pavia – the reference to the Sacred Lateran Palace marked a clear departure from both the kingdom's tradition and an earlier urban practice. This distinctive title was linked to an isolated 11th-century precedent in the case of a single judge, Theoderic, who may be regarded as the ‘founder’ of a new school. It is plausible that the first judges of the Sacred Lateran Palace attested in the 12th century – notably Hildebrand – were students under Theoderic. The documented favour enjoyed by Hildebrand with Bishop Peter (1105-18) facilitated the rapid ascent of his career and that of his pupils.

Scholars have speculated about who appointed these judges and, in the absence of any supporting evidence, have even posited the existence of papal privileges granting such powers to city bishops. Such hypotheses are unnecessary.⁴⁶ The networks of the judges of the Sacred Lateran Palace reveal not only their proximity to the bishop⁴⁷ but also their close ties to the consular

⁴⁴ Scalfati: *In quorum laudatione lis que erat inter archiepiscopum et comitem Gerardum de curte de Cecina posita fuit pro auferenda pugna que erat pro ipsa lite a Benthone et Ughiccione iudicibus per sententiam data erat* [sic!].

⁴⁵ For what follows, see Cotza, “I giudici e la città.”

⁴⁶ Hiestand, “*Iudex sacri lateranensis palatii*.”

⁴⁷ In the majority of documentary references, the judges of the Sacred Lateran Palace appear as custodians of the oath declarations that women were required to make before selling a property (in accordance with Liutprand's provision no. 22). It is therefore unsurprising that these judges

elite and to the viscounts.⁴⁸ One may therefore argue that the basis for their broad latitude of action lay precisely in an agreement among all the actors represented in the civic assembly, none of whom exercised direct control over the courts. At the same time, none of these judges belonged to the consulate – a significant detail that underscores their function as neutral arbiters.⁴⁹

Things changed during the 1130s, when the consuls acquired increasing influence over judicial appointments. Whereas in the first three decades of the 12th century judges did not specify by whom they had been appointed and signed simply as *iudices*, from 1135 onwards – beginning with the earliest surviving judgment of the new type – judges acted with the explicit mandate of Uberto, the archbishop (1132/3–7), and the consuls (*ab Uberto divina pietate archiepiscopo et a consulibus electi*).⁵⁰ After Uberto's death, the consuls proceeded to appoint judges independently, revealing the provisional nature of the earlier arrangement. Under the archbishop's supervision, the consuls had succeeded in securing a role in judicial appointments; soon thereafter, they became autonomous.⁵¹ Furthermore, among the various forms of justice attested in the early 12th century, arbitration entrusted to judges appointed by the consuls came to prevail, as if this procedure alone were capable of guaranteeing stable and reliable judgments.

What, then, had occurred in the meantime? Both the chronicles and the documentary record of Pisa provide far less detailed information than those of Genoa regarding the events of the 1130s. This discrepancy reflects problems in the transmission of memory and documentation, linked to the specific conjuncture of the fourth decade of the 12th century. Whereas the peace promoted by Innocent II opened unprecedented opportunities for Genoese expansion in Corsica, for Pisa it entailed a relative setback when measured against the balance had seemed definitively secured by Honorius II's resolution of 1126. Three Corsican dioceses assigned by Honorius II to the archbishop of Pisa were transferred to the archbishop of Genoa. Although the Pisan archbishop was compensated with primacy over Sardinia and with the diocese of Populonia-Massa, he was nonetheless compelled to relinquish rights that Urban II, Gelasius II, Callistus II, and Honorius II had repeatedly affirmed. For these reasons, it is likely that the Innocentian peace passed largely in silence in Pisan chronicles, unlike in Genoese ones, with only a few documentary traces surviving (e.g., the 1138 document recording the commission's work).

appear among the records of the urban church, the city's largest landowner and the institution that has preserved the greatest number of documents relating to land transactions.

⁴⁸ Archivio di Stato di Pisa, Olivetani, 1116, 16 November, shows the new judges at work at the *curtis* of the city's viscounts on the occasion of the manumission of a slave woman.

⁴⁹ With the exception of Ildebrando, *operaio* of the *Opera del Duomo*, who served as consul for an entire four-year term from 1118 to 1121. On his career, see Ronzani, "Dall'edificatio ecclesie all'Opera di S. Maria."

⁵⁰ Scalfati, *Carte dell'Archivio Arcivescovile* 2, 200–1.

⁵¹ Scalfati, 231–2.

Nonetheless, the compromise embodied in the settlement required broad consensus within the city, especially among the *militia*, who stood to benefit most directly from expansion in Corsica. The Pisan *militia* placed their support for pacification in the hands of the archbishop at several stages (the 1130 truce, the 1133 commission, and the final 1138 commission). At the same time, Uberto also supported the consuls, thereby meeting what appears to have been a plausible demand: greater control over the administration of justice and a move beyond the equilibrium that had characterized the first three decades of the 12th century. This shift was gradual: initially, the judges appointed by the consuls were drawn from the ranks of the judges of the Sacred Lateran Palace;⁵² shortly thereafter, the consuls began appointing additional judges, and over time the cohort of Lateran judges diminished, eventually disappearing by the second half of the 12th century.⁵³

A fundamental difference with Genoa must be noted. Whereas the second half of the 1130s and the 1140s marked a decisive turning point in the strengthening of communal institutions in Genoa, in Pisa the process was characterized by irregular alternations of acceleration and stagnation. The underlying cause lay in the civic dialectic between the consuls and other groups that had historically remained outside the consular *militia*. Attempts by the consuls to further expand their authority were nonetheless made. For example, in 1139, the margrave of Tuscia, Ulrico, granted the consuls the right to collect the *ripaticum* and appoint the *ripari* should the current holders – previously appointed by other public actors, perhaps the viscounts – prove unsatisfactory.⁵⁴ This concession, however, had no practical effect. To obtain uncontested rights over the *ripaticum*, the consuls had to wait until a diploma issued by Frederick Barbarossa in 1162.⁵⁵ Already in 1139, moreover, the right to collect the *ripatico* had been granted independently by Conrad III to the archbishop, seemingly in direct opposition to the margrave's initiative. The royal diploma stipulated that *a quibuscumque petitur et exigitur, ab eo (i.e. by the archbishop) eiusque successoribus ad partem Pisane ecclesie petatur et exigatur*, thereby ensuring that even if the consuls succeeded in appointing the *ripari*, the resulting revenues would accrue to the bishop's treasury.⁵⁶

⁵² The first in this series of 'new judges' to appear alongside the judges of the Sacred Lateran Palace is Nerbotto (Scalfati, 231-2).

⁵³ As can be seen from Hiestand's table (Hiestand, "Iudex sacri lateranensis palatii," 68), the last judges of the Sacred Lateran Palace were appointed between the late 1140s and, at the latest, the very early 1150s (it being reasonable to assume that their appointment preceded by some months or years the date of their first documentary attestation). Once the careers of these judges had come to an end, no further judges of the Lateran Sacred Palace were appointed. The judges appointed by the commune in the 1150s and 1160s did not belong to the Sacred Lateran Palace.

⁵⁴ Scheffer Boichorst, *Zur Geschichte des XII. und XIII. Jarhunderts*, 403-4.

⁵⁵ Appelt, *Die Urkunden Friedrichs I. 1158-1167*, 199, granted the consuls *totum, quod prefata civitas vel quelibet persona habet et tenet de rebus regni, et totum, quod regno et imperio pertinet sive de marchia vel alio modo quoquo iure vel consuetudine vel per constituit retro a XXX annis vel pertinebit in civitate pisana et eius districtu per terras et insulas*.

⁵⁶ Scalfati, *Carte dell'Archivio Arcivescovile* 2, 238-40.

Another indicator of this uneven trajectory is the development, from 1140 onwards, of new legislation. A significant trace is provided by the residue of a norm later incorporated into the *Constituta* of the 1160s, regulating women's dowries, chronologically coinciding with developments in Genoa (1143).⁵⁷ This norm emerged precisely at the moment when the consuls had recently assumed control over the administration of justice through the appointment of city judges. A stratigraphic analysis of the *Constituta* does not allow us to trace this legislation further back, making this the earliest norm in the new Pisan legislation, even though the extant redactions date back only to the 1160s. At the same time, few norms can be placed between the 1140s and the early 1150s: the bulk of the *Constituta* appears to have been elaborated around 1155, during a phase of rapid acceleration that probably included the first, now-lost *brevia*.⁵⁸ In Genoa, by contrast, the consular *brevia* were first compiled in 1143 and already reflected an earlier process of stratification; the *brevia della compagna* are dated to 1157 and 1161.⁵⁹

The trajectory of the Pisan consuls between the late 1130s and the 1140s should therefore be read in terms of denied political mobility. Unlike in Genoa, Innocent II's direct involvement of the *militia* in the broader Tyrrhenian pacification did not translate into a strengthening of communal institutions in Pisa. Nor was such an outcome inevitable. It represented only one possible trajectory – supported by certain segments of Pisan society – and was certainly not aligned with the pope's own objectives, which were guided by different priorities. Yet it was precisely during this period that the consuls redefined the horizon of their power, as traces visible in fiscal policy, the administration of justice, and legislative activity suggest.

Within this framework of denied political mobility, it becomes clearer why Pisa – unlike Genoa – experienced a violent internal struggle in 1153, pitting the consuls against Alberto Visconte, then the recognized head of a consortium that included the Visconti families and other allied individuals. This group formed the core of those who laid claim to the older public heritage and viewed the consulate with some suspicion.⁶⁰ The causes of the conflict remain unclear. Chronologically, it occurred between the death of Conrad III – who, as noted, had acted not in the consuls' interest but in favour of other actors – and Frederick Barbarossa's first descent into Italy. It appears that Alberto and his associates used their towers along the Via Burgi, extending as far as the head of the Arno bridge (today's Ponte di Mezzo), as bases for military action, employing weapons and hurling stones in open violation of Daiberto's *lodo delle torri*. The Visconti thus maintained a tangible military presence near the city's main bridge, where market activities took place and,

⁵⁷ Vignoli, *I costituti*, 95. See entry no. 38. On the corresponding situation in Genoa, see Bezzina, "Dote, antefatto, *augmentum dotis*."

⁵⁸ Banti, *I Brevi dei consoli*, 11 (and n. 9).

⁵⁹ Guglielmotti, "Statuti liguri."

⁶⁰ Banti, *I Brevi dei consoli*, 117-9.

in all likelihood, taxes on goods were collected. This assertion of Visconti control over the city markets was evidently unacceptable to the consuls.

The conflict ended with a victory for the consuls, who barred access to public office for all those who had acted against the consulate in support of Alberto and his associates and immediately took steps to consolidate the new order. From the early 1160s, for instance, the *Brevia* attest the presence of consuls of merchants, officials specifically responsible for commerce – an area that had previously not been directly managed by the consuls.⁶¹ The consular regime also requisitioned the viscounts' public prerogatives, which were largely fiscal in nature, including rights over the *ripatico*, iron, foodstuffs, and foundries, and assigned them entirely to the commune.⁶² The situation was thus very different from Genoa: in Pisa, consuls had never exercised a role as guardians of the *publicum*, a function that in Genoa has been identified as an original feature of the commune during the 12th-century transition.

Only after 1153 do we see the Pisan commune functioning in a new way: in the appointment of judges, now designated as “public”, whereas those of the 1140s had been described merely as “of the commune”; in exercise of fiscal authority; in coinage; and in the initial elaboration of *brevia* and *constituta*, which could now be “published” and deployed as genuine statutory texts. As noted above, this transformation became fully explicit with the diploma issued by Frederick Barbarossa in 1162, which granted the commune – now bound to the emperor through *fidelitas* – all public property in the city dating back over the previous thirty years, including the authority to appoint judges and *mundualdi*.

4. Genoa and Pisa: comparison and connections

The cases of Pisa and Genoa, and their interconnections in the 1130s and 1140s, make it sufficiently clear that the processes shaping their political development cannot be interpreted solely as the outcome of endogenous transformations. Rather, we observe individual threads that, at certain moments, intertwine and give rise to something new. The local changes observable in both cities during the first three decades of the 12th century underwent a decisive acceleration during the pontificate of Innocent II. At that point, the pope's need for broad, socially stratified military support created the conditions for a more substantial involvement of the urban *militiae* than had previously existed. This process, in turn, triggered a new political and institutional pro-

⁶¹ Banti, 50.

⁶² Banti, 117: *Item, in totum illud quod prescripti vicecomites de ripa terre et aque; et de pesa centinariis ferri, et de fornariis et vinivendulis et oleariis, et de omnibus artibus soliti sunt habere et suscipere, et in castaldatum eos sic in perpetuum condemnamus, ut nichil iuris in eis ulterius habeant, et inde ab hac hora in antea nichil recipiant neque habeant, sed ea omnia nostre civitatis iuri publico damus, concedimus et in perpetuum vendicamus.*

tagonism on the part of urban groups that had long aspired to govern the city. The representatives of the older urban political class – the viscounts and those connected to them, who emerge most clearly from the sources – were no longer able to guarantee effective control over the city at a moment when the papacy required internal stability and military responsiveness.

The new context of the 1130s was further shaped by the presence of bishops – Siro in Genoa and Uberto in Pisa – who positioned themselves as mediators between societies undergoing transformation and the needs of the papacy. These actors, too, therefore contributed decisively to the reconfiguration of the political landscape. The outcomes of the strengthening of communal institutions in Genoa and Pisa differed because the contexts in which the consuls operated were themselves different. Nonetheless, it is precisely the legitimating support provided by the pope – at a time when the papacy was itself backed by imperial authority, notably Lothair III and Conrad III – that helps to explain why change occurred at that particular moment. The *pax Innocentiana* and the strengthening of communal institutions were thus inextricably linked. The prestige and honour accumulated by the consuls at this juncture help to account for the acceleration of the late 1130s and early 1140s and its open, not yet juridically defined character: in Genoa, this openness is clearly reflected in the attempted *revanche* of 1168; in Pisa, in the difficulties the consuls encountered in asserting themselves vis-à-vis other, stronger social groups.

Among the distinctive features of transformation in the High Middle Ages, the development of forms of local power – commonly interpreted as the communes – therefore represents only one dimension of a more complex process. These forms of local power were exercised within supralocal arenas that, at specific moments, constituted a decisive horizon of possibilities. The cases of Pisa and Genoa in the 1130s and 1140s demonstrate the vitality of this horizon. What is crucial to note is that the urban *militiae* did not conceive the construction of localized power as a political project in itself. Rather, they sought to construct effective power – power capable of being exercised firmly over the society they intended to govern. At certain moments, this meant operating in spheres broader and different from the strictly local one.

This perspective not only contributes to a better explanation of the processes that allow us to understand these transformations, but also has methodological implications. In a comparative historical reconstruction, the internal communal developments of the two cities would be studied independently and then compared as phenomena with distinct origins. While such an approach would be useful in some respects, it would be misleading in others because it would fail to explain why change occurred at particular moments. What we are dealing with here are processes of internal transformation that share the same genesis within a broader field of connections. Therefore, a strictly comparative perspective would be insufficient to grasp the interweaving of contemporaneous developments.

On a different, though complementary, level, a connected history of communal developments must be distinguished from the more conventional his-

tory of the circulation of models, people, and texts. The latter approach seeks to identify political, cultural, and social factors that move from one context to another and are adopted as models. Its underlying premise is that each context generates factors of autonomous development that can subsequently be transferred elsewhere, where they function as drivers of specific forms of growth. Even in this case, explanations of transformation ultimately tend to locate causality in endogenous processes. Yet the factors leading to the transformation of a society may emerge in the moment of encounter itself.

It is unnecessary to assume that the societies of 12th-century Italy were a collection of small, distinct worlds that can be compared or used as observation points for the circulation of models. Rather, they should be understood as internally differentiated societies of the kind described by Marc Bloch as “fractions of a single society which, taken as a whole, displays a high degree of unity”.⁶³ The forces that produced unity within difference can be identified only if we seek to reconstruct not merely the individual threads that compose the skein, but the skein itself.

⁶³ Bloch, “Per una storia comparata,” 107.

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Alberto Cotza
Università degli Studi Roma Tre
alberto.cotza@uniroma3.it
ORCID: 0000-0001-7834-8013

A shift in written practices. Rome and the ‘documentary revolution’ of the 12th century

by Dario Internullo

The paper reflects on the transformation in documentary practices between the 10th and 12th centuries, taking the city of Rome as a case study while situating it within a broader context. More specifically, it examines the major change in writing practices that several historians have defined as the ‘documentary revolution’. The phenomenon is analysed from two perspectives: first, its development within urban society; and second, its potential contribution to a broader reflection on the periodization of the High Middle Ages.

Il contributo si propone di riflettere sulle trasformazioni delle pratiche documentarie tra il X e il XII secolo, prendendo come caso di studio la città di Roma ma inserendola in un contesto più ampio. Più precisamente, intende riflettere su quel grande cambiamento nelle pratiche scritte che diversi storici definiscono ‘rivoluzione documentaria’, esaminando il fenomeno sia dal punto di vista del suo dispiegarsi nella società urbana, sia da quello del suo possibile contributo a una più generale riflessione sulla periodizzazione del pieno Medioevo.

Middle Ages, 10th-12th centuries, Italy, Latium, Rome, Notaries, Documentary Revolution.

Medioevo, secoli X-XII, Europa, Italia, Lazio, Roma, notariato, rivoluzione documentaria.

Dario Internullo, Roma Tre University, Italy, dario.internullo@uniroma3.it, 0000-0001-9519-0166

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1. *The ‘documentary revolution’*

Among the various phenomena that affected Europe between the 11th and 12th centuries, one that might at first glance be described as a shift in documentary practices stands out. This change became readily apparent when comparing documents produced before the 12th century with those from afterward, even within the same archive. Apart from specific figures, which of course vary from case to case, the number of preserved documents typically increases by an order of magnitude between the two periods: from 5 to 50, from 10 to 100, from 20 to 200, and so on. In addition to being more numerous, documents from the latter period also display qualitative differences: graphically, they are more organized and densely written; in terms of form, they are more standardized; from a legal perspective, they are more abstract and modelled on Roman law; socially, they are more inclusive, shedding light on strata beyond the aristocratic elite; and materially, they are more manageable – often, moreover, textually embedded within the new documentary form of the register.

This change is well known among scholars. Source editors and specialists in diplomatics have been aware of it since the beginning of the great census and publication of medieval documents in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although historians turned their attention to it later, they are now not only aware of the phenomenon, but have also built fruitful lines of research upon it. The space available here does not permit a detailed examination of this historiography, but three brief observations may be useful at the outset. The first is that the phenomenon appears to have been problematized for the first time by the British historian Michael Clanchy in a book published in 1979. In that work, Clanchy demonstrated that the administrative pervasiveness of the Norman monarchy between the late 11th and early 14th centuries fostered an unprecedented explosion of literacy in England, and second, that the phenomenon found parallels elsewhere, notably in the territories under the French monarchy.¹ The second observation is that, more recently, the phenomenon has been labelled ‘documentary revolution’. If I am not mistaken, it was Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur who first used this expression in 1995, in a review of Paolo Cammarosano’s influential book on medieval Italian written culture. Maire Vigueur proposed interpreting “the proliferation and transformation of genres that characterize the new documentary landscape of communal Italy from the 13th century onwards” as a veritable revolution. The definition has found wide acceptance among scholars of Italy – beyond its communal half – and, in recent times, has also been used to describe documentary changes in other parts of Europe.² The third observation is that this phenomenon of cul-

¹ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*. I am particularly grateful to Alberto Cotza, Enrico Faini, Paolo Tomei, and Massimo Vallerani for their stimulating and helpful discussions during the preparation of this essay.

² Cammarosano, *Italia medievale*; Maire Vigueur, “Révolution documentaire” (quotation on p. 180); Menant, “Les transformations;” Francesconi, “Potere della scrittura;” Bertrand, *Les écri-*

tural articulation concerns not only documentary practices but, more broadly, every aspect of the relationship between European societies and writing. The other side of the same coin is the cultural “Renaissance of the 12th century”, first theorized by Charles Haskins in the 1920s. This connection fully justifies the choice of some scholars to speak, more generally, of a ‘writing revolution’ (*révolution de l’écrit*).³

International historiography of the Middle Ages has thus reached a broad consensus on the existence of a historical process that may be described as a ‘documentary revolution’ or, in a more general sense, a ‘writing revolution’. It is now well established that the most concrete effects of this process became evident from the late 13th century, when the diffusion of writing attained an unprecedented ubiquity – unseen since the 5th and 6th centuries – and various European regions participated in a new, remarkable homogenization of writing practices, particularly in the documentary sphere. However, the reasons for its emergence, the ways in which it manifested, and the initial disparities between the different European contexts remain less clear. Following Clanchy, it has often been assumed that the driving force behind the change was the growth of state-like political entities, whether monarchies or city communes, and their needs for documentation and for complex apparatuses of social control. However, to my knowledge, this postulate has never been subjected to systematic empirical verification. More recently, scholars such as Paul Bertrand and Maureen Miller have refined the inquiry by emphasizing the need to consider broad chronological spans beyond the 12th and 13th centuries, in which the transformation becomes more apparent. Their approach involves examining the number of surviving documents as an indicator of changes not only in documentary production but also in archival and preservation practices. They also argue for the inclusion of ecclesiastical institutions alongside secular ones in this analysis.⁴

In the following pages, I intend to reflect on the origins of this shift – which for the sake of simplicity I will also refer to as the ‘documentary revolution’ – within a historical context that I know better than others: the city of Rome.⁵ The primary aim of this reflection is to contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon, both by reconstructing and interpreting it. In keeping the guiding framework of this conference, it also aims to shed light on a small yet somewhat unprecedented aspect of the multifaceted struc-

tures ordinaires (although in this case not depending directly on Maire Vigueur); Keller, “Zur Einführung;” Miller, “Reframing the ‘Documentary Revolution’.”

³ See Bousquet-Labouërie, et Destemberg, *Écrit, pouvoirs et société*, along with Haskins, *The Renaissance* and Witt, *The Two Latin Cultures*. For the definitions, see Bertrand, “À propos de la révolution de l’écrit” and *Les écritures ordinaires*; Miller, “Reframing the ‘Documentary Revolution’.”

⁴ Bertrand, “À propos de la révolution de l’écrit” and *Les écritures ordinaires*; Miller, “Reframing the ‘Documentary Revolution’.”

⁵ I revisit the interpretation put forward in Internullo, Bertrand, *Senato Sapiente*, 62-79, the implications of which are only briefly outlined there.

tural transformation that occurred in Italy – and more generally in Europe – between the 10th and 12th centuries. We have been asked to examine this aspect in order to grasp the possible connection between the various phenomena of the High Middle Ages, and, more broadly, the periodization of the age itself.

2. Documents in 10th-12th century Rome

Although the documentary contexts in which change is most perceptible in Italy undoubtedly belong to the secular public institutions of the 12th and 13th centuries, both in terms of the quantity and quality of documentation (registers) and in terms of preservation practices (new secular archives), a comprehensive assessment of the phenomenon requires consideration of the entire documentary system within a given context. The case of Rome is particularly well suited to a reflection that does not assume secular political institutions as agents of change, since, as is well known, the archive of its commune has completely disappeared, and between the 10th and 12th centuries the available documentation derives exclusively from the archives of urban and extra-urban ecclesiastical institutions.⁶

If the lower chronological limit is determined by the occasion of this conference, the upper limit for Rome is self-evident: documentation before the 10th century can be counted on the fingers of one hand, leaving a sample far too small to allow speculation about changes in the documentary system across a wider timespan. To be more specific, the material available for the period consists of just under 1,500 documentary texts, drawn from the loose parchments of twenty urban churches; from the cartularies of an urban monastery (SS. Andrea e Gregorio, 15th century) and two extra-urban monasteries (Farfa and Subiaco, early 12th century); and from a compilation preserved in the papal archive (the *Liber Censuum*, 1192). These texts were written mainly by *scriniarii Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae*, officers of the papal chancery or *Scrinium*, who between the 10th and 12th centuries came increasingly to dominate the landscape of ‘private’ writings previously managed by the ancient *tabelliones*, the notaries of late Roman tradition. From perspective of preservation, Rome thus appears entirely typical of Latin Europe, where ecclesiastical institutions were the chief agents of documentary transmission. As Chris Wickham has shown, this predominance was all the more necessary in Rome because, during the period in question, most urban and rural property – the primary concern of the the archival documents – belonged to the Church.⁷

⁶ A survey of the sources of medieval Rome in Carbonetti, Carocci, e Molinari, *Roma*, 79-167.

⁷ Carbonetti, “Il *Palatium* lateranense come risorsa;” Wickham, “*Iuris cui existens*” and “La struttura della proprietà fondiaria.” On ecclesiastical hegemony in the transmission of early medieval charters in Italy, see Cammarosano, *Italia medievale*, ch. 1.

To capture the changes in documentary practices, we must first evaluate the corpus from a quantitative perspective, and then examine it more closely from a qualitative standpoint.

3. *Growth, decline, explosion. Quantitative assessments*

The quantitative dimension is clearly illustrated by the graph in Figure 1, which I will now discuss. If we look at the documents preserved in ecclesiastical archives, we observe a steady increase from the 10th century until the mid-11th century, followed by a decline lasting until the second quarter of the 12th century, and then a renewed and a more rapid growth continuing to the end of that century. These numerical fluctuations are not neutral: they do not necessarily correspond to genuine periods of expansion or contraction in the city’s documentary life. To understand them, different evaluation parameters must be adopted depending on the material and contextual conditions that underlie them. I will therefore focus on these three phases, situating each within its specific context.

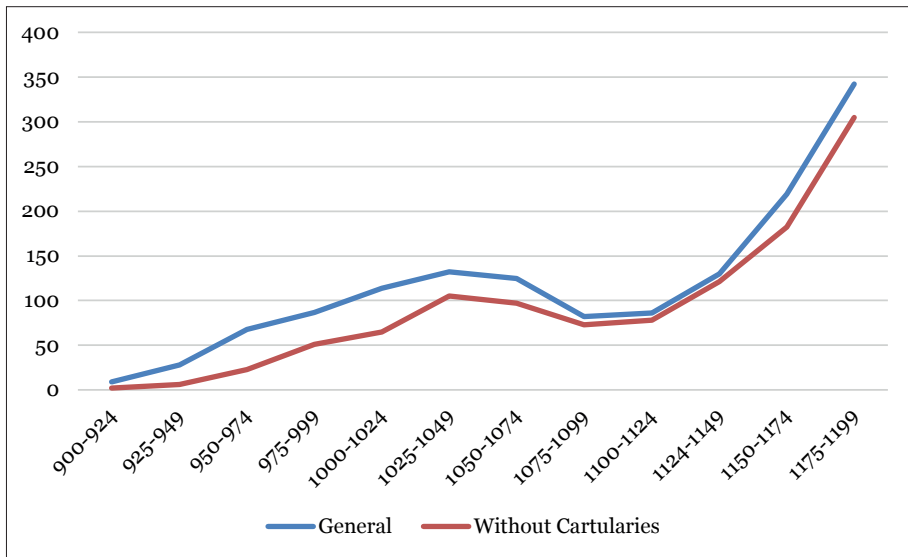


Fig. 1. Numerical variations in the consistency of preserved Roman archival documents. The vertical axis (ordinate) concerns the consistency expressed in intervals of fifty units, the horizontal axis (abscissa) instead marks the chronology on the basis of twenty-five years spans, from 900 to 1199. The blue line illustrates the total number of documents surveyed, while the red line excludes the documents preserved in cartularies that do not cover the entire period considered (*Regestum Farfense*, *Regestum Sublacense*, *Liber Censuum*).

1. As for the growth observed during the 10th and early 11th centuries (900-1049), it can be explained by two factors, one material and the other patrimonial. The material factor corresponds precisely to the transition from papyrus to parchment in most of the city's documentary practices by the mid-10th century. While papyrus has a notably poor rate of archival preservation, rarely lasting more than three centuries, parchment is far more durable and remains visible over the long term. The increase in documentation during the 10th century thus appears to be partly due to the shift from an 'invisible' medium, papyrus, to a more 'visible' one, parchment – a change that, in this respect, places Rome more in line with the cities of southern Italy, particularly those of the Tyrrhenian duchies (Gaeta, Naples, Amalfi), than with the cities of the *Regnum Italiae* (excluding Venice). The patrimonial factor, by contrast, concerns the fact that until the 10th century a large part of Rome's urban and rural landed property was under papal ownership. During this period, the pontiffs managed the land through the stipulation of (often temporary) emphyteutic contracts or by retaining direct control over certain significant estates, such as the *domuscultae*. From the mid-10th century onwards, however, by decision of the papacy itself (or of some aristocrats close to its court), a substantial portion of these assets was redistributed through perpetual transfers of ownership, formalized in papal privileges and donations, to ecclesiastical institutions such as churches, monasteries, and the bishoprics of the suburban dioceses. From that moment, the beneficiary institutions began to generate a more localized circulation of emphyteutic and leasehold rights, thereby stimulating the proliferation of documents within their archives. The documents most frequently found in 10th- and early 11th-centuries archival layers are, on the one hand, public and private donations and, on the other, emphyteutic contracts and leases (*libelli*). This means that until the 10th century the main repository for land documentation was the papal archive, which, for various reasons, survives only in small fragments within late compilations – the most important of which is the *Collectio canonum* of Deusdedit (c. 1080). In this sense, the apparent growth in the 10th century can also be explained by the fact that it was precisely during this period that the archives of the urban churches began to develop a more complex and articulated structure, following the perpetual transfers that fragmented the papal patrimony at a more local level. Rather than speaking of growth, I would characterize the 10th century as a period of increased visibility – both material and archival – for the urban ecclesiastical archives.⁸

2. As for the decline in the second half of the 11th century (1050-1124), I do not believe it is coincidental that it aligns exactly with the years of the

⁸ For the first aspect, see Carbonetti, "*Sicut inveni in thomo*;" Radiciotti, "Copie da papiro;" and Internullo, "Il papiro." For the second, see the previous note, to which one can add Lenzi, "Forme e funzioni," as well as the numerous documents cited in Deusdedit, *Collectio Canonum*, book III (as far as I know, the *Collectio* has been extensively mined by economic historians, but has so far received little attention in discussions of Roman archival practices).

'Church Reform'. In this respect, I believe that it was precisely the restructuring process of the papacy that curtailed the documentary practices that had developed up to that point. This was the period in which reformist intellectuals – building on certain tendencies already established in the preceding period – began to advance new public reflections on the harmfulness of certain written documents. The words below are those of Humbert, Cardinal Bishop of Selva Candida, an intellectual associated with the party of Nicholas II and the author of a treatise against simony (1057–60):

Through diabolical contracts, [the simoniacal bishop] sells, gives or permanently alienates to laymen, by whatever means or in whatever circumstances he can, even the tithes and gift of the living and of the dead until the end of the age, so that those who would serve God in future generations and work for his own and others' salvation of others find nothing left for themselves, not enough food for a single hour, nor clothing nor supplies for a single night. Thus [we have] lease contracts in secular hands, records of documents and the poorly secured instruments with the signatures of such people so that the ancient charters and canonical privileges of the churches of God are voided and every ecclesiastical possession is added to, and confirmed to, the jurisdiction of laymen. The decrees and privileges of the catholic pontiffs are unable to overcome the alienations of these heretics; none of the canons or synods of the holy fathers prevails, nor do the edicts and precepts of the emperors or the laws of religious princes stand in their way.⁹

It is worth emphasizing immediately that Humbert's ideas were not isolated but shared by numerous papal intellectuals active between the second half of the 11th century and the early decades of the 12th. Similar ideas can also be found in the writings of Deusdedit, who composed much of his *Collectio canonum* during the final years of Gregory VII's pontificate. It is also worth noting that both authors, as well as others who participated in the public debate of those decades, drew on earlier traditions. However, while such discourses were particularly influential within the *Regnum Italiae* proper, especially in the Ottonian period, they seem to have had little impact in Rome.¹⁰

⁹ Humbertus Cardinalis, *Adversus simoniacos*, 184: *Decimas enim et oblationes vivorum et defunctorum atque cunctos redditus, quos post se usque in finem saeculi Ecclesia erat habitura, per diabolicos contractus saecularibus hominibus vendit aut donat et, quibuscumque modis et conditionibus potest, perpetuo alienat, ut Deo post in futuris generationibus servituri suamque et aliorum salutem operaturi nichil omnino sibi relicta nec ad victum unius horae nec ad vestitum nec ad diversorium sub nocte inveniant. Inde libelli in saecularium manibus, inde diversa cartarum monimenta et instrumenta subscriptionibus talium male cauta, quibus evacuantur ecclesiarum Dei antiqua cyrographa et canonica privilegia; et iuri laicorum usque ad finem saeculi addicitur et confirmatur omnis possessio ecclesiastica. Nequeunt iam catholicorum pontificum decreta vel privilegia conscriptionibus horum hereticorum obviare, nequeunt ulli canones aut ullae synodi sanctorum patrum iam praevalere, nequeunt ulla edicta et praecepta imperatorum vel leges religiosorum principum iam obsistere* (the English translation here comes from Eldevik, *Episcopal Power and Ecclesiastical Reform*, 139. I learnt about this text from Lauwers, "Decima," 53–6).

¹⁰ See Deusdedit, *Collectio canonum*, 271–95. For the general debate in the late 11th and early 12th centuries, see Ciccopiedi, "Una fase del dibattito;" Vezzoni, "Libertas e res ecclesiae" with "La centralità." For the Ottonian age, see Nobili, "Vassalli su terra monastica;" Violante, "Fluidità del feudalesimo," especially with reference to the *Capitulare Ticinense de praediis eccle-*

The fact that much of the religio-political pamphleteering of the second half of the 11th century emphasizes *res ecclesiae* suggests that the documentary production of Roman ecclesiastical institutions – particularly emphyteusis and lease contracts – was subject to greater scrutiny during this period than in the past. The decline in documents in the second half of the century may partly reflect this increased attention. If we turn briefly to the typology of the preserved documents, we can see that the most significant decline concerns precisely the type of documents summarized below as ‘tenancy document(s)’ (Fig. 2). Immediately after these come donations, probably because the process of ecclesiastical reconfiguration of papal lands had already been completed (see above), while charitable donations by individuals expecting entry into a tenancy network – and thus an ecclesiastical clientele – in return, were diminishing.

The years of decline are also those in which Roman documentation reveals an emergence of a new practice: the *dicta* – a kind of proto-registers (or proto-*imbreviatura*) drafted and preserved by the *scriniarius*. These recorded legal acts in abbreviated yet legally valid textual forms, thereby avoiding and replacing the drafting of a parchment *in mundum* to be issued to the parties.¹¹ Since the spread of this practice shifted the focus of documentary activity beyond the ecclesiastical sphere, it seems clear that the decline under discussion can also be explained by the invisibility of these proto-registers, which were mostly preserved by the notary who composed them and not, as in the case of parchments *in mundum*, usually drawn up in duplicate, respectively for the churches and their tenants. Moreover, the shift in focus from churches to notaries may also reflect a social desire to avoid the surveillance of *res ecclesiae* during the period of the ‘Reform’ – a possibility that must for now remain hypothetical, yet one that should not be excluded, especially since among the first legal acts involved in the practice of *dicta* we already find leases and other forms of ecclesiastical land transfer.

3. The period from the second to the last quarter of the 12th century (1125-99) marks a reversal of the previous trend, with a significant increase in documentation. Since *dicta* continue to be abundantly attested, there can be little doubt that this increase – if not a veritable explosion – of documents preserved in the churches reflects a genuine growth in the overall volume of documentary production in the city. In my opinion, this is the true beginning

siarum (998), whose manuscript tradition – and, by extension, broader significance – would be worth investigating. In the meantime, see Vocino, West, “On the Life and Continence of Judges,” n. 29. For a comprehensive overview of the ‘Church Reform’, an excellent guide is now Mazel, *Nouvelle histoire*, vol. 2, 9-87.

¹¹ Pratesi, “I *dicta*,” Carbonetti, “*Dicta e imbreviature*,” Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 75-6 (with a new interpretation of their earlier form). The earliest records of the practice date back to the 1060s and 1070s: Bartola, *Il regesto del monastero di SS. Andrea e Gregorio*, no. 15 (copy from *dicta* drafted in 1075); Fedele, *Carte del monastero dei SS. Cosma e Damiano*, no. 86 (copy from *dicta* drafted in 1078); Radiciotti, *Le pergamene di S. Maria in Trastevere*, no. 8 (copy from *dicta* drafted in 1079).

of the 'documentary revolution'. To fully understand it, it is now necessary to turn our attention to certain qualitative aspects of Roman documentation and its principal actors.

4. *Qualitative assessments: the 'rational' recomposition of a fractured system*

From a qualitative perspective, the Roman documentary system of the 10th century may be regarded as possessing a distinct *carattere originario*, in that its structure had already assumed a stable form, at least since the late 8th century. Its solidity also makes it relatively easy to describe. It can be envisioned as comprising two levels of documentation: one public and the other private.¹² The public level is mainly represented by the great papal privileges – *privilegia*, also known as 'bulls' because of their seal¹³ – which in Latium were the equivalent of the imperial diplomas of the *Regnum Italiae*. Drafted by *scriniarii*, they are generally found in ecclesiastical archives as guarantees of the perpetual transfer of large blocks of fiscal land, in this case papal land, or of other public rights. Alongside the privileges, we find judicial documentation in the form of memorative reports (*notitiae* or *brevia*), also drawn up by a *scriniarius* at the conclusion of the great judicial assemblies known as *placita*, presided over by the pope, the city prefect, and the Roman aristocrats. The private level, by contrast, consists mainly of temporary land transfers established on behalf of ecclesiastical institutions in the form of emphyteusis or leases, as well as of permanent transfers of property through donations, sales, and exchanges. These documents share not only a common formulaic framework but also the presence of autograph subscriptions or graphic symbols (*signa*) by witnesses, elements that were essential to the legal validity of the act. Once again, these documents were drafted by the same papal *scriniarii*, which is why the distinction between private and public documents in Rome presents a fundamental ambiguity: scholars have always classified emphyteutic and lease documents of ecclesiastical origin as private, yet perhaps it may be worth exploring further how this documentation – and, more broadly, the ecclesiastic property that generated it – was perceived by urban society.¹⁴ Finally, the picture should be completed with the 'lighter' documentation intended for internal use, such as survey lists (of landed estates or mov-

¹² I adopt here the 'classic' diplomatic distinction between public and private documents, based on the genetic process by which they were produced: see Pratesi, *Genesi e forme*, 34. For certain nuances between these two categories, see below. Obviously, the broader problem of document categorization cannot be addressed here owing to space limitations.

¹³ For *privilegia*, I here adopt the terminology used (and certainly produced and perpetuated by the *scriniarii* and *notarii*) in the documents themselves.

¹⁴ In this sense, the gradual occupation of the field of *tabelliones'* writings by the *scriniarii* might also be interpreted as a progressive expansion of the 'public' at the expense of the 'private'. Once again, however, the issue merits further investigation.

able goods) and papal epistolary registers, of which only scant traces survive in our archives.¹⁵

In the second half of the 11th century, this older system broke down, especially at the private level. Leases and emphyteuses not only dwindled in number, but gradually disappeared from the documentary landscape, replaced by a new contractual form of late Roman origin – the rental agreement (*locatio*) – which now encompassed social acts that had previously been poorly documented, perhaps because they had been relegated to the realm of oral tradition, such as those concerning vineyard cultivation. In addition to the rental agreement, new contractual types rooted in the Roman tradition appeared in the final decades of the 11th century, such as the pledge (*pignus*) and the counter-dowry (*donatio propter nuptias*). These were later joined, in the early 12th century, by the will (*testamentum*) and, in the middle years of the same century, by the feudal contract (*feudum*) and the receipt (*apocha*). Receipts were issued to tenants as proof of payment and were sometimes recorded in the owners' archives as "counter-receipts" (*antapochae*). More generally, we can observe a process of rationalization, by which the expansiveness and creativity of the preceding period – particularly visible in the rhetoric and convoluted formulae of *arenga* and *sanctio* of the 10th and 11th centuries – gave way to drier, standardized, and more rigid formulations; to smaller pieces of parchment, often trapezoidal in form; to scripts increasingly distant from the local type known as 'Roman curial' and closer to the 'diplomatic minuscule'; and to documentary texts in which the notary – now the undisputed agent responsible for the legal act – personally drafted even the subscriptions of the witnesses, who consequently lost their autography. At the same time, we can observe a growing articulation of the legal actions envisaged by scribal practice, as demonstrated by these newly mentioned types of contract. The central decades of the 12th century are a period in which the clients of a *scriniarius* had at their disposal a much broader range of legal instruments than in the past.¹⁶

If we cross-reference the qualitative data with the quantitative evidence, it is striking that the most intense phase of this new reconfiguration (1050-1125) coincides with the sharpest decrease in the number of preserved documents, immediately followed by the documentary 'explosion' of the late 12th

¹⁵ Carbonetti, "Il sistema documentario," 87-111. Lists of goods are often summarized in the *Liber Pontificalis* (whose 'first season' ends, however, at the close of the 9th century and resumes, even retrospectively, only in the 12th century). For papal lists whose text have come down to us directly, albeit in copy, see Tomei, "Il sale e la seta" and Internullo, "Sui beni pubblici." For epistolary registers, see generally Pagano, "I registri di lettere." These have survived only occasionally in intact (or nearly intact) copies before the end of the 12th century (Gregory the Great, John VIII, Gregory VII) but are mentioned frequently in Deusdedit, *Collectio Canonum*, 295-334, 374-84.

¹⁶ Carbonetti, "Il sistema documentario," 111-5; Lenzi, *La terra e il potere*, 101-49 (also on the oral tradition of certain socio-economic relations); Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, 366-75; Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 73-9, 257-71.

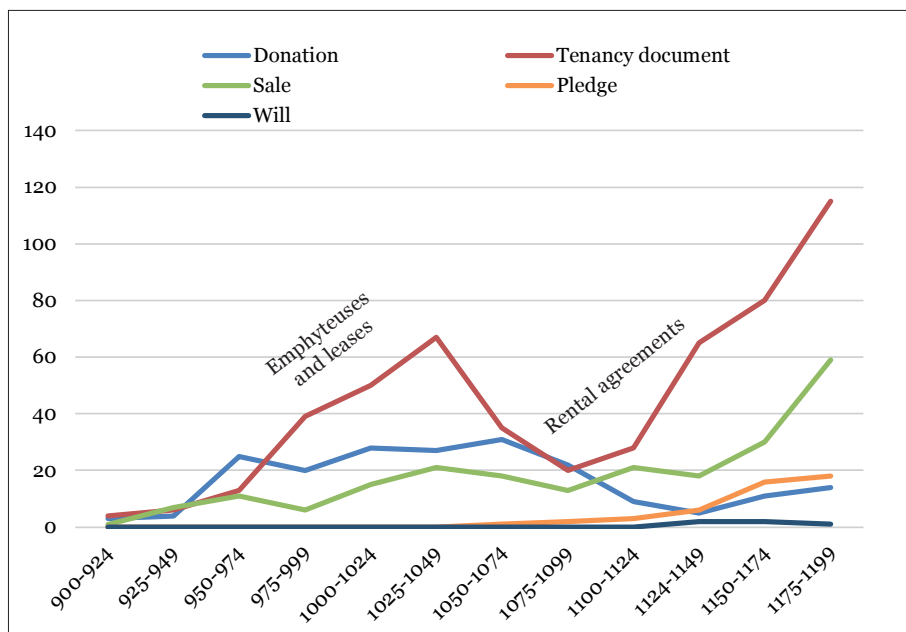


Fig. 2. Numerical variation, taken from the same *corpus*, according to some – but not all – documentary types.

century. Regarding this explosion, the graph in Fig. 2 highlights the takeoff of two specific types of documents – rental agreements and sales. Concerning rental agreements, I believe that their proliferation may be interpreted as a new impulse in the circulation of ecclesiastical lands, probably driven from ‘below’ by lay actors involved in processes of division, allotment, and building. This time, they seem to have encountered fewer obstacles in papal oversight: it must have been less stringent, given that the second half of the 12th century coincides with the period when, following the institutionalization of the commune in the 1140s, the pontiffs were absent from the city for several decades. As far as sales are concerned, which are also characterized by a high degree of lay participation, since they mainly concern rights of use and income derived from ecclesiastical properties, their expansion seems to indicate a progressive – albeit not definitive or abrupt – weakening of the ecclesiastical dominion over land. This can also be explained by the new legal measures introduced by the written *consuetudines* issued by the commune, attested from 1160 onwards.¹⁷ I would also add that, although this is the picture revealed by the surviving archives, to imagine the phenomenon in its fullest concreteness we must consider that this growth – in production even more than in preservation – affected all the new documentary forms. To put

¹⁷ Wickham, “*Iuris cui existens*,” 28-38; Internullo, “Dal caso alla regola.”

it simply, the fact that documents such as pledges, dowries, counter-dowries, loans, arbitrations, refutations, and receipts of payment mainly involved lay parties placed their circulation beyond the ecclesiastical radar, which remains our only available lens before the 13th century. If we possessed even a single complete example of *dicta*, I am convinced it would reveal all these newly listed forms, in a situation not far removed from that of the Genoese notarial *cartolari*, though certainly less centred on maritime trade. Indeed, between the second half of the 11th century and the first half of the 12th century, *dicta* must have been the most significant documentary innovation in urban society, primarily because these early registers represent both the driving force and the outcome of a shift in legal documentation from older ecclesiastical networks to emerging lay ones. Unfortunately, the surviving evidence allows us to glimpse this process only in rough outline, or to trace its furthest developments in the earliest notarial registers preserved from the mid-14th century.

It can therefore be argued that the foundations of the first real shift in medieval documentation in Rome – or, if we prefer, its documentary revolution – were laid between 1050 and 1150. I have already argued that the first major decline in documentation coincides with the years when reformist intellectuals promoted tighter surveillance over the *res ecclesiae* and their emphyteutic and leasehold circulation. Developing this line of argument, I would now emphasize that the entire process of reshaping the documentary system coincides with the years of the city's deepest political and judicial crisis, already vividly illustrated by Chris Wickham in his book on Rome.¹⁸ The convergence between the two sets of evidence is by no means coincidental: it is precisely this crisis that explains the dynamics outlined thus far. Between 900 and 1050, the city of Rome and its surrounding countryside, though occasionally shaken, were still contained within a political system characterized by relative stability: public authority was always formally attributed to the pope and his officers; justice was administered through the great *placitum* assembly; landed property largely belonged to the churches; and the social prestige of the laity derived above all from its proximity to the papacy and the ecclesiastical institutions. After the imperial intervention of the 1040s, the disruptions caused by simultaneous papal elections, and the new reformist demands, that older system collapsed within a few decades. The void created by this collapse paved the way for various forms of experimentation – initially more confused and contingent, but from the 1120s to the 1140s increasingly structured and deliberate. For the purposes of this discussion, the most important outcome of this process of recomposition was the professional reconfiguration of the *scriniarii* and, alongside them, the legal experts known as *iudices*. Until the collapse of the old system, *scriniarii* and *iudices* had maintained an officer-like connection with the papacy. Between 1080 and 1120, however, they lost this connection as a result of the clericalization of the new papal *curia*,

¹⁸ Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, ch. 7.

which increasingly involved the college of cardinals and favoured the entry of documentary forces from outside the city into the papal chancery. The Lateran did not disappear from the horizon of the two groups, which continued to be trained within papal circles and to draw cultural nourishment from that environment (through manuscripts, formularies, educational paths, and ceremonial knowledge). Nevertheless, the loss of direct papal affiliation meant that, from a professional point of view, the *scriniarii* and *iudices* had to address the needs of urban society much more than in the past, welcoming new recruits into their ranks and, above all, solidifying the connection between legal expertise and the demands of lay groups – one of the constitutive elements in the genetic process of the Roman commune and its institutionalization, completed in the years 1143–9.¹⁹

I believe that illustrating these processes helps clarify both the reasons and the mechanisms behind the documentary transformation. The acquisition of social and cultural centrality by the *scriniarius* – what we might otherwise describe as the *fides publica* – can indeed be understood as a response to the disappearance of the *placitum* assembly, which in the old system had served as the point of equilibrium in relations between churches, with their land, and the lay tenants who held them through emphyteuses and leases. The centrality of the notary was not, however, simply an unconditional response to the crisis. If the *placitum*, with the hierarchical order of its assemblies, had contributed to reifying a society dominated by aristocrats, the *habitus* of the post-*placitum* *scriniarius* as a professional undoubtedly stimulated and facilitated the expansion of documentary culture throughout society. The fact that the *scriniarii* had – and continued to have – access to the rich cultural environment of the Lateran explains well the proliferation of new documentary forms between the second half of the 11th century and the first half of the 12th. We now know with certainty that some of the most important legal manuscripts with Justinian's law known in Europe originated from the Lateran deposits. It was also from these deposits that Cardinal Deusdedit, around 1080, obtained the same Justinian texts, together with other papal documents – a corpus which, taken as a whole, provides abundant material on pledges, counter-dowries, wills, and receipts.²⁰ From an economic perspective, the transfor-

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of this process, see Wickham, *Sleepwalking*, ch. 4 and Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, ch. 3. It should also be noted that, although the commune became a new centre of aggregation for the inhabitants' demand for justice (and documentation), the *scriniarii* remained, throughout the late Middle Ages, the pivotal figures of extrajudicial practice – the 'everyday' face of late medieval justice.

²⁰ Ammirati, "Il paratesto" and Loschiavo, "Was Rome still a Centre;" Deusdedit, *Collectio canonum*, 321 (receipts), 339–46 (Justinian texts). It is worth noting that the formulary of the Gelasian receipts transcribed in the *Collectio canonum* bears a striking resemblance to the payment receipts found scattered across various types of erratic supports in the 12th century, which I interpret as 'counter-receipts' (*antapochae*): see Carbonetti, *Scrivere* and Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 270–1, for details. References to *apochae* and *antapochae* are also found in southern Italy during the Swabian period: see von Falkenhausen, e Amelotti, *Notariato e documento*, 20–1. I will develop these connections elsewhere.

mation can be observed in the following way: once the old system collapsed, between 1060 and 1120, notaries sought both to diversify their documentary repertoire – drawing on the resources of the Lateran – and to address their services to lay society far more than in the past. In turn, between 1120 and 1150, lay society became increasingly familiar with this new offer, intensifying its demand for documentation and, between 1150 and 1200, driving the takeoff in documentary production. The austerity of the formulae, the reduced size, and the trapezoidal shape of 12th-century parchments may appear to be purely technical matters, but they are in fact the archaeological traces of this connection between notarial offer and social demand for writing. Faced with a limited supply of sheepskin parchment, notaries – or, if not notaries, the sellers of skins for documentary use – were compelled to use their writing material more rationally: reducing dimensions, including the extremities of the animal in the cut, and economizing on words. Not surprisingly, this is also the period in which preserved documents more frequently contain references to payments made to the notary for drafting the deed.²¹

5. *Concluding thoughts*

In this final section, I intend to develop the argument along two lines: one comparative and the other methodological. These concern the following questions: is the case of Rome representative of a broader Italian and European context? And what are the methodological implications of the documentary revolution for the study of medieval history? I will address the first question in greater detail and the second more succinctly.

The first question undoubtedly admits a positive answer, at least in general terms. As I noted at the beginning of this study, there is unanimous agreement among scholars today in viewing the documentary revolution as a Europe-wide phenomenon spanning the 12th to 14th centuries. A survey of the available research suggests that one of the most enduring effects of this process, between the 12th and 13th centuries, was a marked homogenization of legal and political languages, owing to the fact that notaries were often recruited as officers within state chanceries. This holds true from a general perspective. However, when we delve into the specifics, the picture becomes more complex, for scholars have shown less interest in grasping the details of the great transition from the high-medieval to the late-medieval documentary systems. When reading books that address not only diplomatic and historical-cultural topics, but also economic and political ones, it is quite easy to come across one, two, or even more elements of novelty described in the preceding pages: a larger number of preserved documents, the prominent role of notaries, the absorption of Roman law upon a foundation of legal particu-

²¹ Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 75-8 (also on the use of sheepskin), 241.

larisms, a greater variety of legal acts, notaries with an economic and rational mindset, and so forth. However, there have been few attempts to trace the qualitative and quantitative transformations of entire documentary systems from the 10th to the 12th century, or even across the broader divide between the early and later Middle Ages. Examining individual elements of novelty across multiple case studies can be misleading, especially because a single element, in itself, neither constitutes nor reveals a system.²² Instead, it seems more useful to compare my research with studies that have approached the same problems, albeit in different ways. From this perspective, I believe that a good litmus test is provided by Enrico Faini's studies on Florence and, beyond Italy, by Michel Zimmermann's work on Catalonia.

Let us begin with Florence. Drawing on a corpus of some 5,000 parchments dating from the 10th to the 12th centuries, Faini has identified an intriguing documentary curve: a peak in the second half of the 11th century, a decline in the first decade of the 12th century, and a new peak at the end of that same century. Typologically, while the 11th century is marked by the prominence of donations and leases, the 12th century is characterized by an initial explosion of *brevia* – a generic form encompassing a wide range of legal actions – and, especially in the final decades, by the predominance of sales. In the central decades of the 12th century, references also begin to appear to early notarial registers, which, according to Faini, partly explain the numerical decline of documents during those years. Comparing the Florentine case with that of Rome, it is striking that, although Florence follows a similar pattern (growth-decline-growth), its chronology appears to be shifted forward by about half a century. How can this chronological difference be explained? Perhaps by the fact that, in the Tuscan case, the collapse of the high-medieval political system represented by the March of Tuscany occurred several decades than the collapse of the papal system in Rome – specifically, at the beginning of the 12th century. It is also noteworthy that the endpoint of these developments was the same in both contexts: even in Florence, the close of the 12th century was marked by an increasingly dense interaction between the economic needs of society and the professionalization of notaries. In this regard, Faini notes that this encounter facilitated the emergence, alongside the land market *stricto sensu*, of a parallel market for rents and usage rights – an outcome that can also be seen as a product of the high levels of legal abstraction reached by notarial practice.²³

²² Among the numerous and valuable studies carried out by Attilio Bartoli Langeli, one in particular deserves mention: his research on Raniero da Perugia, the notary who, at the end of the 12th century, was in the habit of recording the number of lines in his deeds using the new Indo-Arabic numerals. According to Bartoli Langeli, this practice represented an additional – and certainly experimental – means of giving the deeds both personal and professional distinctiveness. I fully agree with this interpretation, but I would also add that, in light of the spread of payment notes for notaries in Rome at the end of the 12th century, such numbering may have served Raniero to calculate the economic value of his work. See Bartoli Langeli, *Notai*, 87–108.

²³ Faini, "Le fonti diplomatistiche" and "Prima del fiorino," who values Huertas' studies on Pistoia, especially *La rente foncière* and "Between Law and Economy."

Catalonia, then. Although Zimmermann does not offer quantitative assessments, in his study of the 9th to 12th centuries he identifies qualitative transformations strikingly similar to those observed in Rome: a period marked by great variety and formulaic experimentation is followed, between the 11th and 12th century, by one of recomposition that culminates in what he calls the “normalization of the diplomatic instrument”. The written document acquired regularity, homogeneity, and conciseness; the clergy were gradually excluded from documentary culture, which, according to Zimmermann, was ultimately “confiscated” by a group of notaries increasingly imbued with Roman law and ever more clearly defined in corporate and professional terms. The first major breaking point can be located in the central decades of the 11th century (1020–60), precisely when the old structures of Carolingian origin entered into crisis – a process already reconstructed by Pierre Bonnassie. Michel Zimmermann himself described the 11th century as the “golden age of *convenientiae*”, contracts in which two parties reached agreement without the intervention of either public or private jurisdiction.²⁴

The comparison provides several insights that are useful for reflection on a broader scale. First and foremost, it seems to confirm that documentary change was closely linked to the crisis of early medieval public institutions. From this perspective, the cases discussed here seem to contribute something important to our understanding of the documentary revolution, for they significantly weaken the idea that it was the political recomposition processes of the late 12th and 13th-century that generated it. These processes were certainly significant, and in some areas, such as southern Italy, they were crucial to the transition from early medieval particularism to late medieval homogeneity. However, they do not account for the change everywhere. In Rome and in some other areas, the documentary transformation itself appears to have functioned as a process of recomposition following political crisis. It is equally noteworthy that downstream, the endpoints of the process are remarkably similar even across thousands of kilometers. In this case, I believe the answer lies in the progressive intensification of communication radiating outwards from each urban – or rural – centre, a dynamic that might well be described as interregional connection. As Chris Wickham has recently demonstrated, the second half of the 12th century was precisely the moment when the economies of the Mediterranean regions – including central and northern Italy – became increasingly interconnected, growing in complexity and thereby fostering a new phase of long-distance and more intensive exchange.²⁵ The homogenization of documentary practices

²⁴ Zimmermann, *Écrire et lire en Catalogne*, 112, together with Bonnassie, *La Catalogne*. Regarding the *convenientiae* of Catalonia in the 11th and 12th centuries, see also Kosto, *Making Agreement*, who likewise notes (p. 16) that Catalan documents number approximately 5,000 in the 10th century and around 10,000 in the 11th. The European picture will soon be enriched by the forthcoming studies of Didier Panfili on Languedoc, which, among other topics, also address several of the issues raised in this essay.

²⁵ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*.

may be seen as the cultural counterpart of this intensification, in the following sense: for communications between different contexts to proceed smoothly, each context must equip itself with tools that are intelligible to its interlocutors. It is no coincidence, I believe, that it was precisely in the 12th century that the cities of central and northern Italy definitively abandoned their early medieval cultural particularisms, adopting standardized forms of diplomatic minuscule – i.e. the Caroline minuscule adapted for documentary use. The main vehicles of this homogenization were probably treaties, which were drafted in multiple copies for preservation in the archives of the contracting parties, and letters, which, although poorly preserved, were certainly instrumental – thanks to the *ars dictandi* – in promoting the homogenization of Europe's political language in the 12th and 13th centuries, as Benoît Grévin has shown. The end of the phenomenon known to paleographers as 'early medieval graphic particularism' can probably be explained in these terms: a shared intention among all the parties involved to employ forms of communication that could be understood across an increasingly broad communicative range. It is perhaps for this reason that the protagonists of Rome's documentary culture, as they projected themselves ever more outwards, gradually abandoned their early medieval, Byzantine-based script – the 'Roman curial' – and replaced it with the clearer Caroline forms. The *scriniarii* adopted these first, in the late 11th century, in imitation of the autograph subscriptions of witnesses in their charters – once they decided to forego autography – and later, in the 12th century, for documents issued by the commune of Rome, including treaties and letters addressed to subjects outside the city. Finally, between the 13th and 14th centuries, these forms came to be used for all other types of documents.²⁶

I conclude these pages with a brief reflection on the methodological implications of the documentary revolution, particularly with regard to questions of periodization. I believe that the transformation under discussion constitutes a genuine break with the preceding period and should be considered one of the key elements for framing the High Middle Ages and its periodizing value. In considering the heuristic consequences, namely the implications of this historical phenomenon for the research parameters employed by scholars, I find it useful to draw a parallel with another transformation recently examined by archaeologists: between the 11th and 12th centuries, Rome, and probably many other cities, expanded in volume to such an extent that a sub-

²⁶ On the *dictamen*, see Grévin, *Rhétorique du pouvoir médiéval*, which clearly demonstrates that the standardization of the political language of European chanceries (monarchical, communal, and seignorial) was facilitated by the intensity of contact between *dictatores*, as well as by the widespread circulation of these individuals, along with manuscripts containing epistolary models. It does not appear that the treaties have yet been studied from the perspective proposed here. For Rome, see Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 284-5, 288-90; there are, however, several other documents involving both cities and lords of Latium: see, for example, Falco, *Documenti inediti*, no. 3, concerning Corneto. Further developments of this phenomenon can be observed in the chancery minuscule scripts (so-called *minuscole cancelleresche*) of the late 13th and 14th centuries.

stantial part of the ancient and early medieval urban fabric was buried.²⁷ Given this parallelism, scholars working on the 5th-11th centuries necessarily operate with different parameters from those applied by scholars investigating the 12th-15th centuries. For the period preceding the documentary revolution and the volumetric expansion of cities, when written records were limited and many traces of human activity now lie buried underground, the most useful research methodologies are philology and diplomatics for written sources, and archaeology for material ones. For the subsequent period, however, when written sources multiplied exponentially and human traces – buildings, in particular – are often visible above ground, it becomes necessary, if not to replace, at least to complement these approaches with methods that allow for the ‘serial’ treatment of documents, drawing on statistics and other social sciences, as well as with a more practised eye towards architectural history. This methodological diversity is one of the factors that justify the distinction between early/high medievalists and late medievalists. It also clarifies why the former are more likely to engage with historians of Antiquity, while the latter are more likely to interact with modern and contemporary historians. Of course, I am not suggesting that the research of early medievalists and late medievalists should remain separate. On the contrary, I believe that making these methodological differences explicit is the essential starting point for a more fruitful dialogue.

A final observation concerns the inherent periodizing value of the transformation. The documentary revolution was likely accompanied by a shift in mentality: whereas before the 12th century individuals may have regarded the act of documenting a legal transaction as incidental to the action itself, thereafter they came to see it as essential, or at least *more essential* than before. As Paul Bertrand has aptly observed, according to this new mindset, “the juridical action existed only because it had been put into writing”.²⁸ Clearly, this statement can be nuanced if we examine the late Middle Ages through the eyes of a Renaissance scholar, or a modern or contemporary historian, since society’s familiarity with writing would continue to evolve over time. Yet, it retains its full force if we observe the 12th-15th centuries from the perspective of the early Middle Ages: there is indeed a considerable distance between the urban societies of the 13th century, in which notaries were visited daily and entire populations were increasingly ‘enclosed’ in public registers and lists, and those of the 8th-11th centuries, where the relationship between writing and society followed a slower and less pervasive rhythm.²⁹ Compared with the

²⁷ See Manacorda, *Roma*, and Augenti in this volume.

²⁸ Bertrand, *Les écritures ordinaires*, 50. I quote here from the English translation: “From the thirteenth century on (...) for reasons and in ways already mentioned, here as elsewhere, the written document validated and henceforth authenticated the juridical action it recorded. The document and the juridical action were superimposed on each other, or at least identified each other. The juridical action existed only because it had been put into writing”.

²⁹ For the process of ‘written registration’ of urban society between the 13th and 14th centuries, see now Vallerani, *Regimi di cittadinanza*, 23-48. For further – and considerable – articulation

practices of the 13th century, then, the phenomenon described here can really be interpreted as a point of departure – one all the more interesting because it was, to some extent, triggered from below, i.e. by the relationship between notaries, society, and property.

In more philosophical terms, we could interpret this process as a new manifestation of *documentality*, as theorized by Maurizio Ferraris. According to the philosopher, “nothing social exists outside the text”, where *text* should be understood as the recording – not necessarily written, but at least preserved in memory – of a relationship that establishes, at a given moment, the reciprocal commitment of two or more individuals. Reasoning along these lines, and considering that in the early Middle Ages social relations were more often recorded in memory without resorting to writing – thanks in part to ceremonial structures such as the *placitum* assembly – the documentary revolution may also be interpreted as a new ‘writing turn of documentality’.³⁰

of written communication between the late 14th and 16th centuries, see at least Lazzarini, *L'ordine delle scritture* (with further bibliography).

³⁰ Ferraris, *Documentalità*, *passim*. This reflection is indebted to the works of Paolo Tomei and Simone Collavini, notably “Beni fiscali e ‘scritturazione’,” but see also Collavini’s essay in this same volume.

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Models for a changing society: Lucca around the year 1100

by Paolo Tomei

This article examines the case of Lucca around the year 1100 to investigate a decisive transformation in medieval social and political structures: the emergence of the *domus* (house, household) as a legal and moral person, holder of assets, rights, and obligations. It argues that the aggregation of individuals into *domus* endowed with a proper name, transmissible patrimony (both material and immaterial), and territorial anchorage represents a sharp rupture rather than the linear outcome of a process begun in the Carolingian era. Drawing on extensive Lucchese documentary evidence, the study identifies two distinct phases corresponding to two major seasons in the formation of *domus* within the social fabric. The first (c. 1080-1120), linked to the seigneurial transformation and civil wars, marked the collapse of a court-centred order focused on the marquis's palace: houses formed primarily among parental groups that had distinguished themselves in the microcosm of the court. The second phase (c. 1170-1220), associated with economic growth and the commercial revolution, had a much broader scope, with a strong multiplication of *domus* within the *militia*, mainly in the urban context. By contrasting a pre-1100 'court society' with a post-1100 'house society', the article aims to contribute to the definition of two ideal-typical models and a chronological framework that can be applied comparatively to other contexts, while also challenging the historiographical tendency to project later dynastic and territorial structures backwards.

Il saggio analizza il caso di Lucca intorno all'anno 1100 per indagare una trasformazione decisiva delle strutture sociali e politiche medievali: l'emergere della *domus* (*casa*, *casata*) come persona morale e giuridica, titolare di beni, diritti, obblighi. Si sostiene che l'aggregarsi degli individui in *domus* dotate di un nome proprio, di un patrimonio (materiale e immateriale) trasmissibile e di un ancoraggio territoriale costituisca una frattura netta, e non l'esito lineare di un processo avviato in età carolingia. Attraverso l'analisi della ricca documentazione lucchese

Paolo Tomei, University of Pisa, Italy, paolo.tomei1@unipi.it, 0000-0002-3358-8336

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vengono individuate due fasi che corrispondono a due stagioni di formazione delle *domus* nel tessuto sociale. La prima (ca. 1080-1120) è connessa al mutamento signorile e alle guerre civili e coincide con il tramonto di una società centrata sul palazzo marchionale: a strutturarsi in *domus* sono i gruppi parentali che più si erano distinti nel microcosmo della corte. La seconda fase (ca. 1170-1220), legata alla crescita economica e alla rivoluzione commerciale, ha una portata molto più ampia, poiché vede una forte moltiplicazione delle *domus* nello strato sociale della *militia*, soprattutto in ambito urbano. Attraverso il confronto tra 'società di corte' e 'società per *domus*', il saggio intende contribuire alla definizione di due modelli idealtipici e di una scansione cronologica applicabili anche ad altri contesti, mettendo al contempo in discussione il punto di vista storiografico che tende a proiettare retroattivamente le strutture dinastiche e territoriali caratteristiche del secolo XII.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Lucca, *domus*, seigneurial transformation, court society, house society.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Lucca, *domus*, mutamento signorile, società di corte, società per *domus*.

1. *Introduction. What change?*

The city of Lucca is an excellent vantage point to study a particular aspect of the dense web of political, economic, and social changes that reshaped the post-Roman West at the turn of the 12th century. Through this case study, I focus on the shift marked by the emergence of family structures known as *domus*. By this I mean a broader reorganisation of the social fabric that characterises the making of the High Middle Ages, involving the formation of dynastic units identified by proper names. My aim is to assess the periodizing significance of this development and its contribution to current debates on the seigneurial transformation.¹

It is essential to recognise that, within this specific spatial context, the process unfolds according to its own distinctive rhythm and forms. Nonetheless, I argue that reconstructing it can offer insights into broader dynamics. Beginning from a small-scale, bottom-up perspective allows for abstraction and conceptualization, ultimately producing heuristic tools for comparative analysis. While similar transformations can be observed elsewhere, they are particularly evident in Lucca and therefore merit detailed analysis. The social fabric of this city frayed at a time of civil wars and schisms – a process that extended over two generations, between 1080 and 1120.²

This dynamic affects the body politic as a whole and is so significant because it touches its essential framework: the structures of aggregation that make up the community. I will refer to Émile Benveniste's definition of this latter term: a community is the human group that holds in common and pub-

¹ Bisson, *The Crisis*; Mazel, *Féodalités*; West, *Reframing*; Wickham, "The Feudal Revolution;" Mazel, *L'évêque*; Fiore, *Il mutamento*; Kohl, *Streit*; Kohl, *Konflikt*; Martine, Winandy, *La Réforme*; Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione;" Collavini, "Mutazione signorile."

² Wickham, "La signoria;" Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

licly shares *mūnia*, i.e., gifts, functions, and mutual duties.³ It is a process of transformation that shapes not only individual networks of relatives, friends, and followers, but also the diverse and fluid aggregations of these networks into the broader dimensions of associated living. In its 'patrimonialist' form, it therefore involves all level of power and comes to affect the *domus* par excellence: that centred on the palace, a microcosm of the political universe, whose *dominus* rules from the very heart of the public sphere by divine will.⁴ In Lucca, the master of this house, the lord of the whole community, is the marquis, even though the power to govern it is formally in the hands of the king, according to the arrangement laid down by Hugh of Arles in the second quarter of the 10th century.⁵ Thus, change also affects centres and places of aggregation.

At the turn of the 12th century, certain clusters of goods, rights, and relationships belonging to specific, identifiable communities are circumscribed, consolidated, and institutionalised, allowing them to be transmitted more automatically and autonomously across generations. Their common name is most often *domus* or *casa*. Each cluster becomes an entity, a legal person, and becomes more closely associated with a given territory with clearly defined boundaries.⁶ Yet it does not thereby become a static aggregate: its material, symbolic, and relational capital remains open to expansion. Such a structure is designed to protect – and even enhance – this set of resources at a time of changing conditions and opportunities. It becomes the dominant, though not exclusive, dimension of associated living, signalling a reversal from earlier patterns: for individuals, the most important household community is no longer the one centred in the palace, but rather the one they themselves organise.

With the new architectures of power, resources are both extracted and deployed in different ways. At the head of these bodies stand individuals (*domini*), upon whom other people (*manentes*) who cultivate their land are dependent, in a strongly personal relationship of subjection. These *domini*, or lords, exercise public rights on a patrimonial basis: powers of command and coercion have become something that can also be sold, donated, pledged, and bequeathed. The lords express their superiority and *praepotentia* more overtly, residing in stone towers – their *domus* – which take on a new monumental character. It is from these personal centres of power, and no longer collectively in the palace, that the decisive political game is played out. The playing field becomes smaller, and the balance of power more uneven: proximity to the king in the public sphere has become less important than the power exercised locally. In short, the emergence of the *domus* occurs when the rules of the political game change.⁷ This change connects and nuances two

³ Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire*, 96-7.

⁴ Le Jan, *Famille*; Airlie, "The Palace;" de Jong, "Sacrum palatium;" Devroey, *Puissants*.

⁵ Keller, "La marca;" Nobili, "Le famiglie;" Tomei, "Spazi politici."

⁶ Brancoli Busdraghi, "Genesi;" Leverotti, "Note."

⁷ Collavini, "La condizione;" Carocci, "Signori."

processes that have dominated historiographical debate over the past decade: seigneurial transformation and the petrification of wealth, the latter referring to the massive and systematic spread of investments by the elites in durable construction.

2. *Two generations of domus*

The attribution of a proper name is a founding act. With it, the new structure called *domus* becomes a person within the social system: it becomes recognisable, can claim rights and, conversely, can be subjected to authority. This process can be traced in the sources by examining the rich documentation of the Lucchese ecclesiastical archives (fig. 1). This documentary base – comprising thousands of charters – has already been systematically examined, but it can now be approached from this perspective.⁸ Between 1080 and 1120 what Mario Nobili calls a new ‘genealogical text’ emerges: the set of names in a genealogy can be read as a text, layered and rich in meaning.⁹

Because of its proximity to the marquis, power and wealth in Lucca had until then been concentrated in the hands of a reticular aristocratic circle. This social fabric took shape in two periods. The actions of Lothar I in the second quarter of the 9th century, followed by those of Hugh of Arles in the second quarter of the 10th, triggered ‘structural crises’ that accelerated the natural process of elite renewal and opened up new opportunities for social differentiation. These phases of more intense and rapid mobility were followed by two cycles of stability, during which it was still possible to pursue a path of social repositioning. This could be achieved by gradually moving closer to the lord of the public community. Within the groups of the first network, formed under Lothar I, only a few individuals managed to retain their position at the marquis’s court during the reign of Hugh of Arles. These were then joined by new men, forming a second network. By the Ottonian age, this network had consolidated, and its innermost and central circles endured the civil wars of the early 11th century largely unscathed.¹⁰

Within this reticular social fabric, which was not yet rigidly segmented from an onomastic point of view, the outbreak of new and more violent civil wars – culminating in the destruction of the marquis’s *domus* around 1081 – gave rise to the first medieval series of family names. Some of these have survived to the present day, emerging in a stable yet not unchanging form. The chronology of this phenomenon can be established quite clearly because it often begins with an anthroponym – a name or nickname given by an individual who, in the course of restructuring the networks of his relatives, friends, and

⁸ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

⁹ Nobili, “Formarsi.”

¹⁰ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 359–82.

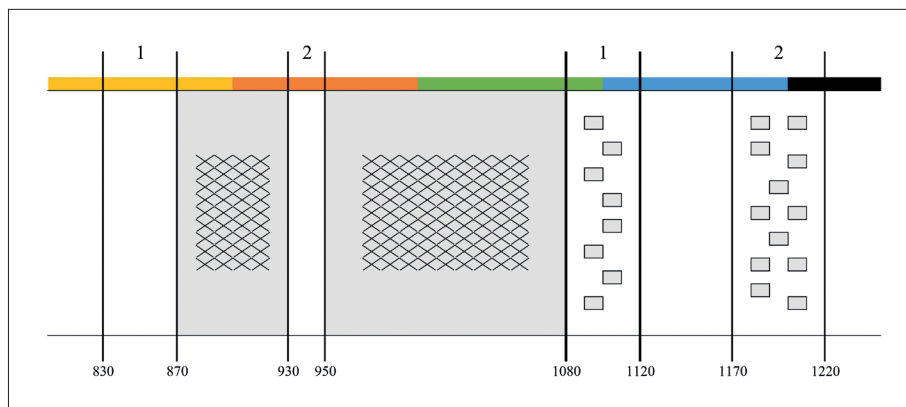


Fig. 1. Structural changes in the social fabric of Lucca, 800-1250.

followers, succeeds in leaving his mark on a *domus*. This person is not necessarily the eldest of his generation; more often – though not invariably – he is a male. Naming occurs primarily within the most distinguished stratum of urban society, those most familiar with public authority and possessing substantial wealth to invest and secure: the *milites* who distinguished themselves by their *elegantia* at the marquis's court and who owned fortified landed estates (*curtes*) – two aspects closely linked because of the importance of the resources redistributed within the court circle. From these centres of power, which were transformed into mighty stone castles as the seigneurial transformation unfolded, *domus* often also take their names. The same phenomenon, however, can be observed in groups that enjoy a unique position of distinction within the city but do not possess an equally prominent landed base. In their case, it is more frequently the special function performed by members of the group within the social body that gives rise to an onomastic label.

The text of a first series of *domus*, which appears at the same time in documentary sources from Lucca, takes us back to this founding period. The names are those of the sons, wives, and daughters of men who were prominent members of the marquis's retinue in the third quarter of the 11th century, or of castles that stand out as centres of power in charters issued around 1120: not by chance, the two chronological extremes that mark the phase of change. During the civil wars, these men and women were on the side of – and close to – Countess Matilda of Canossa, who held the title of marquise and was forced to leave Lucca. The founders of these family lineages therefore placed their political and even onomastic centre of gravity in these castles: away from the city and not far from the Apennine passes, among the mountains of Garfagnana and on the coast of Versilia, with a few notable exceptions. It was not a total detachment: they were able to maintain their urban clientele and their vast estates in the Lucca plain, precisely through the incorporation of this material and relational capital in new containers such as the *domus*.

In the same way, their descendants retained a sense of community and a web of shared interests.¹¹ I shall analyse the designations that make up this new 'genealogical text' one by one.

Guido (1038-1105), son of Cunimundo V, sired the *Filii Guidi*, lords of Villa Collemantina (*Cunimundingha*) and San Michele (castle attested from 1122), in the upper Garfagnana. They preserve the anthroponym Cunimundo as a distinguishing mark, which became obsolete in the 12th century, but was already characteristic of the first aristocratic network at the marquis's court: for this reason, they are also known as the Cunimundinghi. The members of the *domus* acquired their comital title from the *consorteria* they established with the Counts of Lavagna, documented in 1179.¹²

Sighifridi IV and his wife Imilga called Pallia (1052-69) are the progenitors of the *Filii Suffredi*, or Suffredinghi, lords of Rocca di Mozzano and of Anchiano (castles both attested from 1122), in the middle Serchio valley. The latter castle served as a base for a branch of the family descended from a second Pallia, the granddaughter of the previous one, which maintained ties of solidarity with the main branch through their shared lineage.¹³

Ubaldo (1062-83), son of Sighifridi V, gave his name to the *Filii Ubaldi*, lords of Bozzano (a centre of power attested from 1124) and of Castello Aghinolfi, in Versilia. The latter castle is associated with the line originated by Rodilando called Mezzolombardo, first attested during the Peace of Lucca, in 1124, between the Bishop of Luni and the emerging *domus* within the kinship group of the marquises known as Obertenghi – this act and this case have served as the basis for Mario Nobili's reflection on the 'genealogical text'. The branch in question broke off from the main lineage at the time of Mezzolombardo's son, Truffa (1159-1202).¹⁴

The designation *Filii Rolandi*, or Rolandinghi, sometimes with the toponymic specification *de Loppia*, refer to Rodilando IX (1070-8), son of Villano. Loppia, in the middle Serchio valley, is not a centre of lordship, but a *caput plebis*, since the lineage structures a multifocal political entity that largely follows the parish boundaries: Rodilando IX's sons were operating together here in 1120.¹⁵

Ghisla, daughter of Rodolfo *de Casula* (1045-62), with her husband Alberto, son of Signoretto, collected and petrified the Garfagnana inheritance of a very large kinship group that, in the wake of Canossa, operated on three sides: Lucca, Luni, and Emilia. Many other *domus* originate from this line: it is a veritable 'dynastic source' that has yet to be explored in its extensive ramifications. The ancestor identified as a reference point, in the case of Ghisla's inheritance, is her grandfather Gherardo III, hence the onomastic label

¹¹ Tomei, 383-93.

¹² Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 183-92.

¹³ Tomei, 192-203.

¹⁴ Tomei, 204-22.

¹⁵ Tomei, 117-30.

Gherardighi. The *domus* established by the couple in Garfagnana had two centres of power that were not contiguous. This led to a split in the 12th century into two distinct lineages: the lords of Verrucola *Gherardigha* and the lords of Cellabarotti.¹⁶

From Viscount Fraolmi VII (1077-86) and from Raimondo (1065-81), sons of Sisemundo III, descend, respectively, the lords of Corvaia and of Vallecchia, twin castles dominating the Versilia River and the coastal route. They were responsible for the petrification of the two centres: significantly, one of the two towers of Corvaia is called *Fralmingha*. The title of viscount was not decisive in the construction of the identity of this group: before the seigneurial transformation, it was also held by other kinship groups within the marquis's clientele and then, in 1142, for the last time in a single occurrence, by members of the Da Corvaia *domus*. By this time, the toponymic designations based on the twin castles had become established. In the following decades, the Da Corvaia and Da Vallecchia *domus* progressively became detached from each other, before being regrouped in a joint arrangement with the *charta consortatici* of 1218.¹⁷

The lords of Careggine and Bacciano inherited the lands of Fraolmi VI (1019-70), son of Alberico, known as Albizio. In 1136 we find them operating from the first of the two castles, located in Garfagnana; they then abandoned their land base in the area stretching from the Arno River to Grosseto, from the Elsa River to the sea, in favour of the rectory of the mother church of Volterra. This completed their change of social profile and spatial horizon, as they became *domini* and the owners of a *domus* in Garfagnana.¹⁸

Fraolmi VI (1068-1105), the third son of Gherardo called Moretto, is the eponym of the lineage of the *Filii Fralmi*, or Fralminghi, which brings together and encompasses his numerous brothers, sons, and nephews. The household includes a widely scattered collection of assets and landed estates. Their seigneurial base in Versilia, centred on the castle of Pedona, was rather limited; therefore, unlike the other *domus* founded in this period by powerful individuals gravitating around the court, the Fralminghi maintained their main residence in the city.¹⁹

In Montemagno, a centre located on the main axis leading from the Versilia coast to Lucca, the *casa* of Guido III, son of Ildebrando (1043-75), was established. Within the same kinship group, the *domus* of Itta (1078-1117), Guido III's stepmother, was formed around the castle of Mammoli, north-west of Lucca. After Ildebrando's death, Itta remarried the son of another important but more recently established member of the marquisal retinue: Rodilando, son of Beraldo II called Pagano *da Corsena* (1034-1088). Nevertheless, the

¹⁶ Tomei, 420-1; Tomei, "Prima dei Bianchi." The expression 'dynastic source' is used with reference to another kinship group by Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*, 78.

¹⁷ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 256-67; Marrai, *I signori*.

¹⁸ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 328-31.

¹⁹ Tomei, 309-15.

lineage established in Mammoli continued to bear the woman's name, and with great success. After 1100 we lose track of the last member of the *casa* of Guido III, and the members of the *domus* of Itta emerge as the lords of Montemagno.²⁰

On the same axis but beyond Lucca, on the eastern edge of the political sphere of strict and direct urban subjection, the so-called Sei Miglia, lies Porcari. In 1061, after a process of redistribution within the marquis' court, this centre of power passed into the hands of Pagano *da Corsena* and then of his son Rodilando, Itta's second husband. Here settled the lineage of the lords of Porcari or *domus Paganelli*, named after Rodilando and Itta's son.²¹

A group picture of this first generation of *domus* survives: the diploma issued by Frederick I Barbarossa from Castellarano, on March 5, 1185, to the *fideles* of Garfagnana and Versilia – later confirmed by Frederick II from Apricena on January 12, 1243.²² This charter ratified the formation of a kind of 'macro-consorteria' that brought together seigneurial lineages descended from *milites* of the Matildic clientele, 14 in all, and five communities of castles already under Matildic control – in Garfagnana, Castiglione, Ceserana, Barga, Ghivizzano, and Coreglia.²³ All these elements can be traced back to the legacy of Countess Matilda, embodied in a *domus*: a constellation of political actors, with their assets and rights, that through ongoing negotiations with the Empire, sought to acquire better-defined institutional and territorial boundaries – particularly in response to the political consolidation of urban communes – and which Barbarossa had every interest in leading.²⁴ The result was a structure that was free from outside interference. Its lands and men were under the direct protection of the Emperor and of a *podestà* and rector appointed by him, Marquis Guglielmo *de Paloto*, a nephew of that Guglielmo called Francisco who signed the Peace of Lucca in 1124. In 1243 it was headed instead by a vicar-general of the Holy Empire in Lunigiana, Versilia, and Garfagnana, Marquis Oberto Pelavicino. The list of its individual components follows a geographical criterion: to describe the pieces of the mosaic in Garfagnana, the diploma starts from the northernmost one, going down the Serchio River towards Lucca; to describe those in Versilia, it moves away from Lucca and up the coast towards Luni. In addition to the above, there are two other *domus* from the upper Garfagnana, whose lineage probably originated

²⁰ Tomei, 278-99.

²¹ Tomei, "Porcari"; Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 343-4, 382.

²² Appelt, *Die Urkunden Friedrichs I.*, doc. 899, 153-5; Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia diplomatica*, 73-6. The diploma can be related to those issued by Barbarossa to the inhabitants of Barga (Appelt, *Die Urkunden Friedrichs I.*, doc. 909, 167-70; July 4, 1185, from Annone) and of the episcopal castle of Moriano (Appelt, *Die Urkunden Friedrichs I.*, doc. 910, 170-1; July 25, 1185, from San Miniato), and by his son Henry VI to the *populus* of the city of Lucca (Cianelli, *Disser-tazioni*, 198-200; April 30, 1186, from Borgo San Donnino).

²³ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 126-9, 390-3.

²⁴ Gross, *Lothar III.*; Ronzani, "L'affermazione"; Cortese, "L'impero." The same dialectic occurs with the Papacy; see De Stefani, "La signoria." Indeed, the diplomas for the 'macro-consorteria' and for Barga are transmitted in the registers of Gregory IX.

outside Lucca: the lords of Soraggio (perhaps to be identified with the lords of Dalli, descendants of Rodolfo *de Dallo*, active in Emilia from 1090) and the lords of Gragnana (the first known representative, Guglielmo, is attested in the Matildic retinue at Pieve Fosciana in 1105).²⁵ The only ones missing are the Fralminghi, who, as already mentioned, have a slightly different profile.

To complete the overview of the first generation of *domus*, two more families must be considered: the lords of Coldipozzo and of Vorno, situated on the northern and southern borders of the Sei Miglia, respectively. Their ancestors rose to prominence within the urban social fabric by virtue of the particular public function they exercised, after the second network of kinships had already crystallised as a centre of power at the marquis court. Both families shared a background as professionals in the fields of writing and justice. They were notaries and judges who acted as 'permanent' imperial *missi* in the city:²⁶ first Leo II, from 973; then Flaiperto called Amico (1013-79), from 1055, already *advocatus* of the marquis from 1035 and *vicedominus* of the bishop.

The descendants of Leo II, who abandoned the profession of judge after Leo IV (1029-49), are the lords of Vorno. Although they are not included in the diploma of 1185, as their centres of lordship lay not in Garfagnana and Versilia, but on the slopes of the Monti Pisani, they maintained close relations and acted in concert with the other lineages that had emerged from Matilda's entourage.²⁷ Anchoring in the countryside took place with the generation of the grandson of judge Leo IV, Sighifridi, son of Lamberto, and can be said to have been completed in 1126, when a *casa quondam Lei iudicis* is attested as the owner of the castle and seigneurial district (*fortia*) of Vorno.²⁸

Of the three sons of Flaiperto called Amico, who formed and onomastically marked a *domus*, it was not the eldest son, the judge Flaiperto II called Donadeo (1074-1130), who resumed his function as imperial *missus* by decisively siding with Henry IV, but the second son Lamberto (1097-1111), who appeared in Matilda's entourage as *advocatus de Luca* in 1105. Lamberto succeeded in overturning the internal balance of the kinship group, taking advantage of the changed political situation: Henry V, who became closer to Matilda, revoked Donadeo's office as imperial *missus* in 1111. Lamberto's heirs then became the Avvocati, being the sons of the *advocatus* par excellence: they regained the powers of *missaticum*, adding the high-sounding title of counts of the sacred palace in 1126, after Henry V's death. In other words, a function became a surname. After the civil wars, this *domus* constituted one of the poles of political coordination active in the city. It was characterised by several interrelated elements that explain its difference from the lineages listed in the diploma

²⁵ Rinaldi, Villani, and Golinelli, *Codice Diplomatico Polironiano*, doc. 43, 161-2; Goetz, Goetz, *Die Urkunden Mathildes von Tuszien*, doc. 88, 249-50. On these lineages see De Stefani, *Storia dei comuni*.

²⁶ Ghignoli, "Istituzioni," 635-6.

²⁷ Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, 284-90; Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 380-1.

²⁸ Guidi, Parenti, *Regesto del Capitolo*, doc. 827, 357-8.

of 1185: it did not leave the city when hostilities broke out, unlike the other major players from the marquis's entourage (the first signs of contact with this group concern only Lamberto and are dated after the episcopal election of Rangerio in Lucca, in 1096); it was strongly centred on the city and, by imperial concession from Barbarossa, it could only count on a small lordship on the edge of the Sei Miglia, in Coldipozzo (its first documentary mentions date from 1167). Donadeo's heirs, conversely, experienced marginalisation. Much later, in the early 13th century, they were collectively designated with a label in line with their more powerful and distant cousins: the speaking name of *Advocati Minores*.²⁹

There were around fifteen new *domus*, then. Most of them were based in the countryside and were headed by the protagonists of the seigneurial transformation, but some *domus*, the Avvocati and the Fralminghi, operated primarily from the city, in a political context that was undergoing a global re-organisation. Here, in a complex dialectic over a long period that lasted until the third quarter of the 12th century, and with a non-linear course, a new community, the *commune*, was organised and defined. It framed, as a collective legal person, the set of subjects operating in the space bounded by the city walls and its immediate surroundings.³⁰ These were *milites* who, unlike those who managed to establish their own *domus* between 1080 and 1120, had not occupied the positions of closest proximity to the marquis in his *domus* before it was dismantled and who could not rely on fortified *curtes*.

It was only when the institutions of the commune became firmly established, during the early age of the *podestà* (when the term *commune* first appears in the charters, alongside the first references to a *constitutum civitatis* in 1178, a seal of the commune in 1182, and a *palatium civitatis* in 1197),³¹ that the *domus* truly flourished in Lucca, within the boundaries of the *commune*, and within the ranks of the urban *militia*. Between 1170 and 1220, a second, very substantial series of designations emerges. The chronology is significant. This is the period in which the *militia*, which had previously been a fluid and shifting social body – metaphorically akin to a restless and turbulent sea – underwent a process of closure and ‘aristocratisation’. This transformation in Lucca has been highlighted by Alma Poloni, and more broadly, by Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur.³²

To understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider, on the one hand, the effects of economic growth and the accumulation of material, symbolic, and relational capital in the hands of many new men, and, on the other hand, a close comparison with the ‘first generation’ *domus* that, after almost a century of absence, began to re-enter on the urban political scene. These are

²⁹ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 381-2; Giacomelli, *L'honor*.

³⁰ Tirelli, “Il vescovato;” Tirelli, “Lucca;” Wickham, *Comunità*; Savigni, *Episcopato*; Wickham, *Legge*; Ronzani, “L’affermazione;” Wickham, *Sleepwalking*.

³¹ Savigni, *Episcopato*, 97-9.

³² Poloni, *Lucca*, 21-60; Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri*, 427-508.

what I have elsewhere termed ‘super *milites*’, due to the breadth and ramification of their interests, which were larger in scale than the ordinary *militia* involved in consular government. These men acted in two key spheres in Lucca: from 1180, as *podestà* at the head of the communal institutions, and from 1220, as canons of the mother church (and thus also as bishops), benefiting from the connections with the Roman Curia, which were established through the Fieschi – a *domus* formed at the end of the 12th century from the lineage of the Counts of Lavagna.³³ Significant changes then occurred: confronted with a substantial number of individuals who had the resources to ascend in society but found the avenues for asserting their social status blocked, the urban community became divided and settled by internal conflicts. This resulted in the definition of a new institutional framework – the ‘*podestà*-council system’ – and the emergence of a new pattern of political action, with the rise of the *popolo*.³⁴ The genesis of the *domus* lies in this period of turmoil, at the intersection of these two seemingly divergent dynamics: economic expansion and social restriction.³⁵ New structures emerged, designed to encompass and aggregate growing resources, thus solidifying and crystallising social rank.

A starting point for the study of the ‘second-generation’ *domus* – a task still largely to be accomplished for Lucca – might be the *nomina* listed in the city statute of 1308 under the socio-political label of *casastici et potentes*.³⁶ This is an artificial category, comparable to that of *magnates* in other cities, coined by the ruling group of the *popolo* to identify and isolate an antagonistic social area.³⁷ The statutory chapter examines the *casatae*, *domus*, and *patrimonia*, so that both the individual *homines* composing them, as well as their *consortes* and *arma portantes*, that is to say the people linked to them in a horizontal and vertical sense, respectively, do not try to blend in with the *populares*. The list begins with a generic reference to all *milites*, then moves up the social hierarchy towards a more markedly aristocratic profile, *proceres* and *cattani* – i.e., *capitanei*, a term that begins to spread in Tuscany from the time of Barbarossa.³⁸ 113 specific entries follow. I have ventured to study the ‘genealogical text’ in order to research their origins, with a non-systematic documentary survey that can be expanded and deepened.³⁹

³³ Ronzani, “Vescovi,” Tomei, “La circolazione.”

³⁴ Poloni, “Strutturazione.”

³⁵ Cammarosano, “Il ricambio.”

³⁶ Bongi, Del Prete, *Statuto*, 241-4. It is chapter 170 at the end of Book Three. It would be worth conducting a detailed study of the list, investigating how it was compiled and, in particular, whether it might be the result of the amalgamation of older lists.

³⁷ Poloni, *Lucca*, 180-2.

³⁸ Collavini, “I capitanei.”

³⁹ The analysis makes cross-use of three tools: the prosopographical appendices offered by Savigni, *Episcopato*, 399-619; the index to the edition of the charters of the *Diplomatico Capitolare* by Guidi, Parenti, *Regesto del Capitolo*; and the digitised *regesta* of the charters of the Archivio di Stato (<https://www.archiviodigitale.icar.beniculturali.it/it/185/ricerca/detail/536771>, accessed March 8, 2026), examined with a full-text search. On specific families, see

That of the *casastici et potentes* is not an internally homogeneous stratum, but a composite one. It includes, first and foremost, a handful of the oldest lineages belonging to the ‘first-generation’ *domus*. There are the two lineages that continued to reside in the city even throughout the first three quarters of the 12th century: the Avvocati and the Fralminghi. Also present are lineages from Garfagnana, and notably the two closest to Lucca in the list of the imperial diploma of 1185: the Suffredinghi, lords of the Rocca di Mozzano and Anchiano, and the Porcaresi. Similarly, looking to the east, among the lineages in the Valdinievole there is the one that owned the castles closest to the city: the Da Uzzano, lords of Montechiari and Vivinaia, near Montecarlo.⁴⁰ One kinship that deserves more attention is the Da Poggio, or *Fili Raimundi*, who obtained from Countess Matilda the *silva regia* near Filettolo, in the Valdiserchio. This estate was later sold to the commune of Lucca in 1194. The Da Poggio operated repeatedly alongside the seigneurial families of Versilia and Garfagnana.⁴¹ All other *domus* recorded among the *potentes* in 1308 established their fortune and fixed their names in later times.

Most of these households descended from *milites* who emerged later, in the 12th century, and whose progeny succeeded in securing their continuity – no easy task in the volatile environment of the consular commune. The emergence of *domus*, in their case, can be considered an aspect of the process of ‘aristocratisation’ of the *militia* and is generally dated to the transitional decades between the 12th and 13th centuries, in the age of the *podestà*. To shed light on this phenomenon, I will use the framework developed by Chris Wickham to classify the urban elites of the commune in the 12th century. His approach allows us to study them as a whole and compare them with other contexts. Wickham’s stratification is based on three distinct levels of eminence and wealth: “a richer and usually more signorial first level, a prosperous second level without castles (and, if with fiefs, only of land or, sometimes, tithes), and a third level of a ‘medium élite’ with distinctly less land”.⁴²

The structuring into *domus* of those family groups that Wickham has chosen as representatives of the three levels occurs in Lucca in the same chronological span, between 1170 and 1220.⁴³ This is the case with the Malpigli, belonging to the first stratum, who take their name from Malpiglio (1128-1185), son of the *causidicus* Ubaldo and descendant of a family of legal professionals in the age of the marquises.⁴⁴ The founder of the Antelminelli, belonging to the second stratum, is Antelminello (1143-1192), son of Antelmino, *consul maior* in 1166 and 1172, with whom the cousins Ruggero (1163-1193), father

Blomquist, “The Castracani;” Blomquist, “Lineage;” Pescaglini Monti, “Le vicende;” Pescaglini Monti, “Nobiltà;” Meyer, “Der Luccheser;” Meyer, “Die ältesten;” Meyer, *Ser Ciabattus*; Meyer, “The Sweet.”

⁴⁰ Pescaglini Monti, “Una famiglia.”

⁴¹ Savigni, *Episcopato*, 569; Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 218, 222.

⁴² Wickham, *Sleepwalking*, 191.

⁴³ Wickham, 180-7.

⁴⁴ Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, 325-30; Savigni, *Episcopato*, 553-4; Wickham, *Legge*, 110-1.

of Castracane, and Gonella (1172-1209), son of Malagonella, maintain lineage solidarity.⁴⁵ The Guarmignani, sprung from the sons of Guamignano, who died in 1165, represent the third stratum: prominent among them is the judge Rolando (1153-1221), author of the *Summa Trium Librorum*, the oldest medieval treatise on public law.⁴⁶ I would add another example of a lineage that matches the Antelminelli in its importance for the late medieval history of Lucca: the Guinigi, who are grouped together with the Benettoni in the list of 1308. The charters already preserved in the family archives, which have been collected over time also for genealogical purposes, make it possible to identify their progenitor in the *causidicus* Guinigi (1163-85).⁴⁷

The list includes, thirdly, lineages of more modest origin that flourished essentially at the same time through the process of economic development known as the 'commercial revolution', between 1195 and 1215. Their founding fathers were *homines novi* who, excluded from the path of *militia*, initiated the experience of the *popolo*. Alma Poloni has reconstructed their portrait gallery and an ideal type. Here are some of their names: the Martini, from Guido, son of Martino; the Fornari, from Fornario, son of Mattafellone; the Peri, from Pero, son of Sasso; the Onesti, from the brothers Tancredi and Noradino, sons of Onesto; the Carincioni, from Carincione, son of Gherardo; and the Rapon-di, from Tommaso, son of Rapondo. This group of individuals rose to prominence and established themselves as an alternative network to the *militia*, opting for horizontal forms of social cooperation rather than seeking to join the clientele of powerful lay and ecclesiastical figures. It was characterised by a strong endogamy and by the fact that many of its members resided in the Borgo San Frediano, a suburban area incorporated into the new circle of walls built during the age of the *podestà*. After serving in the city *curiae* of justice, its members sat together in the general council in 1224 and later entered the government of the commune with the institution of the *anzianato* in 1255.⁴⁸ However, in the following decades they showed a tendency to adopt knightly status and aristocratic traits, marked by the title of *dominus*. As a result, their *domus* were therefore opposed – and included among the *potentes* – by a new social group of the *popolo*, who gained access to the magistracy of the *priorato* in 1294. This new group, the *parte nera*, established its political dominance through a second season of economic and commercial expansion between

⁴⁵ Savigni, *Episcopato*, 495-6, 528, 551-2; Wickham, *Comunità*, 150-1, 173; Meyer, *Ser Ciabattus*, 65-73.

⁴⁶ Conte, Menzinger, *La Summa*; Collavini, "Iugum."

⁴⁷ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, 315-6. The two genealogical axes are: Jacopo, Guinigi, Albertino, and Panfolia, sons of Rustico, grandsons of Guinigi *causidicus*, and great-grandsons of Rustico; Orlanduccio, son of Benettone *de Lischia* and grandson of Rolando (Guidi, Parenti, *Regesto del Capitolo*, doc. 1528, 343-4, doc. 1748, 203-4; Archivio di Stato di Lucca, *Diplomatico*, Guinigi *, January 5, 1181, March 16, 1239, December 15, 1246).

⁴⁸ Poloni, *Lucca*, 21-60. On the concept of 'commercial revolution', see Spufford, *Money*, 240-63.

1255 and 1275.⁴⁹ Indeed, the list of 1308 marks a social boundary, setting the dividing line between the *parte nera* and the *parte bianca*.

Of the 113 *domus* surveyed, we thus find 51 that acquired a name, and with it a life and a history, between 1170 and 1220. These names primarily originated from men who were active in the city during this period, whether from members of long-established *militia* families or from individuals who had recently and rapidly improved their economic and social standing.⁵⁰ In the dynamics leading up to the creation and adoption of a family name in this period, a few significant exceptions stand out. Two households, the Opizi and the Cenami, chose earlier eponyms, individuals who were alive during the civil wars. On one side, there is the cleric and canon of the mother church, Opizo (1097-1128), son of Ingone, also a cleric and canon. On the other side, there is Cenamo, son of Pandolfo (1053-73), of the late Uggeri of the Borgo San Frediano, whose *casa solariata* had hosted a *placitum* of Countess Matilda.⁵¹ In both cases a collective identity was formed, and a shared memory preserved, anchored in an element of cohesion and distinction embodied by these men. For the Opizi, it was the practice of Roman law, tied to Opizo's clerical status. Acting as a *consorteria* and led by the brothers Malaspina and Artiglio, sons of Ugo called Ringhio, they declared in 1177 to be *romana lege viventes pro quondam Opitho clerico avo nostro*.⁵² For the Cenami, it was likely the possession of a public right, the *teloneo*, although this requires further investigation. The Cenami are referred to as *consortes de teloneo* in 1194

⁴⁹ Poloni, *Lucca*, 61-182.

⁵⁰ Pantassa, from Ugolino Pantasse; Falconi, from Corso, son of Falcone; Sartori, from Vinciguerra, son of Sartorio; Forteguerra, from the *causidicus* Forteguerra, son of Ildebrando *de Octavo*; Faitinelli, from Faitinello, son of Gherardo; Moccidenti, from Orlando, son of Moccidente; Tadolini, from brothers Villano and Lamberto, sons of Tadolino; Malisarti, from brothers Ardiccione and Gherardino Malisarti, sons of Albertino Malfancello; Lanfredi, from Bonagiunta, son of Lanfredi; Barletti, from Barletto, son of Brunetto; Mangialmacchi, from Uberto Mangialmacco, son of Uberto; Trazei and Omodei, from the sons of Omodei Trazei; Cari, from Caro, brother-in-law of Vezosa Spiafame; Sornachi, from Sismondo called Sornaco, son of Alluccio; Corbolani, from Corbolano, son of Enrico; Panichi, from Benenato, son of Pandolfino Panico; Ciaure, from Enrico Ciaura, son of Uberto; Da Chiattri, from Gherardo *da Chiattri*; Dombellinighi, from Ubertello, son of Dombello and his brothers; Callianelli, from the sons of Brunetto called Caliano; Pinelli, from the sons of Pinello *de Cortina*; Overardi, from Gherarduccio, son of Overardo; Castagnacci, from Castagnaccio, son of Gherardino; Mordecastelli, from Morodecastello, son of Gualfreduccio; Spiafame, from the sons of Enrico Spiafame; Rossiglioni, from Rossiglione, son of Gottifredo *de Arcu*; Boccansocchi, from the sons of Rolando called Boccansocchio; Mansi, from the brothers Manso and Macaccioro, sons of Sassello; Beccafava, from Beccafava *de Classo*; Meliani, from Rustichello Meliane; Rape, from Gottifredo Rapa, son of Aldimaro; Da Tassignano, from Soffreduccio, son of Ugolino *de Tassignano*; Allucinghi, from Aliotto, son of Rolando; Malagallia, from Ildebrandino, son of Malagallia; De Suso, from Enrico *de Suso*, son of Gherardo; Falabrina, from brothers Falabrina and Tangrande, sons of Ugolino; Ricciardi, from the dyer Ricciardo, son of Graziano; Cardellini, from Cardellino, son of Giovanni; Salamoni, from Salamoncello, son of Salamone; Romagnoli, from Bartolomeo, son of Romagnolo.

⁵¹ Goetz, Goetz, *Die Urkunden Mathildes von Tuszien*, doc. 7, 49-52; Guidi, Parenti, *Regesto del Capitolo*, doc. 351, 136-7, docc. 854-5, 369-70; Savigni, *Episcopato*, 439-40, 450, 498, 512, 517, 573-5, 579.

⁵² Archivio di Stato di Lucca, *Diplomatico*, San Giovanni, October 30, 1177.

and 1195, when they received imperial confirmation from Henry VI and his brother Philip, Duke of Tuscany, and as *consortes de turre* of the *fili Pandulfi* in the Borgo San Frediano in 1216, when they established *capituli* to regulate internal relations within the *consorteria*.⁵³ Another noteworthy case involves a group of individuals residing near the church of San Michele degli Avvocati, in the *curtis* or *curia Ildebrandi*, first mentioned by this name in 1170. This extensive network held the patronage of the urban church of Santa Giulia and that of Santa Maria in Colle di Compito, located on the south-eastern border of the Sei Miglia. Among its prominent members were Simeone, son of the late Ildebrando, and his son Napoleone. When this group eventually solidifies into a *domus*, however, an onomastic shift occurred: the reference to the eponymous Ildebrando was dropped, and the name De Gelso appeared for the first time in 1205, derived the mulberry tree that stood at the centre of Ildebrando's courtyard.⁵⁴

This analytical survey therefore adds the case study of Lucca to the dozen or so systematised by Paolo Cammarosano.⁵⁵ I have carried out my analysis of kinship groups structured as *consorterie* with a proper name by moving backwards, starting from the leading social stratum at the end of the 13th century, on the basis of a source of the same type as those used by Cammarosano: a list drawn up by the *populares* both as an effect of and as a tool in their political struggle against the *magnates*. In Lucca, as in other cities, between the last generation of the 12th century and the first of the 13th, a mixture is formed through a process of social assimilation, blending kinship groups that vary in terms of antiquity and composition. Through this transformation – it may be added – the social body of the city presents a new onomastic text for the historian to read and interpret. It should be remembered, however, that these reconstructions are partial: those *domus* that belonged to the victorious faction, whose point of view was adopted by the list, and those that had since become extinct, escape detection. Hence the need to nuance the picture of a stable social block that remained unaffected by the economic changes of the commercial revolution, a point emphasised by Alma Poloni.⁵⁶

In the sources other elements reveal that, in the decades between the 12th and 13th centuries, a structural redefinition of the social fabric took place. Not only did the *domus* increase exponentially in number, multiplying on the urban chessboard, but the need was also felt to document their existence more precisely by using every available space on the parchments. This is evident in the genealogical annotations made by the canons of the mother church of

⁵³ Archivio di Stato di Lucca, *Diplomatico*, Cenami (II acquisto Ghivizzani), July 18, 1194, June 13, 1195, May 11, 1216; De Conno, "Il consorzio".

⁵⁴ Archivio di Stato di Lucca, *Diplomatico*, San Giovanni, December 1, 1148; Guidi, Parenti, *Regesto del Capitolo*, doc. 1268, 163-4, docc. 1275-6, 167-8, doc. 1282, 170-1, doc. 1458, 297; Meyer, *Ser Ciabattus*, 74-82; Marrai, *I signori*, 480-7.

⁵⁵ Cammarosano, "Il ricambio." The cities in question are Asti, Florence, Genoa, Mantua, Modena, Padua, Siena, Venice, and Vicenza.

⁵⁶ Poloni, "Il ricambio." On these issues, see also Petralia, "Problemi."

Lucca, written on the verso of older charters and in the margins of the *regesta* of the same charters in registers.⁵⁷ At this stage, the first-generation *domus*, which were older and more ramified, sometimes experienced a crisis of their internal structure – see the *charta consortatici* of 1218 between the Da Corvaia and the Da Vallecchia. Solidarity could be cemented or, on the contrary, a *domus* could split into separate entities – as in the case of the Gherardighi and the Da Cellabarotti, the Da Bozzano and the Da Castello Aghinolfi (but the argument could also be applied to the emergence of the Fieschi). To cope with the expansion of the lineages, the biggest *domus*, like communes and other collective bodies, tended to adopt forms of monocratic institutional organisation. They experimented with chief offices such as the sole *consul*, the *capitaneus*, or the *podestà*. As a result, members of these *domus* often held these positions both internally within their own households and externally within the commune.⁵⁸

I will not proceed any further along the diachronic axis. In keeping with the conceptual and chronological core of this volume, I have focused mainly on the time span from the 11th to the 13th century. My aim has been to highlight a phenomenon that unfolds across two distinct periods and generations: the emergence of *domus*. The formative phases occur at opposite ends of this arc, corresponding, respectively, to the seigneurial transformation, between 1080 and 1120, and to the commercial revolution, between 1170 and 1220. This is not merely a question of social mobility. Nor is it just an exercise in tracing internal turnover within the aristocratic world, distinguishing between phases of general reshuffling, in which the ruling group expands, and phases in which it contracts, allowing only a select few to rise to the top. Nor is it simply a history of families and their relations, aimed at following their gradual emergence over the very long term, according to a grand narrative that begins, at the latest, in the last quarter of the 9th century with the alleged collapse of a Carolingian order.⁵⁹ Rather, the rapture that took place around 1100, during the first of these two phases, demands full recognition and appreciation. This reorganisation affected the core structures of social and political aggregation, which were deeply intertwined with economic dynamics. On one side of this watershed stood a city organised around the palace of the marquis; on the other, a city characterised by a plurality of *domus*.

3. ‘Court society’ and ‘house society’

It is now my intention to describe, from a synchronic perspective, the social realities that stand on opposite sides of the change just discussed, and to present

⁵⁷ Violante, “Le strutture,” 7–8, 55; Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

⁵⁸ Faini, Maire Vigueur, *Il sistema*; Faini, “Società di torre,” Tomei, “La circolazione,” Faini, “Per uno studio.”

⁵⁹ This is the so-called ‘origin of dynasties’ according to Cammarosano, *Nobili*.

two models. I will examine these realities in their structural character: an organic set of elements whose value lies not in themselves, but in their constructive interaction. Besides, change does not merely reframe things; it can also imbue pre-existing elements with new weight and new functions. A preliminary note is necessary: it is important to specify what the differences are, so that the distinction between a before and an after – and therefore the basis for periodisation – can be properly established. These structures differ in the ways in which they extract and access resources and in their relationship to space.

The first model that can be used to describe the social fabric of Lucca in the age of the marquises, prior to 1080, is that of the ‘court society’. This term comes from Norbert Elias and has already been applied by Janet Nelson to the early Middle Ages, and more specifically to the Carolingian galaxy of power.⁶⁰ Both the court of Charlemagne and, to a large extent, the palace of Lucca – built during the reign of Lothar I and ruled by the marquis until its destruction during the conflict between Matilda and Henry IV – can be understood through this model, in three specific senses. A court society exists in space, in a defined physical place, and with a set of buildings. Its leader stands at the head of a *domus* that is either real, consisting of a specific group of people who live in and visit a specific space, or ideal, as it extends to encompass the entire *populus*, i.e. the social body as a whole,⁶¹ which participates in the domestic order of the palace and functions as its audience. Individuals with greater spending power tend to imitate and reproduce, in their own residences, what they observe in this environment. A court society possesses a distinctive culture based on participation in common rituals, and it forms also a textual community – in Tuscany, this is seen primarily in the liturgy of the *placitum* and its associated writings.⁶² The court is the centre of competition and redistribution of resources: wealth, offices, and justice. In such a society, the court exerts a centripetal force that attracts the aristocracy. The master of the house plays with rivalries; he punishes, forgives, or rewards individuals; and, above all, he distributes resources. From the analysis of the case of Lucca I draw the following elements.

In this model of society, the key word is *curtis*.⁶³ It is a multivalent signifier charged with foundational meanings: the *potentes* possess *curtes cum castris*, clusters of estates whose ‘central core’ presents lightly fortified structures,⁶⁴ and they derive their resources primarily from frequenting the *curtis*, the heart of the political organism. Their aim is to occupy a central and increasingly influential position in this *domus*, living in symbiosis with its *dominus*.⁶⁵ Proximity to the public authority in his house is more important than local anchorage.

⁶⁰ Elias, *Die höfische*; Nelson, “Was Charlemagne’s Court.”

⁶¹ Menant, “Qu’est-ce que le peuple.”

⁶² Petrucci, Romeo, “Scrivere;” Bougard, *La justice*; Ghignoli, “Istituzioni.”

⁶³ Tomei, “Sul termine *curtis*.”

⁶⁴ Violante, “La signoria territoriale.”

⁶⁵ Innes, *State and Society*.

Within this court community, resources are distributed radially and are not patrimonialised, since the *res* of the fisc and the churches – entities in a ‘synergic-binary’ relationship – hold a specially protected, inalienable status.⁶⁶ Access to resources is graded, controlled, and shared. Social mobility occurs ‘horizontally’, through a progressive advancement towards the centre. Cycles of stability and ‘structural crises’ alternate over time,⁶⁷ driven by the action of a coordinating pole that reshapes the aristocratic fabric, accelerating its natural turnover process – notably, during the reign of Lothar I and Hugh of Arles.

Political actors operate within kinship groups organised along a horizontal axis, where women play a leading role. Their activity is best described as reticular and urbanocentric: they act collectively as a power network rooted primarily in the urban environment.⁶⁸ The *domus*, which coordinates the political community, has its main seat in the city. Consequently, those who distinguish themselves by virtue of their proximity to the lord of this house reside chiefly within the urban walls. Even in the mid-11th century, the *milites* at the court are the *cives* par excellence, investing heavily in the city through the foundation of churches and monasteries. Beyond the urban core – and always as a group – they tend to operate close to the *curtes* of the fisc.

The spatial configuration of the *potentes* resembles what Cinzio Violante termed ‘Cluniac’ type, one of the two models of organisation of ecclesiastical structures in the High Middle Ages, as opposed to the ‘episcopal’ type.⁶⁹ This configuration is based on exemption. Its appearance is that of a mobile framework composed of islands that enjoy *immunitas*: literally, reserved spaces that are not shared within the political community of the court and that have a special status with respect to the power of command and coercion of the public *actores*. Yet, their creation and maintenance, which is precarious and potentially revocable, depend on active, continuous participation in this community. Outside the manorial reserve, but within the same network, are the *manentes*: people who, while remaining external, are connected to the coordinating centre of the *curtis*. To some extent, they benefit from the exempt status as the demesne (*dominicum*): they are individuals who are not automatically subject to the same obligations as others because they perform special services for the *dominus* of the *curtis*, usually production or transport activities.⁷⁰ In the system of documentation, territoriality is formed and represented ‘negatively’: the boundary marks the exclusion from a duty (fig. 2a).

The second model that can be applied to the social fabric of Lucca after 1120 – when Matilda died without direct heirs and the civil wars came to an end – is that of the ‘house society’. The term comes from Claude Lévi-Strauss and has already been employed by Mario Nobile to describe the transforma-

⁶⁶ Violante, “Fluidità,” de Jong, “Sacrum palatium.”

⁶⁷ Bougard, Bühner-Thierry, and Le Jan, “Les élites.”

⁶⁸ Lazzari, “La rappresentazione,” Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*.

⁶⁹ Violante, “Per una riconsiderazione.”

⁷⁰ Tomei, “Sulle tracce.”

tions occurring between the 11th and 12th centuries, particularly the process of territorialisation and seigneurialisation, drawing also on the research of Karl Schmid and Georges Duby. The key word in this model is *domus*. It refers to social formations that go beyond the narrow definition of family, encompassing material and symbolic heritage that includes dignity, origin, kinship, names, symbols, position, power, and wealth. A *domus* is a moral person: it possesses a heritage, perpetuates it through name transmission, and actively organises and produces its own memory.⁷¹ From the analysis of the case of Lucca I draw the following elements.

In this model of society, the term *curtis* acquires a new meaning: it now designates territorial districts where the dominant strata of society, embodied by the *milites*, exercise *districtio* locally, according to new customs.⁷² This semantic shift is part of an overall restructuring of the vocabulary of power. It leads to the definition of new entities: collective legal persons (*opera, domus*), with a semantic trajectory that moves from the concrete investment in a building to the abstract sphere;⁷³ and lordship territories (*podere, fortia, virtus*), with a semantic trajectory that moves from the abstract ability to exercise powers of command and coercion to the concrete sphere, through a process of patrimonialisation.

The *potentes* are those who own *castra cum curtibus*: heavily fortified castles on which limited spheres of dominance depend, designed for the extraction and defence of resources with a public display of their overwhelming power, also reflected in personal onomastics.⁷⁴ They aim to secure an increasingly stable position within the *domus* of which they are *domini*. Local anchorage in one's own *domus* has become more important than proximity to public authority. Each *domus* draws resources for itself and redistributes them internally, but it may also cooperate with other entities in the fragmented political mosaic. In every case, a clear distinction emerges between the *divisum* and *commune* modes of action.⁷⁵ Following the destruction of the urban palace, Countess Matilda's house is transformed from a microcosm that encloses and concentrates the political community into a *domus* that can, at most, connect other *domus*. It becomes a patrimonial container, with its own name and ideal boundaries: the object of competing inheritance claims by political forces with universalist ambitions – the Empire and the Papacy – as well by local actors who continued to identify with the Countess's community until the very end.

At the top of society are *milites* operating within lineage-based structures, developed along the vertical axis and characterised by a clear onomastic identity. Family names are sometimes forged by reworking earlier provisional designations that used to be applied to the land held in undivided possession by

⁷¹ Lévi-Strauss, "Histoire;" Schmid, "Über die Struktur;" Duby, "Structures;" Nobili, "Formarsi."

⁷² Fiore, "Bonus et malus."

⁷³ Ronzani, "Dall'edificatio ecclesiae."

⁷⁴ Collavini, "Sviluppo signorile."

⁷⁵ Faini, "Il Comune."

the large and flexible kinship groups of the age of the marquises.⁷⁶ This transformation results from the cumulative effect of economic and demographic growth, particularly during two key moments: the seigneurial transformation and the commercial revolution. Those who have sufficient capital to structure themselves as a *domus* – thereby crystallising their rank and achieving upward mobility – may choose to fix their seat in the city, as is more common in the nearby case of Pisa, or to shift their centre of gravity to the centres of power in the countryside undergoing processes of petrification.⁷⁷

In changing, these structures have taken on a new spatial configuration. They no longer consist of islands of exemption, but of spheres of jurisdiction: coherent and bounded territories within which jurisdictional rights – originally public and now patrimonialised – apply. Compared to the earlier period, the powers of command and coercion are now held by a larger number of actors, and the appellation *dominus* is attributed more widely in contemporary sources.⁷⁸ These powers can rightly be called seigneurial. They are exercised not only within districts (*curtes*) but also – and this is a common denominator of the *milites*, whatever their rank – over individuals located outside and detached from these seigneurial territories yet closely tied to the lands they cultivate and inhabit: the *manentes*. A large segment of the population lives in a condition of *manentia*: a form of ‘new serfdom’ that is also established through the recovery of the Roman legal model of the colonate.⁷⁹ In the system of documentation, territoriality is formed and represented ‘positively’: the boundary marks the affirmation of a right (fig. 2b).

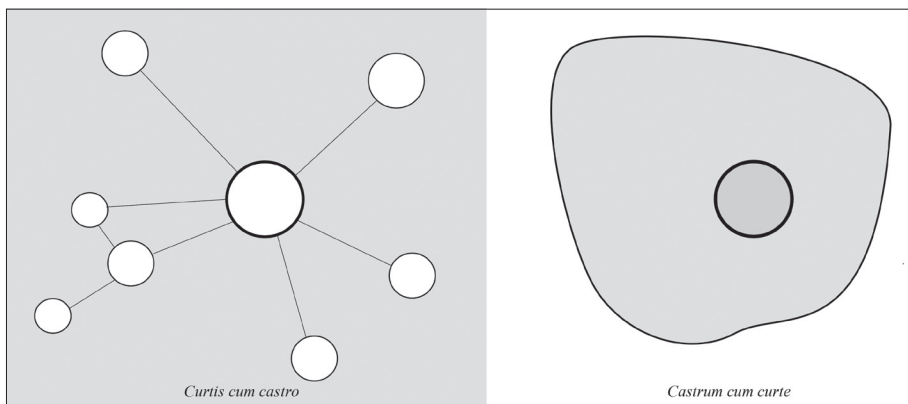


Fig. 2. a) Spatial configuration of power structures in a court society; b) Spatial configuration of power structures in a house society.

⁷⁶ Herlihy, “Family.”

⁷⁷ Ronzani, *Chiesa*; Cortese, *Signori*.

⁷⁸ Le Jan, “Domnus.”

⁷⁹ Wickham, “Manentes;” Collavini, “Il servaggio;” Carocci, *Signorie*, 311-42.

4. The '12th-century gaze'

The shift to the second mode of organising the social fabric has been recognised by historiography, but it has been pushed back in time by being associated with a process spanning several centuries. It has been regarded as the culmination of a slow developmental trajectory rooted in what has been interpreted as the break-up of the Carolingian order between the end of the 9th and the first half of the 10th century. The structures of the phases preceding the birth of the *domus* are not studied in themselves, but only in relation to what they eventually become. Within them, elements are isolated that are already present in the sources, tracing forms of continuity from a genealogical and functional point of view. This approach, I argue, creates a distortion in the historical reconstruction caused by the '12th-century gaze'. By this I mean a perspective that projects backwards and anticipates the dynamics of change. The aim is to assemble structures that are unconsciously expected, because they are more like those of the *Ancien Régime*, and therefore also more like modern ones – that is to say, territorial, dynastic, and agnatic.

The actions that build *domus* at the turn of the 12th century become an interpretative paradigm through which their past is observed. This work of grafting and pruning aims to establish a centre, a dynastic pivot – whether an individual or a place – that becomes a patrimonial and onomastic anchor for the lineage. Thus, what come to be regarded as secondary branches, relations, and interests are pruned away. As a result, the birth of the *domus* is a passage that is not ignored but ends up being interpreted as a moment of recomposition. By means of the *consorteria*, lineages that are already vertically developed and structured in dynastic and territorial terms are united; otherwise, they would risk becoming disjointed and experiencing economic and identity pulverisation.⁸⁰

The historiographical distortion has further been exacerbated by the choice of the object of investigation. In the study of the 'ruling classes', as defined by Gerd Tellenbach, Tuscany has been one of the earliest and most thoroughly examined contexts.⁸¹ Before Maria Elena Cortese's research, the prevailing paradigm focused almost exclusively on the aristocratic stratum of comital rank.⁸² Owing to their considerable influence, these aristocrats were able to transmit material, symbolic, and relational capital more stably from generation to generation within a 'court society', making it easier for historians to confirm their expectations. Yet, Simone Collavini has pointed out that the *comites* in Tuscany – at least until the second quarter of the 11th century – are portrayed by the sources, and must be studied, as a social group rather than as dynastic families in the process of taking root in their own *comita-*

⁸⁰ Violante, "Le strutture."

⁸¹ Cammarosano, *La famiglia; I ceti dirigenti; Formazione e strutture; Nobiltà e chiese*; Collavini, *Honorabilis domus*.

⁸² Cortese, *L'aristocrazia*.

tus.⁸³ Numerous and significant traces point in this direction but tend to be overlooked in narratives focused narrowly on a dynastic axis.

It is notable that in the second half of the 10th century and even in the first quarter of the 11th century, there were counts who did not belong to comital families to which the dignity of a name had been given or, within these families, individuals who had never have borne a title or had lost it. These figures appear alongside the marquis at *placita* or in negotiations within the court circle, concerning areas dotted with fiscal *curtes*. This is the case of the area between Certaldo and Monteriggioni, in Valdelsa, where the following figures operated: two members of the kinship group known as Gherardeschi that have been somewhat overlooked in its reconstruction, namely Teuperto, son of Count Rodolfo, and Gherardo, son of Gherardo *de Serena*; Alberico, son of Count Alberico; and Adelmo, son of Suppone, and his mother Teuperga, daughter of Winigildo.⁸⁴ Often, there was no linear, dynastic transmission of comital offices from father to son, but rather a redistribution within the group, as in the case of the alternation in Pistoia between the families conventionally known as Guidi and Cadolingi. It was not until the second half of the 11th century that the patrimonialisation of the comital title occurred, with a generalised attribution to the representatives of a kinship group: for example, in the fourth generation of the so-called Gherardeschi and in the seventh generation of the so-called Cadolingi.⁸⁵ There is a complete spatial separation between the circuit of *honores* redistribution and that of the fiscal *curtes*. Only in a few scattered cases, can the office be linked to a precise comital district centred on one of the *civitates*.⁸⁶ François Bougard's comprehensive overviews of the Kingdom are especially helpful in this regard.⁸⁷

But there is more. As Mario Nobili has observed, the birth of the *domus* also affects the production and reworking of memory, generating narratives.⁸⁸ These narratives, which can take the form of texts – historiographical, documentary, or a mixture of the two – and images, particularly genealogical depictions, must be understood for their performative purpose, a research perspective recently applied to Tuscan historiographical sources by Alberto

⁸³ Collavini, Tomei, "Fra le città," 221-3.

⁸⁴ Schneider, *Regestum Volaterranum*, docc. 82, 84, 30-1; Cammarosano, *Abbadia a Isola*, docc. 6-8, 189-97. Three main fiscal *curtes* stood here: San Gimignano, Foci, and Marturi/Poggibonsi; see Tomei, "Una nuova categoria." From the end of the 10th century the area underwent an intense cycle of monastic foundations promoted by the court circle: San Michele in Marturi (Marquis Ugo, 998), Santi Salvatore and Cirino in Isola, near Monteriggioni (Ava, daughter of Count Zenobio, 1001), San Salvatore in Spugna, near Colle di Val d'Elsa (Counts Aldobrandeschi, after 1007), San Sepolcro and Santa Maria in Elmi, near Certaldo (Adelmo and Teuperga, 1034). There is also the monastery of Santa Maria in Coneo, near Colle di Val d'Elsa, whose date of foundation (certainly before the 12th century) and patrons are unknown; see Paganelli, "Montieri."

⁸⁵ Ceccarelli Lemut, "I conti Gherardeschi," Pescaglini Monti, "I conti Cadolingi."

⁸⁶ Collavini, Tomei, "Fra le città," 221-3.

⁸⁷ Bougard, "Laien," Bougard, *Le royaume*, 273-91.

⁸⁸ Nobili, "Formarsi."

Cotza.⁸⁹ This is a recovery of the past with an eye to the present, designed to build a *domus* even in its historical foundations, so as to claim its material and symbolic heritage.

Considering the processes of petrification of wealth, seigneurial change, and *domus* structuring, it is possible to reread a source that has instead been treated almost as a manifesto reinforcing the traditional picture of aristocratic structures in Tuscany and the Kingdom: the 'genealogy of Isola'. This is the name given to an illuminated parchment, studied by Paolo Cammarosano, produced in the mid-12th century by monks of the monastery of San Salvatore in Isola, Valdelsa. It commemorates the memory and preserves the heritage of the group that had founded and richly endowed the monastery: the descendants of Ildebrando and his wife Ava. The depiction shows the male-line sequence of ancestors and a genealogical tree of Ildebrando's descendants; the monastery founded by Ava and her children; and a schematic representation of the contemporary patrimony of the monastery, derived from donations by the group and organised into castles and seigneurial *curtes*, divided into quotas.⁹⁰

At first glance, this seems like a straightforward picture. Yet, the charters preserved by the monastery as *munimina*, ownership titles usable in court, which provide the earliest evidence of these individuals, reveal a network not unlike what I have called a 'court society'.⁹¹ Ildebrando, son of Isalfredo, appears in documentation as the recipient of a diploma issued, in 953, by Kings Berengar II and Adalbert through the intercession of Oberto, Count of the Sacred Palace. He operated in the proximity of the vast fiscal estates in Valdelsa, which attracted the interest of sons of counts and other powerful figures at the marquis's court. Besides the monastery's charters, this is also visible in the '*proclamatio* of Marturi', the best source for studying the political entity whose functioning in Tuscany was regulated by the marquis.⁹² San Salvatore in Isola was founded in 1001 by a woman, Ildebrando's widow Ava, the daughter of a Count Zenobio, who cannot be linked to any renowned comital family. The group descending from them does not bear any family name in the charters. *Lambardi* di Staggia is merely a historiographical label.

Designations such as these remain useful heuristic tools for distinguishing otherwise nameless groups, but they must be employed with care and critical awareness when reconstructing the flow of the past: they can, in fact, obscure change. They refer to collective subjects that did not exist at the time but are constructs of the present. Before the transformations of the late 11th century, such labels artificially segment sequences of individuals who, when viewed across the same generation, operated within fluid networks of rela-

⁸⁹ Cotza, "Prove di memoria."

⁹⁰ Violante, "Alcune caratteristiche," 24-5, 34 (and table 10); Cammarosano, *Abbadia a Isola*, 39-115 (with a photographic reproduction in fig. 9).

⁹¹ Cammarosano, *Abbadia a Isola*, docc. 1-8, 173-97.

⁹² Collavini, Tomei, "Fra le città," 223-4.

tives, friends, and followers, interacting politically at court as members of a broad and flexible domestic community. The history of how *domus* were formed – reconstructed through their naming patterns – reveals that a sharp and rapid social rupture took place in the late 11th century. Dynastic units did not evolve gradually over the 10th and 11th centuries; rather, they emerged during this period of generative crisis. With the shift to the 12th century and the rise of a ‘house society’, it becomes possible to identify kinship structures using the same words as the sources. Fictitious labels are no longer needed. And here, too, lies the change.

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Paolo Tomei
Università di Pisa
paolo.tomei1@unipi.it
0000-0002-3358-8336

V

Archaeology

Mediterranean economies compared through archaeology (10th-12th centuries)

by Alessandra Molinari

This article offers a comparative reassessment of Mediterranean economies between the 10th and 12th centuries through an archaeological perspective, with particular attention to Italy and the Islamic regions of the central Mediterranean (Egypt, Sicily, and Tunisia). The analysis of chaînes opératoires, exchange networks, and technological innovations in both craft and agricultural sectors makes it possible to assess more accurately the levels of specialisation and economic complexity of the different areas. Archaeological evidence confirms the strong vitality of Islamic economies, especially in terms of their capacity for innovation and the complexity of their internal distribution networks, while showing a later role for central-northern Italy in processes of growth. Engaging with recent historiographical debates, the article argues that medieval economic development was largely driven by regional dynamics and domestic markets, but suggests rethinking the significance of interregional exchanges primarily as vehicles for the circulation of knowledge, techniques, and cultural models.

Questo contributo propone una rilettura comparativa delle economie mediterranee tra i secoli X e XII attraverso l'archeologia, con particolare attenzione all'Italia e alle regioni islamiche della sponda centrale del Mediterraneo (Egitto, Sicilia, Tunisia). L'analisi delle catene operative, delle reti di scambio e delle innovazioni tecnologiche nei settori artigianali e agricoli consente di valutare in modo più preciso i livelli di specializzazione e la complessità economica delle diverse aree. I dati archeologici confermano la forte vitalità delle economie islamiche, soprattutto in relazione alla capacità di innovazione e alla complessità delle reti interne di distribuzione, mentre mostrano un ruolo più tardivo dell'Italia centro-settentrionale nei processi di crescita. In dialogo con il recente dibattito storiografico, il contributo sostiene che lo sviluppo economico medievale fu determinato in larga misura da dinamiche regionali e da mercati interni, ma pro-

Alessandra Molinari, Tor Vergata University of Rome, Italy, molinari@lettere.uniroma2.it, 0000-0003-2233-5349

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pone di riconsiderare il peso degli scambi interregionali soprattutto come veicolo di circolazione di conoscenze, tecniche e modelli culturali.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Economic archaeology, Medieval Mediterranean, Technological innovation, Exchange networks.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, archeologia economica, Mediterraneo medievale, innovazione tecnologiche, reti di scambio.

In a volume devoted to the discussion of continuity and change in Italy during the 11th and 12th centuries, archaeology can, unsurprisingly, offer a valuable contribution. I believe this contribution can be particularly significant in debates concerning economic growth and the so-called commercial revolution. Moreover, it is essential to conduct a comparative analysis of the available evidence from the Italian Peninsula and that from other Mediterranean regions – especially those of the Islamic world. When considered systematically, archaeological data make it possible to reconstruct the various *chaînes opératoires* employed by artisans (from raw materials to finished products), as well as the networks through which objects and goods of various kinds circulated. These reconstructions help assemble a body of evidence useful for assessing levels of specialization and the complexity of medieval economies. The increasing use of scientific analyses and archaeometric methods further enhances our ability to identify processes of technological innovation, which occurred in different ways and at different times across the regions under study. Although archaeological inquiry is often dismissed as a kind of fetishism for “potsherds,” we can now assert not only that ceramics are a fully legitimate source for reconstructing economic processes (from production methods to exchange networks), but also that a far broader range of materials and contexts is now available for integrated analysis. In any case, such “potsherds” constitute an exceptional source of information, no less illuminating than well-known documentary series such as the Cairo Geniza. Ceramics are ubiquitous in Mediterranean stratigraphy – precisely because they are not recyclable – and they retain information about both production processes and the raw materials employed, which in turn allows us to infer their potential provenance. Ceramics can be quantified both in terms of the distance from their production centres and in terms of typology – by degree of technical sophistication, origin, or function. This makes it possible to carry out systematic comparisons across different chronological periods and geographical contexts.

We therefore aim to discuss periodization and economic growth through a comparative use of archaeological datasets, focusing on Italy and, above all, on the Islamic regions of the central Mediterranean that once formed part of the Fatimid Empire (10th-12th centuries): Egypt, Sicily, and Tunisia. These areas not only constituted a political unit for at least part of the period under consideration, but – especially in the case of Sicily – have also been the subject of recent research that has enabled an integrated reading of diverse forms of material evidence. This, in turn, allows us to contribute to the epistemological

debate stimulated by Chris Wickham's recent volume.¹ As is well known, *The Donkey and the Boat* challenges a widely held historiographical interpretation that credits Italian merchants with initiating a commercial revolution in the Mediterranean from the 11th century onward. Drawing on both historical and archaeological data, Wickham argues that economic growth was primarily rooted in regional dynamics, grounded in the local exchange of everyday goods rather than in international trade or the circulation of luxury items. His comparative analysis of six Mediterranean regions reveals that Italy's economic development was relatively late, while Egypt maintained the most complex economy in the region at least until the Black Death. Wickham also critiques historical narratives that depict the economic trajectories of Islamic or Byzantine societies as 'failures', suggesting that such interpretations often serve to reinforce a narrative of early Western ascendancy and are seldom supported by robust empirical evidence. He concludes that Italian merchants arrived late and never succeeded in dominating the internal economies of the various Mediterranean political entities.

My recent research leads me to endorse fully many of the arguments presented in *The Donkey and the Boat*, particularly with regard to the periodization of economic growth and the considerable internal complexity of the Islamic economies under examination. In this contribution, however, I broaden the range of archaeological evidence considered, including not only inorganic materials but also organic remains (plants and animals), as well as typically perishable materials such as paper and textiles. Special attention will be devoted to a crucial aspect of any discussion of economic growth: the varying degrees of technological innovation achieved by the societies in question. This expanded perspective allows for further reflection on the relative complexity of the economies under analysis, on the timing and nature of their growth, and – most importantly – on the role of international relations, not so much in terms of the volume of goods exchanged as in the circulation of ideas, knowledge, and tastes. In short, I would suggest that exchanges – between culturally and politically distinct regions may enhance a society's capacity for innovation and therefore should not be viewed as peripheral to processes of growth. In some instances, I will also touch upon developments in the 13th century, which often displays marked discontinuities that make it particularly interesting for comparative analysis. For this period, it may be possible to reopen the discussion of the role played by Italian merchants in the economies of regions such as the Crusader states or Sicily, and to reassess the extent to which their economic activities remained truly "external" to the societies in which they operated. In the pages that follow, alongside reflections on technological innovation, I will seek to summarise several key aspects relating to settlement patterns and exchange networks, drawing on new research con-

¹ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*. See also Saggioro and Varanini, "Una discussione" and Goldberg, Wilkin, Tabarrini, and Wickham, "About «The Donkey and the Boat»."

ducted both in Italy and in the Islamic regions of the central Mediterranean. A brief concluding section will offer some thoughts on the value of periodisation and comparison as analytical tools.

1. *The different capacities for technological innovation*

The increase in the overall stock of knowledge, which also includes technological progress, is considered one of the main drivers of economic growth, although it is not always easy to understand why some societies are more creative than others.² Technological innovation is hardly the sole driver of growth; rather, it goes hand in hand with market expansion, demographic trends, and patterns of investment. Far from being a period of technological stagnation,³ the Middle Ages are increasingly recognised as highly innovative. Archaeology is greatly enhancing its ability to identify and date the introduction and establishment of new techniques across a range of productive sectors, from agriculture to handicrafts. It is rarely possible to pinpoint archaeologically the exact moment of an invention, but certainly the phases in which innovations became more or less widely adopted within particular social groups are clearly discernible.⁴ Innovations do not always follow the same pathways: they may arise simultaneously and independently in several places, or result from the mobility of artisans or peasants. It is also possible – and frequently observed – that innovations occur because new needs arise that lead to the exploitation of empirical knowledge already possessed by a given society⁵. In these latter processes, the role of women is also receiving increasing attention. Finally, it is worth recalling that innovation may involve both the gradual refinement of existing techniques and the invention and application of entirely new processes. As noted above, archaeology is becoming ever better equipped to recognize innovations thanks not only to its traditional focus on reconstructing *chaînes opératoires* and production cycles, but also to the growing availability of archaeometric analyses, which can more accurately identify the composition and origin of raw materials, as well as the dating of artefacts and ecofacts.

Returning to our themes and to the specific period addressed in this chapter, it becomes evident that the Islamic world – particularly the Mediterranean region – was significantly more creative and innovative than peninsular Italy, especially during the 10th and 11th centuries.⁶ This observation appears to reinforce further Wickham's reconstruction, which is based above all on

² A good overview of the subject is Mokyr, *The Lever or Riches*.

³ See, most recently, Franceschi, et al., *Medioevo che crea*.

⁴ For the differences between invention and innovation, see Mokyr, *The Lever*, 21-48; Giannichedda, *Uomini e cose*, 73-81.

⁵ Graeber, Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, 527-9.

⁶ Among recent works, see, for example, Colangeli, Sacco, *Le forme del vetro*.

the analysis of internal exchange networks. A good example is Egypt, now regarded as the engine of Mediterranean economies for much of the Middle Ages. In the 9th and especially the 10th century, Egypt switched from papyrus to paper; from natron (a mineral component) to vegetable ash in glass production; began producing glazed and decorated ceramics inspired by the fashions from China and Iraq; introduced new cash crops such as cotton (to which we will return) and sugar; and probably developed new methods of spinning and dyeing textiles. Similar innovations occurred in Sicily and Tunisia, in ways that were in some cases certainly independent. Many of these innovations – clearly underway across much of the Islamic world – did not reach the Italian Peninsula until the 12th and, especially, the 13th century. The innovations did not only concern the craft sector alone. In agriculture, the so-called green revolution was, according to some scholars, facilitated by the creation of the vast Islamic economic and cultural sphere and involved the introduction of new plants and/or new methods of cultivation.⁷ In this regard, as we shall see, a considerable number of recent studies detail and refine our understanding of the processes of agricultural transformation, which did indeed take place in several parts of the Islamic world. Resistance to innovation is certainly not attributable solely to economic backwardness: tastes, habits, the size of human groups, and social distinctions are all factors that may have delayed the adoption of new technical processes and objects. The fact remains that much of the Italian Peninsula was, for a long time, much less creative than its neighbours in the Islamic world. In discussing some case studies, I will dwell especially on those for which archaeological research offers interesting new insights, without any claim to be exhaustive.

It is not yet entirely clear which pathways led to the adoption of paper in Egypt. The mediation of Baghdad and its chancellery was probably crucial, and it is estimated that during the first half of the 10th century paper almost completely supplanted papyrus.⁸ The Fatimid administration made exclusive use of paper for official documents. The preference of the Shia caliphs is thought to have stemmed from the greater difficulty in forging paper documents and from the capillarity of their state organization. Egyptian archaeology – which benefits from unusually favourable conditions for the preservation of perishable artefacts – has shown how the use of paper as a writing medium was socially widespread between the 10th and 11th centuries, extending well beyond strictly administrative or official contexts. In addition to the fact that the vast majority of the documents of the Cairo Geniza are on paper,⁹

⁷ See Watson, *Agricultural Innovation* and, most recently, Davis, “Watson’s Green Revolution,” and Kirchner, et al., “Re-thinking the ‘Green Revolution’” for an extensive critical review on the subject.

⁸ It would seem that papermaking techniques did not reach the Islamic world directly from China, but rather via Central Asia: see Bloom, *Paper Before Print*; Rustow, *The Lost Archive*, 128–52.

⁹ Cohen, *Composition Analysis of Writing Materials*.

the French excavations of the 1980s/90s at Fustat (Istabl Antar)¹⁰ uncovered a large rubbish deposit containing hundreds of fragments of common-quality cloth and paper stratigraphically datable to the 11th century. From the same site, a similar deposit – datable instead to the 9th century – yielded not only cloth of varying quality, but also rather poor papyrus, and no paper at all. Even in the 11th century levels of the excavation of the port of Quseir al-Qadim on the Red Sea, paper is the main writing medium (found on over a thousand objects). It is followed by cloth, wood, and even oyster shells, but not by papyrus, which had been the principal medium in the Roman levels. Between the 10th and 11th centuries, therefore, there appears to have been a clear substitution of paper for papyrus, despite the latter having been produced in Egypt for millennia. This was a radical innovation, introduced through a top-down impulse but also associated with a very widespread social use of writing.

Egypt also holds enormous potential for information regarding the archaeology of textiles. In addition to the large number of post-antique and mostly luxury textiles preserved in museums around the world, everyday fabrics recovered from settlement excavations are of great interest: e.g. at Quseir al-Qadim, Deir al-Naqlun, Jasirat Fara'un, and again at Fustat.¹¹ From these findings, it appears that the production of cotton fabrics – the fibre that revolutionised the cloth market in the Middle Ages – began early (perhaps as early as the 10th century) in Egypt for everyday use,¹² alongside the better known linen, wool, and silk fabrics. We will return later to the subject of cotton cultivation and its interpretative challenges, but it is worth noting here that archaeological evidence has also yielded relatively substantial finds of fabrics that can confidently be identified as Indian (cotton textiles printed with stamps), again at Quseir al-Qadim and Fustat.¹³ The arrival of know-how required for the production of cotton fabrics in Egypt may have resulted from the intensification of contacts with India, although it should be remembered that cotton fabrics (archaeologically attested) have been recognised on the Arabian Peninsula since pre-Islamic times as well.¹⁴ Since relations between Egypt and India certainly predate the Middle Ages, it is interesting to note that it was nevertheless this period that proved more favourable to large-scale innovation.

¹⁰ See Gayraud, "Fostat: évolution d'une capitale arabe;" Gayraud, Vallauri, *Fustat II, Fouilles d'Istabl Antar*. Roberta Cortopassi (Louvre Museum), who has catalogued all the textiles, believes that among those dated to the 11th century there are very common, locally produced fabrics, including some made from cotton (personal communication).

¹¹ See Desrosiers, "Techniques des textiles," for an overview.

¹² Cotton also appears to have been used for furnishing fabrics or even as padding – e.g. in funerary rituals; see Desrosiers, "Techniques" and Gayraud, "La nécropole fatimide."

¹³ See Barnes, *Indian Block-printed Textiles in Egypt* for the Ashmolean Museum's collections of textiles from Fustat – made in India and dated by C¹⁴ to between the 9th and 13th centuries; and Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Resist Dyed Textiles*, for the finds from Quseir al-Qadim.

¹⁴ Ryan, et al., "Strontium isotope evidence."

Archaeometric analyses of Egyptian glass are also of great interest. Until the 8th century, Egypt remained one of the great primary producers of glass, manufactured from silica and natron as a flux. Natron – extracted in the Wadi el-Natron, about 90 km north-east of Cairo – was one of the main components (as flux), together with silica of course, of glass produced in both Egypt and the Levant until at least the 7th century.¹⁵ Raw glass or finished objects made from natron circulated throughout Mediterranean and even reached the continental part of the empire in Roman and late Roman times. From the 8th century, for reasons that are not entirely clear, this fundamental component disappeared from glass production except in Egyptian glass or in glass made from older recycled material. In the Levant, ash from specific plants (such as *salicornia*, which is a marine plant) began to be used instead of natron. Archaeometric analyses have shown that in Egypt, plant ash began to be employed as a flux from at least the 10th century. In this case, the shift represents an expedient that did not introduce entirely new processes, but rather involved the replacement of a fundamental raw material (*natron*) with another – plant ash – characterised, perhaps, by a simpler production cycle and greater availability. It would therefore be a form of innovation likely to lower production costs, even in a country that had previously mined natron in large quantities. It is not unlikely that this technique reached Egypt from the Levant. Here we can recall that locally produced glass made from plant ash is found in Sicily and probably also in Tunisia between the late 9th century and the 10th century.¹⁶ On the Italian Peninsula, by contrast, even in the Venice area, glass in the 11th century still appears to have been produced primarily by recycling ancient and late antique glass (which contained natron) and was in any case extremely rare and luxurious.¹⁷

A development of great interest to archaeologists – and very evident in the material record – is the introduction of ceramics intended for food consumption that are covered with transparent (glazed) or opaque (enamelled) coatings, very often accompanied by painted (using different colour palettes) or incised decorations. In the late 9th and especially the 10th century, these ceramics came into common use in virtually all households across the Islamic world. What is particularly interesting is the multiplicity of technical, as well as formal, solutions employed in producing these glass surfaces,¹⁸ all of which, however, require the vessel to be fired at least twice. This was therefore a technical innovation that appears to have increased production costs, owing to the doubling of the fuel requirements and the use of more complex manufacturing processes that, in some cases, also demanded rare raw mate-

¹⁵ For a recent overview of the composition and local production of glass in Egypt in Islamic and pre-Islamic times, see Schibille, *Islamic Glass in the Making*; and Foy, “Entre orient et occident, le verre islamique.”

¹⁶ See, most recently, Colangeli, Sacco, *Le forme del vetro*.

¹⁷ On glass from the Venice area, see e.g. Ferri, “Shine bright.”

¹⁸ See, most recently, Salinas, et al. “Técnicas decorativas de la cerámica vidriada.”

rials (as in the case of the tin oxide needed for majolica). We can say that these ceramics – generally, at this chronological stage, the product of urban workshops – soon reached a very wide market that certainly included rural contexts. The variety of technical and formal solutions suggests highly complex dynamics behind these technical innovations: the mobility of craftsmen, the imitation of imported products, the revival of local techniques that had been marginal or dormant, or even the invention of entirely new procedures. For Egypt, it is now quite clear that the formal and decorative models – especially those of Fatimid glazed wares – owe much (though by no means everything) to the imitation of Chinese ceramics (porcelain and celadons from southern China) or Iraqi ceramics (metal lustres), which were regularly imported into Egypt from the 9th century through to well beyond the 15th century.¹⁹ We will return later to the quantitative significance of these imports in relation to local production. Here it is worth emphasising, on the one hand, that the technical processes used in Egyptian imitations of Chinese ceramics were entirely distinct from the originals, and, on the other, that these exotic wares must, nevertheless, have been sufficiently well known for people to want to imitate them. We may recall once more that in peninsular Italy the new techniques for glazing tableware became established in the 12th century in the south, and only in the early 13th century in north-central Italy.²⁰

This is not the place to revisit the debate surrounding the so-called Islamic Green Revolution; however, even if the term ‘revolution’ may be considered inappropriate, it remains undeniable that numerous agricultural innovations can be identified – and, in some cases, chronologically situated – following the Islamic conquest of various regions of the Mediterranean. In this area of archaeological study (archaeobotany), the context in which seeds and wood are found remains crucial, since not all soils or types of contexts allow the remains of new plants to be preserved; absences, therefore, may not always correspond to historical reality.²¹ Turning to the positive evidence, we can regard the finds from the excavation of the Egyptian port of Myos Ormos/Quseir al-Qadim on the Red Sea as particularly significant, since they reveal substantial differences between the Roman and Fatimid (11th century) phases. In the latter, newly cultivated plants – such as sugarcane, cotton, aubergines, certain citrus fruits, bananas, colocasia, and watermelon – appear in such quantities that M. Van der Veen, who has studied this exceptionally well-preserved context, argues that whereas Roman Egypt looked to the Mediterra-

¹⁹ There is an extensive bibliography on this topic: see e.g. Gayraud, “Arabisation, islamisation et orientalisation” on imitation; François, *Céramiques médiévales à Alexandrie*, 143–54, on Egypt; Priestman, *Ceramic Exchange and the Indian Ocean*; Zhang, *An Exploratory Quantitative Archaeological*; Qin, Ho, “Chinese Ceramic Exports to Africa,” on the circulation of Chinese ceramics within the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and Red Sea.

²⁰ For an overview, see Berti, et al., “Trasformazioni tecnologiche.”

²¹ As is well known, a number of environmental and structural conditions favour or limit the preservation of charred, calcified, and dehydrated plant remains, including arid or very humid areas, latrines, and fire layers.

nean for its culinary preferences, Fatimid Egypt drew more heavily on the cultures of the Indian Ocean area.²²

For Sicily we possess highly systematic data for Mazara, an important city on the south-western coast of the island, and for the area of Castronovo, located in the interior between Palermo and Agrigento, collected within the framework of the ERC *SicTransit* project.²³ Fortunately, Palermo can also be added to these areas thanks to information from written sources and to the study of ceramic vessels – for example, those used in sugar production or for lifting water from wells (the so-called *noria* or *senia* vessels).²⁴

In the 10th-11th century latrines of Mazara, a number of new plants associated with the so-called green revolution have been found: aubergines, as well as spinach, citrus fruits, and again cotton. Sugar production is currently attested in Palermo, where – as mentioned above – the finds of vessels suitable for refining are concentrated. The data from the inland area of Castronovo, however, present a rather different picture: plant remains indicate a clear orientation towards cereal production (predominantly wheat rather than barley until the 12th century). Indeed, at one of the main sites in this area, Casale San Pietro, numerous amphorae arrived from Palermo between the 10th and 11th centuries, containing wine, oil, and probably also salted fish.²⁵ No new plants are reported in this inland territory until much later. It is quite clear, therefore, that agricultural novelties and specialised crops in Sicily were concentrated around at least two coastal cities with cosmopolitan elites, while the island's interior continued to fulfil its traditional role as a wheat producer.²⁶ It is also evident that the Sicilian agricultural economy was highly integrated, as shown by the distribution cross much of the island of amphorae for wine, oil, and fish manufactured in Palermo.²⁷ It is worth noting briefly that in Mazara during the Swabian and Angevin periods, in the 13th century, there was a marked increase in the cultivation of cash crops – cotton in particular – and this was accompanied by the presence of a larger number of aged sheep, raised for wool and dairy products.²⁸

More complex is the identification and especially the dating, of structures and tools associated with new agricultural techniques, including irrigation. A recently conducted survey by Gideon Avni, of the *qanats* – a type of underground aqueduct that captured groundwater and channelled, sometimes over

²² Van der Veen, *Consumption, Trade and Innovation*, 227-32.

²³ See the contributions by Gerolamo Fiorentino and Milena Primavera in Molinari, e Meo, *Mazara/Mazar: nel ventre della città medievale* and Carver, et al., *Castronovo di Sicilia*. See also the website <https://sicily-in-transition.org/>.

²⁴ Sacco, *Dalla ceramica alla storia economica*, 148-52.

²⁵ Carver, et al., *Castronovo di Sicilia*.

²⁶ However at a period that is not precisely ascertained, but in any case during the Middle Ages, the farming community of Castronovo built a system of irrigated terraces intended for polyculture, considered typical of Islamic world: Carver, et al., *Castronovo*, 173-201.

²⁷ Sacco, *Dalla ceramica alla storia economica*, 248-63.

²⁸ See Veronica Aniceti's contribution in Molinari, e Meo, *Mazara/Mazar*, 533-91.

several kilometres, to irrigated areas – has shown that in various areas of Eurasia these installations were often constructed in the phases immediately following the Islamic conquest, between the 7th and 8th centuries, enabling the cultivation of semi-desert areas and a substantial expansion of crops.²⁹ *Noria* and sugar vessels can also be dated with precision on the basis of the archaeological contexts in which they have been found. In Sicily, *noria/senia* vessels are known in Palermo from the late 9th century and in Mazara from the 10th.³⁰ Much more challenging, by contrast, is the dating of irrigated terrace systems, owing to their continuous remodelling and their extraordinary durability over time.³¹

To conclude this part, we may briefly mention one last topic: the building sector. Studies in this field are, however, far more advanced for Italy than for the various Islamic regions under consideration here. As is well known, the advent of Romanesque architecture on the Peninsula, between the late 11th and 12th centuries, entailed significant innovations in building techniques (from the reopening of quarries to obtain isodomic blocks to the organisation of construction sites), the origins of which remain debated.³² Some hypotheses link these architectural innovations to the experience of the Crusades and to direct contact with the more advanced techniques in the Greater Syria area.³³ It is, however, very difficult to make a proper assessment of this issue. For example, in al-Andalus the main building innovation – already from the emiral period (9th century) and increasing exponentially in the following centuries – was the adoption of the *tapial*, a North African construction technique (using earth compressed in moulds). Its quality and durability, though, varied considerably.³⁴ In general, it appears that in the Latin-Christian Mediterranean world (particularly in the cities of central and northern Italy), investment in private construction employing complex building processes and durable materials was, from the 12th century onwards, more substantial – or at least more enduring – than in Islamic regions.³⁵

²⁹ Avni, “Early Islamic Irrigated Farmsteads.”

³⁰ Sacco, *Dalla ceramica alla storia economica*, 148–9.

³¹ There are several international projects devoted to dating terraces (including non-irrigated ones) using new methods – especially OSL – although the results are still preliminary. See, e.g., Turner, et al. “Agricultural terraces,” the ERC projects TERRACE (<https://www.terrace.no/>); and the GreenMedRev project (<http://medgreenrev.com/en>), which is still in its early stages. See also, Avni, et al., “Byzantine-Early Islamic Agricultural Systems.”

³² See, e.g., Salvarani, et al., *Alle origini del romanico*; Brogiolo, Gentilini, *Tecniche murarie e cantieri*, and the paper by Cantini in this volume.

³³ See, e.g., Cagnana, “Oriente e Occidente.”

³⁴ Martín Civantos, Rouco Collazo, “De la piedra a la tierra.”

³⁵ Some reflections in Molinari, Giovannini, *Il paesaggio pietrificato*. However, this is a subject that still needs to be explored in great depth in relation to Islamic regions.

2. Settlement and exchange networks

The reconstruction of settlement types and networks is, of course, crucial for understanding the forms of organisation, the levels of domination or autonomy within peasant communities, and thus the different ways in which surplus was extracted from rural production. Unfortunately, in this regard, post-antique archaeology in both Egypt and Tunisia does not allow for very detailed overviews.³⁶ We are, however, far better informed about Sicily and peninsular Italy. Here I will recall only a few themes to our comparative analysis.

Research on settlement dynamics – conducted especially in central and northern Italy over the last two decades, through both surface survey and intensive excavations – has made it possible to refine and nuance themes such as *incastellamento*, settlement concentration, and the petrification of the built environment between the 10th and 13th centuries.³⁷ Castles often took at least two centuries to become the predominant form of settlement (and in any case this was not the case everywhere on the Peninsula), and the petrification of built-up areas occurred in stages, often beginning with the upper enclosures, followed by the towers and mansions. The petrification of peasant houses often took place much later, in the 13th century, in different ways and with different meanings; in at least some cases, however, it must have entailed greater pressure on the mobility of rural families.³⁸ For the issues that concern us here, we may say that – contrary to what was once argued by Pierre Toubert,³⁹ and to some extent by Riccardo Francovich as well⁴⁰ – the 10th–11th centuries do not appear to represent the full affirmation of castles/villages with stone buildings, nor the disappearance of dispersed settlement. Moreover, *incastellamento* would not seem to have occurred in a context of economic expansion, but rather during a phase of broader transformation marked by the crisis of public powers and the progressive rise of lordship and urban centres.⁴¹

Research on rural settlements in Sicily continues to advance, providing an increasingly chronologically and spatially articulated picture of settlement dynamics. Within the centuries under consideration, one may note that between the 10th and 11th centuries, especially in western and central Sicily, there was a marked expansion in the number and/or size of rural centres, most of which were located in unprotected and unfortified sites. By way of example, we may mention the large village that arose on the ruins of the late Roman

³⁶ See, e.g., Gascoigne, “Egypt” and Fenwick, *Early Islamic North Africa*.

³⁷ A truly vast literature could be cited; for the sake of brevity, see Molinari, *Mondi rurali*; Galetti, Augenti, *L'incastellamento*; Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*; Carocci, “Nobiltà e petrificazione della ricchezza.” Maria Elena Cortese, Alessio Fiore and Sandro Carocci also address these topics in their contributions to this volume.

³⁸ See, e.g., the various essays on the subject in Molinari, Giovannini, *Il paesaggio pietrificato* and Carocci, “Nobiltà.”

³⁹ Toubert, *Les structures du Latium Médiéval*.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Francovich, Hodges, *Villa to village*.

⁴¹ For brevity, see Wickham, *The Donkey*, 465–620; Fiore, Poloni, *L'economia medievale*, 97–138.

villa near Piazza Armerina and the site of Casale San Pietro in central Sicily, both of which reached their maximum expansion precisely in these centuries (with estimates suggesting an area of up to 40 hectares).⁴² In the survey at Contessa Entellina and in the Jato Valley, in the Belice area, the number of settlements clearly increases; this is not the case in the east of the island – for example, in the area of ancient Megara – where the 10th-11th centuries are less clearly identifiable.⁴³ It would appear that during the height of the Islamic period an important role was played by large lowland settlements, almost always with earlier phases, located along important communication axes. These sites, certainly centres of peasant habitation, often also hosted specialised production activities and in all likelihood also fulfilled public functions as well, serving as post stations and places for tax collection. It is not always clear, however, when these types of open settlements went into decline. In the case of Casale San Pietro, it has been possible to document with precision a clear contraction beginning in the second half of the 11th century. By contrast, the village of Villa del Casale near Piazza Armerina was abandoned in the mid-12th century. The establishment of centralised highland villages in Sicily is a process that is not yet entirely clear. Unlike Byzantine authority, Islamic rule does not appear to have undertaken explicit initiatives to promote or construct public fortifications; nor, on the other hand, did Islamic Sicily experience phenomena comparable to territorial lordship.⁴⁴ The creation of highland villages may, at least in the west, be understood as the spontaneous initiative of peasant communities during phases of weakened state structures – for example, in the 9th century (during the long period of Islamic conquest) or in the 11th century with the fragmentation of political authority under the Kalbite emirate and the subsequent Norman conquest.⁴⁵ The Normans then superimposed summit fortifications onto highland villages that were almost always already in existence.⁴⁶ The Swabian period appears to have been one of the most radical phases of upheaval, especially in the west, where, in the first half of the 13th century, large spontaneous highland centres – inhabited main-

⁴² Pensabene, Barresi, *Piazza Armerina* and Carver, et al., *Castronovo di Sicilia*. In addition, the various essays in Castrorao, Mandalà, *Suburbia*, and Nef, Ardizzone, *Les dynamiques de l'islamisation*, include several relevant contributions.

⁴³ In general, it should be noted that the number of settlements alone is not sufficient to demonstrate settlement contraction. A clear case in point is again Casale San Pietro (Castronovo), which concentrated a substantial portion of the territory's population during the 10th-11th centuries.

⁴⁴ On Byzantine fortification strategies in Sicily, see, e.g., Arcifa, et al., "Sicily in a Mediterranean context" on *incastellamento* in Sicily, see, e.g., Molinari, "Paesaggi rurali e formazioni sociali" and, most recently, Carver, et al., *Castronovo*.

⁴⁵ This would seem to be the case, for example, in the present village of Castronovo in central Sicily (Carver, et al.), or *Calathamet* (Lesnes, Poisson, *Calathamet*) in western Sicily.

⁴⁶ See, e.g. *Calathamet*, Castronovo, but also perhaps all those sites that still preserve a fortified area together with a district known as the *rabato*, which appears to represent the oldest part of the highland settlements. Future research would ideally involve excavating the *rabati* in order to gain a clearer understanding of the 11th and 12th centuries.

ly by Muslims – such as Segesta, Entella and Monte Jato⁴⁷ developed, while most of the unprotected sites were abandoned. As is well known, all the large Muslim highland sites just mentioned had been abandoned by the mid-13th century. We must imagine that the rural population was compelled (at time forcibly) to relocate to other centres, to emigrate, to suffer significant demographic decline, or to undergo processes of urbanisation. Transformations in the central and eastern part of the island appear to have been more gradual.

We do not know much, on an archaeological basis, about social stratification within villages during the Islamic period, but no very clear forms of hierarchisation appear to be evident. At the most extensively excavated site – Villa del Casale – we can nevertheless see that between the 10th and 11th centuries, there were specialised production activities (such as kilns for glazed tableware) and also a dwelling that may have belonged to a ‘doctor’, or in any case to someone living at a relatively higher standard than the rest.⁴⁸ At Casale San Pietro we have excavated what were in all probability public structures (a postal station, a tax collector’s office). Monetary circulation also appears to have been considerable at both excavated sites.⁴⁹ Our archaeological knowledge of social stratification in the Norman period is likewise limited. At Castronovo (the present-day town in the centre of Sicily that succeeded Casale San Pietro), for example, the creation of a fortified upper area and a palace/‘donjon’ is particularly telling. As can also be inferred from the written sources, these were buildings commissioned by the monarchy rather than by the aristocracy.⁵⁰

Turning now to the exchange networks within the areas under consideration, we may recall, as already mentioned, that these have become a fundamental key to assessing the complexity of regional economies. The study of ceramics has likewise become an essential tool for understanding the distribution networks of non-luxury goods in the centuries examined here, just as it has long been for Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. It should be made clear from the outset that coherent observations can be drawn not only from transport ceramics, i.e. amphorae,⁵¹ but also from the full range of pottery, from decorated and glazed tableware to strictly utilitarian wares such as cooking vessels. Moreover, as mentioned above, by analysing the *chaîne*

⁴⁷ For an overview, see Molinari, “Paesaggi rurali e formazioni sociali.”

⁴⁸ On an 11th-century kiln, see Pensabene, Barresi, *Piazza Armerina*, 581-90; on the “doctor’s house” (house A), also dating from the Islamic period, see Bonanno, *Piazza Armerina*, 41-5.

⁴⁹ See Palma, “I rinvenimenti numismatici” for the Villa del Casale, and Mammato, “Monete e circolazione monetaria a Castronovo” for Casale San Pietro.

⁵⁰ Carver, et al., *Castronovo*, 163-72. On public powers and southern lordships more generally, see Carocci, *Signorie di Mezzogiorno*.

⁵¹ Amphorae, which persisted in several areas of the Islamic world and in the Byzantine world even in the 10th-13th centuries, are instead absent or insignificant in other areas, where they may have been replaced by perishable containers. For example, Tunisian oil was transported in containers made of animal skins. The absence of amphorae does not therefore necessarily imply the absence of commodity exchange; only positive evidence can be used for this type of container. See, in general, Gelichi, Molinari, *I contenitori da trasporto*.

operoaire and the places of production of all types of ceramics, it is possible to make meaningful observations about production specialisation, as well as about the varying levels of product sophistication and quality in urban and rural markets.

Let us begin with Sicily. The recent systematisation of chronologies and morphologies of the productions of Palermo and Mazara del Vallo, together with the systematic study of rural contexts such as Casale San Pietro (in the territory of Castronovo), Pizzo Monaco, Paternò, and Villa del Casale, as well as the publication of surface surveys in areas such as Entella and Jato,⁵² now allows for rather precise observations, especially for the centuries of interest here. In the course of the 10th century, amphorae, fine tableware (decorated and glazed), and kitchenware produced in Palermo reached virtually the entire island. In many inland areas – particularly the central regions – they could represent almost the entirety of the pottery used in rural settlements. This is, for example, at Casale San Pietro, where the excavation of an uninterrupted stratigraphic sequence between the 5th and 13th centuries, combined with surface survey across the area occupied by the settlement, makes it possible to trace variations in the supply of ceramics to this rural centre located some 80 kilometres from Palermo.⁵³ Here in the 10th and early 11th centuries, fine glazed tableware, cooking pottery, and amphorae were imported from the emiral capital. Analyses indicate that the amphorae carried wine and apparently also oil and fish. To this evidence we may add that plant remains show a clear predominance of cereal cultivation for the same period, with wheat prevailing over other species. Equally significant is the discovery, among the archaeozoological finds, of tuna vertebrae. A series of iron slags – although not securely dated, as they were found out of context – may nonetheless suggest that ironworking was among the possible activities carried out at Casale San Pietro during this period. To summarise, the archaeological evidence indicates that fine and cooking pottery, as well as agricultural products such as wine, oil, and salted fish transported in amphorae, arrived from the capital on a massive scale. In the 10th century, this impressive network of internal trade appears to have been decisively dominated by the emiral capital, Palermo, which was itself undergoing remarkable growth at the time.⁵⁴ This would go hand in hand with the importance of the centres located along the main arterial roads (with fiscal and settlement functions), such as the oft-mentioned Casale San Pietro. The distribution of amphorae and fine pottery even in the areas of peasant settlement thus makes it possible to observe how the fiscal network also promoted rural consumption.

⁵² For the sake of brevity, see the frequently cited Sacco, *Dalla ceramica*; Molinari, e Meo, *Mazara/Mazar*; Carver, et al., *Castronovo*; Wickham, *The Donkey*, 218–30, with further bibliography.

⁵³ See the chapters on ceramics in Carver, et al., 353–461, as well as those on archaeobotanical and faunal remains, 531–67.

⁵⁴ See, most recently, Vassallo, “The Topographical Context of Palermo.”

The 11th century in Sicily presents a highly complex picture, with different phenomena occurring in the different parts of the island. Palermo lost its absolute political and artisan pre-eminence due to competition from other production centres, sometimes located in cities promoted as capitals by the so-called *gaitti*⁵⁵ (as has been established in the case of Mazara). Local production of fine glazed ceramics also began in medium- to large-sized rural centres such as Paternò or the village that arose above the Villa del Casale in Piazza Armerina.⁵⁶ Centres such as Casale San Pietro, however, seem to have maintained a strong link with Palermo. While the consumption patterns of rural settlements became less dependent on Palermo, they nevertheless show a strong demand at the peasant level for fine pottery, so much so that large rural centres such as Paternò or Villa del Casale developed their own production of good-quality glazed ceramics. In the 12th century, the trends already underway in the 11th century appear to have intensified, and even a centre such as Casale San Pietro imported pottery both from Palermo and from other areas of Sicily. During this century another important phenomenon began – one that would become fully established in the 13th century – namely the circulation throughout the island of cooking pots produced in Messina.⁵⁷ These vessels, purely utilitarian but of good quality and presumably excellent for cooking and boiling food reached virtually every part of the island in considerable quantities. Messina was certainly promoted by the Norman rulers, to the point that it could be regarded as a second capital alongside to Palermo. Curiously, Messina's fine tableware pottery – truly unattractive, to be honest – did not circulate with anything like the same intensity as its beautiful and functional cooking pots. These observations suggest that the circulation of Messina's pots was driven entirely by commercial factors. In the 12th century, there also appears to have been a possible increase in monetary circulation in rural areas.⁵⁸

If, in the context of ceramic circulation in Sicily, we turn our attention to extra-regional imports, we can immediately see that between the 10th and 12th centuries they were quantitatively very limited. In Palermo, for example, in the 10th–11th centuries we can identify imports of glazed ceramics and amphorae from Tunisia, while tableware fragments from Egypt, Spain, or China (the latter probably arriving via Egypt) are extremely rare.⁵⁹ In Mazara, in the 11th century, non-Sicilian imports of fine pottery were almost exclusively Tunisian and accounted for around 10% of all glazed wares.⁶⁰ In the 12th century, in an

⁵⁵ Such as Mazara, Syracuse, Enna, and Agrigento: see, e.g., Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 126–32.

⁵⁶ Messina, “La Collina di Paternò” and Pensabene, Barresi, *Piazza Armerina*, 599–628.

⁵⁷ For an overview of this type of pottery, see Paola Orecchioni's text in Molinari, e Meo, *Mazara/Mazar*, 352–6.

⁵⁸ See the bibliography cited in n. 49.

⁵⁹ Sacco, 204–10.

⁶⁰ See the overview paper by Antonino Meo and Paola Orecchioni in Molinari, e Meo, *Mazara/Mazar*, 595–608.

inland highland centre in the west such as Calathamet, imported ceramics (Egyptian and Iberian Peninsula fine wares) arrived in very small quantities compared to Sicilian pottery.⁶¹ By contrast, when we look at exports from Sicily – both of glazed ceramics and, above all, of amphorae (mainly containing wine) – those produced Palermo between the 10th and 11th centuries reached a vast area extending from Tunisia to southern France.⁶² It remains to be determined to what extent the production centres that emerged in the 11th century exported outside Sicily; with the possible exception of Agrigento, however, their distribution appears to have been mainly local or sub-local. In short, until the 12th century, Sicily consumed predominantly pottery produced on the island itself and imported only a very small number of, I would say, occasional items. Exports of both amphorae and glazed ceramics from Palermo peaked between the 10th and 11th centuries and seem to have decreased sharply, if not ceased altogether, by the 12th century.⁶³ As becomes clear, the 12th century does not display solely expansionary trends.

I will briefly mention here the main changes occurring in the 13th century. In western Sicily, in addition to the massive arrival of pots from Messina, both urban and rural centres exhibit conspicuous quantities of fine tableware, mainly imported (thus in complete contrast to the previous period) from regions such as Campania, Tunisia, and southern Italy. In some centres, such as Segesta/Calatabarbaro and Mazara, imported fine pottery equalled or even surpassed local ceramics in quantity, the latter being on average of poorer quality.⁶⁴ In eastern Sicily, by contrast, local production continued to predominate, but was of better quality than that of the western part of the island and differed in both technique and form. Work on the amphorae of this period still remains to be carried out, but in any case they appear to have circulated only within the island and over relatively limited areas.

Summarising, then, the trends in the production and circulation of ceramics of all types in Sicily, we may first emphasise the absolute pre-eminence of Palermo in the second half of the 10th/early 11th century – a city that quite literally dominated the island market, especially in the central and western areas. This suggests that the inland road system was also in good condition and that there was a truly remarkable movement of goods from the capital to inland rural centres and other coastal towns. The case of Castronovo, together with what we know of the new crops cultivated in Palermo, offers a glimpse of a notable economic specialisation: on the one hand, the coastal area gravitating around the capital, where specialised crops (certainly vines and sugar-

⁶¹ Lesnes, Poisson, *Calathamet*, 206–9.

⁶² Sacco, 253–73 notes that a new analysis of extra-island finds shows that the bulk of Sicilian amphorae (of various forms) were exported almost exclusively in the Islamic period, rather than in the Norman era as previously believed.

⁶³ Sacco, 264–7.

⁶⁴ See also the contributions of Paola Orecchioni in Molinari, e Meo, *Mazara/Mazar*, 337–41 and 595–608, with bibliography for all of Sicily.

cane) appear to have been concentrated; on the other, the inland area devoted mainly to cereal cultivation. It would appear that, especially in the second half of the 10th century, inland networks were strongly reinvigorated by the economic as well as the political role of the new capital. At the same time, the countryside – where a monetised economy was in place – displayed a consistent demand even for non-essential goods (such as richly decorated tableware and glassware). Indeed, it is interesting to note that even cooking pots, which could certainly have been produced locally, were imported in large quantities from the capital. In the 11th century, the decline in the dominance of Palermo products should not be seen as a recession in the distribution system, but rather as a result of competition from production centres that were now part of an even more complex network. This development can be explained either by the expansion of demand – which encouraged the spread of specialised artisans to centres other than Palermo – and/or by the rise of other cities alongside the emiral capital, coinciding with the fragmentation of political authority (as we have clearly seen in the case of Mazara). This overall dynamic closely resembles what has been reconstructed, *mutatis mutandis*, for al-Andalus during the period of the *Reinos de taifas*, where political fragmentation does not appear to have had a negative impact on the internal economy.⁶⁵ During the 12th century, the most noticeable novelty was the widespread distribution of Messina cooking pots, which reached all parts of the island in conspicuous quantities. It must be said, however, that Messina's role as a production and export centre for cooking wares in the 12th and 13th centuries is in no way comparable to that of Palermo in the 10th century, whether in terms of quantity, quality, or variety of exported products. It should also be emphasised that from the 12th century onwards, the circulation of amphorae – containers used to transport large quantities of wine, oil, and other goods – seems not only to ceased to be controlled by Palermo, but not to have been taken over by other Sicilian cities either. One possibility is that these goods were no longer transported in amphorae but in perishable containers.

In agreement with Chris Wickham's argument, we may therefore say that for the period between the 10th and 12th centuries it was internal economic dynamics, rather than interregional trade, that determined Sicily's growth and complexity.⁶⁶ At the same time, while the balance between the demands of urban elites and those of the peasantry appears to have been a fundamental ingredient, the political and fiscal role of the Islamic capital (closely linked to Egypt and Tunisia) in the 10th century, and of the other cities that served as seats of the *gaiti* in the 11th century, as well as the role of Messina as a second

⁶⁵ Wickham, *The Donkey*, 365-464.

⁶⁶ Reference is also made, for the following considerations, to Wickham, 198-268, where the main bibliography on Sicily is discussed and summarised, including the historiographical debate between, on the one hand, Abulafia, *The two Italies* and Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen*, and, on the other, Epstein, *An Island for Itself*. This body of historiography on Sicily was also effectively reviewed a few years ago in Petralia, "La nuova Sicilia tardomedievale."

capital during the Norman period, were no less crucial. In short, the flows and directions of goods seem to have been dictated not only – or not primarily – by ecological differences between inland and coastal areas, but also by the shifting contours of internal political geography. Finally, more data are needed to gain a clearer understanding of the 12th century as a whole on the island.

The 13th century requires additional reflection, especially for western Sicily, and I would like to offer just a few observations that seem particularly significant for the question of periodisation. In the past, I interpreted the exponential increase in imports of high-quality tableware (into western Sicily) within the framework of the ‘colonial’ view of the island’s economy advanced by Henri Bresc and sketched out by David Abulafia. In essence, it seemed to me that the ceramic source supported – at least for western Sicily – the idea that, whereas until the 12th century Sicily primarily consumed locally produced specialised handicrafts, in the 13th century it imported such goods on a large scale, coinciding with the decline in fine local production. The idea, therefore, that Sicily imported quality manufactured goods while mainly exporting raw materials and grain therefore appeared broadly convincing. Chris Wickham, by contrast, rules out the possibility that medieval economies could have developed to such a degree of productive specialisation as to negatively impact local economies: if the Sicilians were importing large quantities of manufactured goods from outside the island, they must obviously have had an equivalent volume of goods to sell. Since my earlier reflections, new archaeological data – drawn from sectors other than ceramics – have emerged. Particularly significant, to my mind, are the archaeobotanical and archaeozoological data from Mazara, which we have already discussed.⁶⁷ In particular, the 13th century appears to show an exponential increase in the presence of cotton – which we know was particularly in demand among the Genoese – and a decrease in crop varieties compared to the Islamic period. Equally significant is the sharp increase in the slaughter age of sheep and goats, which evidently shifted from being reared for a wide range of uses during the Islamic period to being kept more extensively for the production of wool and cheese. These indicators, which merit future research, seem to suggest the potential impact on the Sicilian economy of increasing commercialisation and productive specialisation in the agricultural sector, developments that were also encouraged by the activities of Ligurian and Tuscan merchants. This question of the extent to which Italian merchants influenced productive choices in the inland areas of Sicily is a controversial one. Giuseppe Petralia addressed it a few years ago in his commentary on the essays on Sicily by Henri Bresc and Stephan R. Epstein, noting the significant presence as early as the 13th century of individuals of Tuscan origin even in the island’s interior.⁶⁸ Further evidence may come

⁶⁷ See, respectively, the contributions of Gerolamo Fiorentino, et al. and Veronica Aniceti in Molinari, e Meo, *Mazara/Mazar*, 533-93.

⁶⁸ In addition to the bibliography cited in n. 67, see, e.g., Petralia, “Sui Toscani in Sicilia.”

from further archaeological research, as suggested perhaps by the new data on the medieval cemeteries of Segesta/Calatabarbaro in western Sicily. We do not know the names or origins of those who built the castle and church and demolished the mosque on this large hilltop site in the late 12th/early 13th century. However, analyses of ancient DNA from the burials – radiocarbon-dated to the 13th century – located in front of the church at Segesta indicate a possible provenance from the northern Mediterranean. Moreover, there is no sign of any intermingling with individuals buried according to Koranic rites in the nearby Muslim cemetery, situated only a few metres from the Christian one.⁶⁹ The burials from the Islamic area date between the 10th and 13th centuries. Although, in the case of Segesta, there may have been a short-lived local Christian lord, together with his own retinue of immigrants, who had no connection with Pisan and Genoese merchants, the strong presence of imported tableware nevertheless suggests that new social actors were able to foster trade between inland areas and the coast. Moreover, the involvement of the so-called Latin merchants in the inland economies of the Crusader states has been hypothesised for several regions of the Levant that have been intensively investigated archaeologically; in these areas, such merchants are thought to have encouraged increased production specialisation and the circulation of both tableware and cooking wares.⁷⁰

Overall, then, the data for the 13th century point to growth on several fronts. It does not seem unreasonable to consider that the increase in the inter-regional trade – in which Italian merchants played an important role – also had an impact on domestic economies. Moreover, if we regard ceramics as a reliable proxy for reconstructing the modes and intensity of the circulation of cloth (a sector economically far more significant than ceramics), why should we not also view the patterns observed in ceramic consumption in western Sicily in the first half of the 13th century – when imports equalled or even surpassed local production of fine pottery – as a valid indicator of broader economic developments?

Let us now turn to Egypt, where the dynamics of internal exchange in the Fatimid period (10th-12th century) have recently been delineated with great clarity.⁷¹ Here we can offer some additional thoughts, especially with regard to imported ceramics and excavated textiles. Egypt is potentially one of the few areas of the Mediterranean where it is possible – on an archaeological basis – to compare the circulation patterns of perishable artefacts such as textiles with those of ubiquitous ceramics, thanks to the climate and soil conditions that often allow for the remarkable preservation of materials that would otherwise be extremely perishable. The internal distribution network of Egyptian-produced fine tableware ceramics is highly complex. The two

⁶⁹ Molinari, *Segesta*; Monnerau, et al., “Multi-Proxy Bioarchaeological Analysis.”

⁷⁰ Stern, et al., “The impact of the Crusades.”

⁷¹ Again Wickham, *The Donkey*, 82-93, with bibliography.

main centres – Aswan and Fustat (the capital) – located several hundred kilometres apart, essentially supplied the whole of Egypt with a very wide range of high- and medium-quality products, which were also exported in small quantities outside the country. Also of interest, however, is the quantitative relationship between local production and imports, which unfortunately can only be sketched, as the number of fully published excavations is less than meagre. An extensive study on the production of ceramics from China between 800 and 1500⁷² and their circulation across the Indian Ocean to Egypt has shown that, between the 11th and 13th centuries, Egypt yielded the highest number of finds in the entire region under consideration – surpassing even the centres of the Persian Gulf, which had dominated in earlier centuries. Most finds come from Fustat (where most excavation has also taken place), but significant quantities have also been reported from Alexandria, Quseir al-Qadim, Qûs, and Aydhâb. A range of Chinese ceramics (mostly from southern kilns) are witnessed, and these are not considered luxury productions. This has led Zhang to hypothesise the centrality of Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk Egypt within the global trade system of the Indian Ocean.⁷³ Whenever it is possible to examine the composition of ceramic assemblages more closely, however, the amount of exotic imports is generally very low compared to local production.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, it was quite normal in Fustat households to possess tableware originating from faraway China. It is not known what was sent to China in exchange for these ceramics, but it is likely that their arrival was mediated through the wider Indian Ocean trade system rather than through any direct relationship between Egypt and China. Chinese ceramics did, however, reach Egypt with regularity over many centuries. It can also be added that, with the exception of a few isolated instances, such ceramics did not reach other Mediterranean regions in the period between the 10th and 13th centuries. Taken together, the evidence for both local Egyptian production and imported wares certainly seems to support Wickham's view that each individual region needed to possess a sufficiently developed domestic economy in order to participate systematically in interregional trade. However, we must also recall, as we have done above, that the ceramics – especially those from Fustat – that most marked a productive turning point, becoming successful enough to enter the realm of mass consumption, explicitly imitated the various Chinese ceramics or Iraqi lustres that had been imported.⁷⁵ If we add to this other products such as paper, glass made with vegetable ash, sugar and cotton, we may well say that Fatimid Egypt's trade and cultural contacts fos-

⁷² Zhang, *An Exploratory Quantitative Archaeological Analysis*. See also Qin, Ho, "Chinese ceramic exports."

⁷³ The literature on the subject is quite extensive: see e.g. Zhang, *An Exploratory*; Priestman, *Ceramic exchange*, who independently holds similar opinions to Wickham, *The Donkey*, on domestic economies and international exchange.

⁷⁴ See for example the stratigraphies of the walls of Cairo: Monchamp, *Céramiques des Murailles du Caire*, or the data on Alexandria: François, *Céramiques médiévales à Alexandrie*.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Gayraud, "Arabisation, islamisation et orientaliation."

tered its capacity for innovation. In turn, this capacity was both a product of and a contribution to the dynamism of its domestic markets. In short, international trade may not have been entirely unrelated to domestic development. Something similar occurred, as we will mention shortly, on the Italian Peninsula, especially in the 13th century.

Remaining with Egypt, I would like to briefly mention the textiles recovered in archaeological excavations, which provide some of the best evidence for the everyday uses of textiles. Although the published data are limited and it is not possible to determine provenance with the same precision as in the case of ceramics, a few observations can nonetheless be made. In the 1980s excavations at Quseir al-Qadim, a port on the Red Sea, most of the textiles recovered were locally produced, though there was also a significant presence of cotton fabrics identifiable – on the basis of style and technique – as being of Indian origin.⁷⁶ The fabrics from the relatively recent excavations at Istabl Antar, an area of Fustat, are still under study, but they too appear to consist largely of very common local products, with only a few fine imported.⁷⁷ In addition, many of the Indian cotton textiles now held in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford – radiocarbon-dated to between the 9th and 13th centuries – are known to have come from Fustat.⁷⁸ While it is clear that the Egyptian domestic market was again far more important than the international one, in this case – unlike with ceramics – imported products were not imitated. Nevertheless, the use of cotton as a weaving fibre appears to have been encouraged by international trade during the Fatimid era.⁷⁹

At Quseir al-Qadim, the best-studied medieval Egyptian context for archaeobotanical remains, it is possible to identify other types of imports, including of spices and Indian wood, although local species tended to be preferred in the Islamic phases.⁸⁰ In Fustat, Roland-Pierre Gayraud notes that the 11th-century stratigraphic levels of Istabl Antar contain as many as twelve types of plants ‘from India’, though these, like all the wood finds from the site, unfortunately remain unpublished.⁸¹ It would also be interesting to know precisely where these Fustat plant remains originated, and whether material from other Mediterranean regions is attested. As is well known, the shortage of timber in Egypt and the need to import wood have been regarded by some authors as structural weaknesses of the Egyptian economy,⁸² and, in any case,

⁷⁶ See Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Resist dyed textiles* on excavations in the 1980s and Peacock, Blue, *Myos Hormos-Quseir al-Qadim*, 321-3, on more recent ones.

⁷⁷ Personal communication with Roberta Cortopassi of the Louvre Museum. On the context, see also Gayraud, *Fostat* and Gayraud, Vallauri, *Fustat II*.

⁷⁸ Barnes, *Indian Block-printed Textiles in Egypt*.

⁷⁹ The transfer of the technique of cotton cultivation and weaving are two distinct issues. For example, although it is not yet possible to specify the species, cotton was cultivated in the southern oases of Egypt in the 3rd century, but it does not appear to have been used for textiles. See, e.g., Kelley, “By Land or by Sea;” Bouchaud, et al., *Cottoning on to Cotton*.

⁸⁰ Van der Veen, *Consumption*, 40-73 and 205-26.

⁸¹ Gayraud, “Arabisation,” 161.

⁸² See, e.g. Lombard, *L'Islam dans sa première grandeur*.

as factors that made timber one of the principal products exported from the Christian West to Egypt.⁸³ It is likely, however, that Egypt was able to diversify its sources of wood considerably, thereby mitigating what might otherwise have been a significant dependence on inter-regional trade.

To sum up: the complexity of internal exchange networks in Egypt and Sicily, their degrees of economic integration with other regions, and their capacity for technical innovation across various fields of production (as attested by archaeological sources) are phenomena that are either not visible – or at least not nearly as pronounced – on the Italian Peninsula, especially in central-northern Italy, before the late 12th and especially the 13th century. Although the data concerning modes of production and the circulation of pottery and other artefacts for the period in question are not always equally detailed, certain areas of the Peninsula have been analysed more closely and provide particularly significant insights. Between the 10th and 12th centuries, there appears to have been a gradual shift from redistributive systems based primarily on *curtis* production and dependent artisans to urban production carried out by specialised craftsmen.⁸⁴ As mentioned above, this process reached maturity in the 13th century. Let us also recall that money circulation was almost non-existent in rural areas until at least the end of the 12th century.⁸⁵

In the case of Pisa⁸⁶ it has been established that urban ceramic production took hold only gradually over the course of the 11th-12th centuries, with some urban products circulating in the surrounding countryside. From the early 13th century onward, the production of archaic maiolica in the city marked a significant qualitative leap, and during that century Pisan pottery gained a large regional and even interregional market. We may say that archaic maiolica was the first ceramic production in Pisa to become a real commodity. Between the 10th and 12th centuries, Pisa was one of the Italian cities that received the greatest quantity of imported ceramics – both fine tableware and amphorae. Initially these arrived from Latium and Campania, but later from a wide swath of the Islamic world, from al-Andalus to Egypt, including Tunisia and Sicily, and to a much lesser extent from the Byzantine territories. The percentage of imported ceramics in relation to local production remained generally low until the 12th century. Pisa redistributed small quantities of these imports into part of its countryside. By the 13th century, however, it is noteworthy that Pisa exported fine ware (its archaic maiolica) along the Tyrrhenian coast, from Sicily to Provence. The bulk of Pisan exports, however, was directed above all towards its vast countryside. A comparable qualita-

⁸³ Wickham, *The Donkey*, 137.

⁸⁴ For an overview, see Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*; Fiore, Poloni, *L'economia medievale*, 97-137.

⁸⁵ Rovelli, "Nuove zecche" and her contribution to this volume.

⁸⁶ For an overview of the economic aspects of ceramic production and consumption in Pisa, see Cantini, "Ritmi e forme" and Cantini, Grassi, "Produzione, circolazione e consumo."

tive leap can be observed in the production of metal objects, especially in the 13th century. Excavations in the Chinzica district, for example, have revealed specialised workshops producing clothing accessories (especially buckles) in series by means of moulds, enabling truly remarkable production volumes.⁸⁷

The ceramic production of Rome between the early and late Middle Ages has also been thoroughly investigated.⁸⁸ The well-known Forum ware – whose technical tradition was rooted at least in Late Antiquity and required only a single firing – is poorly standardised in the early stages of production (late 8th/9th cent.) and, outside the city, is often found in connection with ecclesiastical institutions. It appears to have been produced by craftsmen with low output, perhaps non-independent and/or itinerant. In the 10th and 11th centuries, Forum ware became progressively more standardised, and written references to specialised craftsmen – especially potters based in Trastevere – multiplied. However, analyses of the clay used in Forum ware sherds found outside the city suggest that the market for Roman ware was primarily, though not exclusively, urban. Between the 10th and 12th centuries, Rome was probably the most populous and economically complex city on the Italian Peninsula.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, as I have argued elsewhere, its level of complexity was modest compared to that of Palermo during the same period.⁹⁰

3. *Concluding: periodising and comparing*

Jessica Goldberg⁹¹ has recently observed the difficulty of establishing a clear periodisation while at the same time comparing the Islamic regions of the Mediterranean with areas such as central and northern Italy, noting that regions like Egypt and the Levant may have entered their development phase even before the 10th century. We can nonetheless agree with Chris Wickham that the greatest economic complexity within the Islamic Mediterranean is most evident in the 10th-12th centuries. During the same period, textual and archaeological evidence consistently indicates that central and northern Italy were undergoing a phase of transformation, marked by a gradual transition from systems based on redistribution to the growth of cities and independent, specialised crafts.

For the Islamic areas of the Mediterranean, the modes and locations of ceramic production (including not only amphorae, but also glazed pottery and cooking pots) and its various distribution networks clearly indicate the full

⁸⁷ For archaeological evidence of manufacturing activities in Pisa, see Cantini, Rizzitelli, *Una città operosa*. On the former Gentili workshops in Chinzica, see Carrera, *Gli scavi degli "Ex Laboratori Gentili"*.

⁸⁸ An overview of the topics mentioned below can be found in Rascaglia, Russo, "La ceramica medievale di Roma" and Molinari, et al., "Stili di vita, produzioni e scambi."

⁸⁹ This is discussed in Wickham, *Medieval Rome*.

⁹⁰ Molinari, "Riflessioni sulle economie."

⁹¹ Goldberg, "About «The Donkey and the Boat»."

development of specialised, independent craftsmen in urban areas, as well as the substantial consumption of urban products in rural ones. The volumes involved, and the distances between production and consumption sites, would not be matched in Italy until much later. The role of the fiscal authorities in facilitating the circulation of goods is especially evident in Egypt and Sicily during the Fatimid period, and in al-Andalus during the early Caliphal era. Yet this does not appear to have been the only factor encouraging the circulation of goods between city and country. The existence of relatively prosperous peasant communities not dependent on 'lords' seems to have been another important component. What we know about the monetarisation of the rural economies of Egypt and Sicily likewise points in the same direction as the ceramic data.

Important information also comes from archaeology's ability to identify the varying degrees of complexity in the *chaîne opératoire* and the more or less pronounced propensity for technological innovation among past societies. Here again, comparison shows the Islamic regions to have been markedly more prone to innovation. The mechanisms underlying the technical changes identified by archaeologists – whether in craft or agricultural production – are as complex as ever. International trade networks appear to have played an important role in stimulating such innovations, although it is clear that the receptiveness of each society to external novelties depended on a combination of social, economic, and cultural factors internal to each social formation. Somewhat like international trade, which can only be said to be possible when domestic economies are sufficiently developed, the capacity for change requires sufficiently open societies with a balance of urban elites and peasants demand. As we have seen, in the Islamic world the drivers of change included not only the caliphate and the urban aristocracies, but also peasant communities in the agricultural sphere. The mechanisms of innovation could involve imitation, the creation of entirely new techniques, the mobility of artisans and peasants, and the promotion of marginal or dormant techniques to produce new types of objects. Another aspect to consider is the category of innovations that might allow for the economists' celebrated 'free meal'. Here, however, the situation appears to be more complicated. While, for example, the introduction of plant ash as a flux in place of Egyptian natron can indeed be seen as an innovation that reduced the cost of glass production, the spread of richly decorated and glazed ceramics – products that were technically more complex and required double or triple the fuel, as well as more expensive raw materials – seems, by contrast, to represent a 'more expensive meal'. The huge success of glazed pottery on the market must have offset this increase demand for labour, energy, and raw materials. If we evaluate positively only those innovations that make production processes more efficient (such as mills in their traditional forms, the mouldboard plough, or horizontal looms), we risk overlooking the explanatory value of other kinds of innovative processes.

Finally, it seems important to emphasise the profound changes visible in the 13th century in peninsular Italy – though not there alone. It would be particularly interesting to reconsider the extent to which the so-called Latin mer-

chants, but especially the Italian ones, influenced local economies between the 12th and 13th centuries, above all in former Islamic regions with which they intensified their commercial relations. In the Crusader States, for example, both ordinary and fine ceramic production saw increases in scale and organisational changes. In Sicily, in Mazara, we have observed a marked expansion of cotton cultivation in the 13th century, at the expense of the polyculture characteristic of the Islamic period, along with a sharper orientation of sheep husbandry towards wool and cheese production. The growth of interregional relations in the 13th century, in which Italian merchants played an important role, may well have encouraged the specialisation of production in certain Mediterranean areas. Future research, including archaeological work, should reconsider just how ‘external’ Italian merchants truly were to the local economies of some Mediterranean regions with which they came into more intensive contact,⁹² and to what extent this intensification may have constrained, rather than simply responded to, the autonomous choices of local farmers.

⁹² Reflections of this kind have previously been raised by Petralia, “La nuova Sicilia tardomedievale,” specifically regarding the presence of Tuscan merchants even in minor Sicilian centres.

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Alessandra Molinari
 Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata
 molinari@lettere.uniroma2.it
 ORCID: 0000-0003-2233-5349

Local and supra-local drivers in the transformation processes of material culture. Central-northern Italy between the 10th and 12th centuries

by Federico Cantini

This article examines the transformation processes of material culture in central-northern Italy between the 10th and 12th centuries, focusing on the interplay between local and supra-local drivers and their impact on landscapes, economies, and societies. Drawing primarily on archaeological evidence, integrated with written sources, the study reconstructs changes in both urban and rural contexts, with particular attention to the building sector as a key indicator of economic and social development. During the 10th century, construction in stone remained limited and largely confined to public, episcopal, and monastic initiatives, within predominantly regional economic systems. From the 11th century onward, and especially during the 12th century, a progressive 'petrification' of the landscape can be observed, marked by the spread of masonry houses and towers, long-lasting ecclesiastical and civic building campaigns, and the growing centrality of cities. These developments were supported by widespread demographic growth, intensified exploitation of rural resources, and, from the 12th century onward, the expansion of Mediterranean and northern European trade networks. Increasing investment capacity, social mobility, and political competition within emerging communal frameworks fostered the diffusion of shared architectural models, adapted to local conditions, resulting in a profound material and symbolic transformation of medieval society.

Questo articolo esamina i processi di trasformazione della cultura materiale nell'Italia centro-settentrionale tra i secoli X e XII, concentrandosi sull'interazione tra fattori locali e sovra-locali e sul loro impatto su paesaggi, economie e società. Basandosi principalmente su evidenze

Federico Cantini, University of Pisa, Italy, federico.cantini@unipi.it, 0000-0003-0586-7968

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archeologiche, integrate con fonti scritte, lo studio ricostruisce i cambiamenti sia nei contesti urbani sia in quelli rurali, con particolare attenzione al settore edilizio come indicatore chiave dello sviluppo economico e sociale. Nel corso del X secolo, la costruzione in pietra rimase limitata e in gran parte confinata a iniziative pubbliche, episcopali e monastiche, all'interno di sistemi economici prevalentemente regionali. Dal secolo XI in poi, e soprattutto nel corso del secolo XII, si osserva una progressiva 'pietrificazione' del paesaggio, caratterizzata dalla diffusione di abitazioni e torri in muratura, da campagne edilizie ecclesiastiche e civiche di lunga durata e dalla crescente centralità delle città. Tali sviluppi furono sostenuti da una diffusa crescita demografica, da un'intensificazione dello sfruttamento delle risorse rurali e, a partire dal XII secolo, dall'espansione delle reti commerciali mediterranee e dell'Europa settentrionale. Il crescente potenziale di investimento, la mobilità sociale e la competizione politica all'interno dei nascenti quadri comunali favorirono la diffusione di modelli architettonici condivisi, adattati alle condizioni locali, determinando una profonda trasformazione materiale e simbolica della società medievale.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, central-northern Italy, material culture, medieval economy, building practices.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Italia centro-settentrionale, cultura materiale, economia medievale, pratiche costruttive.

1. Introduction

Between the 10th and 12th centuries, profound transformations occurred in the landscapes, economies, and societies of central-northern Italy and beyond. What were the preconditions, drivers, and forms of implementation of these changes, as well as the rhythms that characterized their full manifestation?¹ These topics have been the focus of numerous contributions and conferences,² and they continue to attract scholarly attention today, as demonstrated by Chris Wickham's recent book *The Donkey and the Boat*, published in 2023.³

In the following text, I will address these themes, drawing primarily on archaeological data and evaluating the different impacts that local and supra-local factors had on the ongoing processes. This attempt will entail – whether as a limitation or perhaps as a virtue, depending on the reader's judgment – a general tendency to simplify the complex phenomena that unfolded during the period under consideration. Nevertheless, I believe it is sometimes useful to observe events from a distance to understand their development, even at the risk of occasional error.

¹ Carocci, "Portici, palazzi, torri;" Molinari, "Archeologia e mobilità."

² Cortonesi, e Palermo, *La prima espansione economica*; Molinari, "Mondi rurali d'Italia;" *La crescita economica*.

³ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*.

2. The data

In presenting the data, I will proceed chronologically from the 10th to the 12th century, addressing urban spaces first and then rural ones. For central-northern Italy, extending from Lazio to the Alps, there are more studies of the countryside⁴ than of cities. For this reason, with regard to urban centers, I will focus on a few exemplary cases.

2.1. The 10th century

2.1.1. The cities

In the 10th century, the urban centers of central-northern Italy were characterized by a transforming, still-rural landscape dotted with the ruins of Roman monuments and filled with fields, vineyards, and gardens. A new road network was developing amidst these ruins, primarily connecting religious structures.⁵

In Rome, the new parceling of abandoned public spaces – intended for the construction of *case solariate* (masonry houses with an upper floor) – involved extensive land reclamation projects during the 10th century. This is clearly evidenced in Trajan's Forum, where “thousands of cubic meters of soil and crushed Roman pottery, alternated with layers of sand and clay”, were dumped (Fig. 1). This intervention is associated with the initiative of the aristocrat *Kaloleus*, a member of the entourage of the city's lord, Alberic, who resided nearby with his female relatives, close to the church of the Santi Apostoli.⁶

Quantitative evaluation of the presence of *case solariate* is possible, unfortunately, only through written sources for the city of Lucca. In the 10th century, out of 108 houses, both urban and suburban, only 13 (14.4%) are described as *solari* and 4 as *sale* (4.32%); one of these, equipped with baths (790), belonged to the father of Bishops Giovanni I and Iacopo.⁷ Evidently, such infrastructures were still exceptional. In Pisa, between the late 9th and early 11th centuries, stone buildings are also documented: in Piazza Dante, where they were covered with plaster; in the Sapienza area, interpreted as *case solariate* with an internal area of 30 square meters; and in Via Cavalca. These structures coexisted with dwellings and annexes made of perishable materials – sometimes on stone foundations – and often made use of *spolia* or stone materials collected from the surface.⁸

⁴ Augenti, e Galetti, *L'incastellamento: storia e archeologia*.

⁵ An exemplary case is Rome, see Santangeli Veneziani, *Roma altomedievale*.

⁶ Meneghini, e Santangeli Valenzani, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, 186-8; Meneghini, “Roma medioevale e i Fori,” 22-4.

⁷ Cantini, “Specchiarsi nella pietra.”

⁸ Cantini, with previous bibliography.

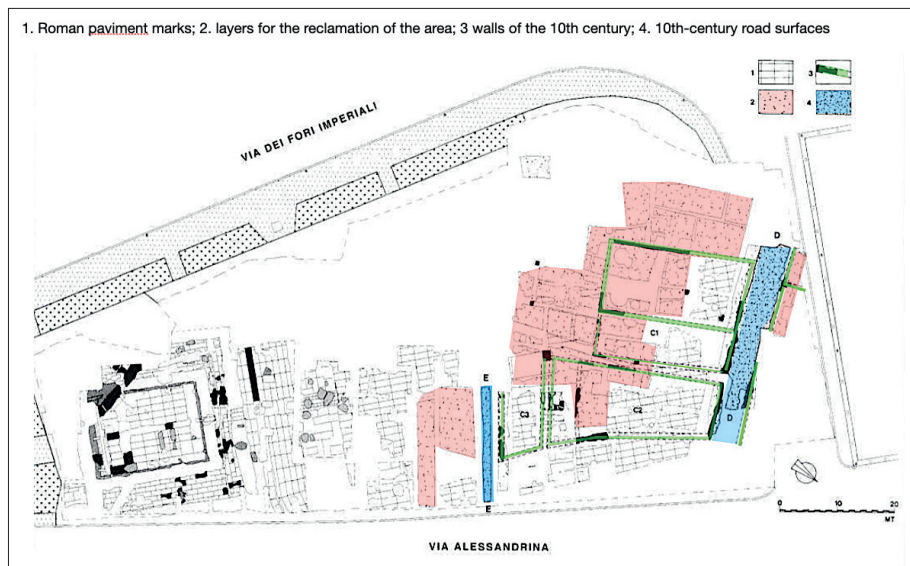


Fig. 1. Trajan's Forum in the 10th century. Modified image from Meneghini, Santangeli Valenzani, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, 186, fig. 177.

Additionally, some towers began to appear (in Lucca as early as the 9th century).⁹ These towers were often associated with fortified episcopal palaces: we have records of them in Parma in 935, Savona in 988, and Modena in 1016.¹⁰ In the urban landscape, *episcopio* must have stood out as particularly complex structures: written and archaeological sources confirm that, from the late 9th and early 10th centuries onward, they included a tower (*turris*), a solar (*solarium*), a hall (*caminata*), one or more loggias (*laubie*), stables, warehouses, and chapels, as well as gardens.¹¹

Episcopal palaces were paralleled by those of public power, characterized by similar architectural features: halls, *caminata*, *solari*, *laubie*, and chapels.¹²

If we then look at investments in churches and monasteries, we see that the first half of the 10th century was a period of severe crisis, marked by abandoned structures lamented by both popes and prelates. In 903, Bishop Everard of Piacenza declared he was unable to restore the suburban church of San Savino, which had been burned by the Hungarians, because it was too large for his means. He therefore decided to build a new monastery within the city walls, on a more modest scale.¹³ The situation changed starting from the 970s-980s,

⁹ Augenti, "Identità urbane in Italia," 161.

¹⁰ Chavarria Arnau, "Case solarate e domus."

¹¹ Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 54-72.

¹² Cantini et al., "Nuovi dati sull'area della corte;" Cantini, "The Centres of Public Power."

¹³ Tosco, *L'architettura medievale in Italia*, 55.

during the Ottonian era, when episcopal patrons began rebuilding or restoring religious buildings. However, these reconstructions often followed non-innovative models with irregular masonry that was frequently covered with plaster and used split stones and *spolia* materials.¹⁴ In Pisa, north of the cathedral, remains of a church – likely the cathedral – have been found. It was rebuilt between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century and equipped with a frescoed crypt.¹⁵ In Milan, work was carried out on the tetraconch of San Lorenzo and the presbytery of Sant’Ambrogio. In Ravenna, in 965, Archbishop Peter IV constructed a funerary chamber for the veneration of relics, featuring a double ambulatory within the Ursian cathedral, while cylindrical bell towers began to appear, starting with the cathedral’s bell tower in the mid-tenth century. In Ivrea, Bishop Warmund promoted the restructuring of the cathedral at the end of the 10th century, adopting a design that included a western apse area with a double ambulatory framed by two towers. Similar twin towers are also found in the reconstruction of the Aosta cathedral, commissioned by Bishop Anselm at the end of the 10th century.¹⁶

The renewal of religious structures also occurred thanks to the involvement of public authorities, who invested particularly in monastic institutions. Examples include the Badia Fiorentina in Florence (970) and the monastery of San Nicola in Pisa (late 10th century), attributed to Margrave Hugh.¹⁷

This scenario inevitably brings to mind the words of the chronicler Rodulfus Glaber, who described Europe around the year 1000 as being covered with a *candidam aecclesiarum vestem*,¹⁸ an image that aptly reflects the significant investment in religious building projects beginning at the end of the 10th century.

The economy from which the resources for these reconstructions were drawn was not yet oriented toward the Mediterranean, from where rare products arrived primarily through the few cities that served as the maritime arm of public authority. In Pisa, from the second half of the 10th century and throughout the 11th century, small quantities of soapstone from the western Alps, painted ceramics from the Campania-Lazio area, glazed ceramics from Lazio, and painted amphorae from Palermo have been found. In addition, Sicilian polychrome glazed tableware appeared sporadically.¹⁹

Between the late 10th and early 11th centuries, some Tunisian and Sicilian ceramics (yellow-glazed, painted in green and brown) are attested in Genoa

¹⁴ Tosco, 103-4.

¹⁵ Cantini, “Archeologia di un’assenza.”

¹⁶ Tosco, *L’architettura medievale in Italia*, 105-11.

¹⁷ Cantini, “Valleys and power.”

¹⁸ Tosco, *L’architettura medievale in Italia*.

¹⁹ Meo, “Anfore, uomini e reti,” 225; Meo, “L’ordinario e l’eccezione,” 62. In the second half of the 10th century, Sicilian glazed wares with ‘alla pavoncella’ decorations appeared in Via Cavalca and Via della Sapienza. For a discussion on the possible mediation by Campania (Amalfi?) in the trade of Sicilian products to Pisa, see Meo, “Anfore, uomini e reti,” 228, with previous bibliography. On medieval amphorae in Pisa, see also Fatighenti, “I contenitori da trasporto.”

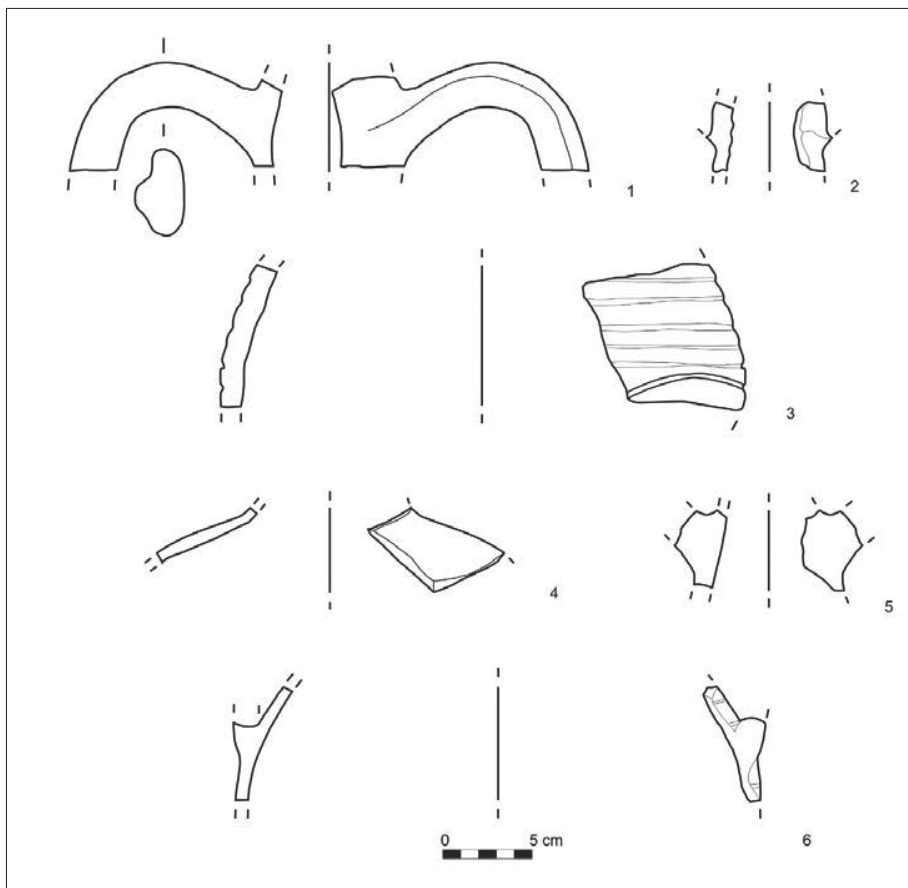


Fig. 2. Otranto-type amphorae [1-3] and gray paste amphorae [4-6] from the site of Nonantola. From Sabbionesi, "Anfore medievali dall'Abbazia," 30, tav. 1.

and Savona.²⁰ In the Venetian lagoon, from the 10th to the first half of the 11th century, only piriform Eastern amphorae (Brusic I-Mljet 1, also found in Ferrara), ovoidal ones (Brusic Va-Mljet 6.1, possibly Greek – from Corinth – or from southern Italy, also found in Ferrara), and South Adriatic amphorae (Otranto type, which would also become widely distributed along the eastern Adriatic coast) appear to have arrived, although their quantities have yet to be determined.²¹

²⁰ Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 133-4; Benente, "La ceramica d'importazione dal Mediterraneo," 64; De Vingo, "La céramique d'importation," 283-6.

²¹ Gelichi, Sauro, et al. "Importare, produrre e consumare," 55-72, and Gelichi, "The Other Than Self," 433-7. In the 9th and 10th centuries, we only find glazed ceramics (forum ware and sparse glazed ware with handled jugs and cups), likely produced in north-eastern Italy. The only

On the Adriatic side, additional but sporadic findings have been recorded: Eastern amphorae from southern Italy and Sicilian examples have been found in contexts dating from the 10th to 11th centuries in the episcopal area of Comacchio.²² Otranto-type amphorae and containers characterized by gray paste come from contexts dated to the second half of the 9th and first half of the 10th century in Nonantola²³ (Fig. 2). Sicilian amphorae have also been found in Classe.²⁴

In the central-northern Tyrrhenian area, south of Pisa, the only known case is that of Rome, which has yielded a single specimen of Sicilian glazed pottery with *graticcio* decoration from the 10th century, discovered during the excavations of the *Forum* of Nerva.²⁵

More generally, central-northern Italy appears to have been predominantly characterized by regional and sub-regional economies, which distinguished the north-western area from the north-eastern, and both from the center of the peninsula.²⁶ Mediterranean products still seem to have been rare and concentrated in a few cities or large monasteries, with the Adriatic coast showing greater openness to Byzantine goods and the Tyrrhenian coast to Islamic products – both evidently still luxury items. The goods that achieved widespread and supra-regional distribution were, by contrast, primary commodities of local origin, such as salt, which circulated throughout the Po Valley in northern Italy, and in which Venice itself came to play an important role from the late 10th century onward.²⁷

2.1.2. *The countryside*

From the mid-tenth century onward, rural landscapes witnessed the construction of castles commissioned by public and episcopal authorities, as well as by great lords, monasteries, and members of the middle aristocracy. However, despite the growing number of sites, investments appear to have been modest: stone walls or foundations enclosed houses built primarily of perishable materials, sometimes set on stone bases.²⁸

With the exception of episcopal and lordly centers, churches in fortified hilltop sites were rare. Similarly uncommon were interactions between religious structures from the early high Middle Ages (6th-9th centuries) – often

exception is a fragment of Glazed White Ware II chafing dish (9th-11th century) from Constantinople, found during the excavation of the monastery of St. Hilary and Benedict in Gambarre, on the mainland (Gelichi et al., “Importare, produrre e consumare,” 68). On amphorae, see Negrelli, “Modelli di scambio,” 21.

²² Negrelli, 25.

²³ Negrelli, 25-6; Sabbionesi, “Anfore medievali dall’Abbazia.”

²⁴ Sacco, “Produzione e circolazione.”

²⁵ Molinari, “Le anfore medievali come proxy,” 299. Molinari, “Riflessioni sulle economie,” 164; Russo, “I romani e il gusto esotico,” 131-2, where the glazed pottery is dated to the 11th century.

²⁶ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 526-8.

²⁷ Wickham, 508.

²⁸ Cantini “Specchiarsi nella pietra;” Cantini, Cirelli, “Mercati, economie e incastellamento.”

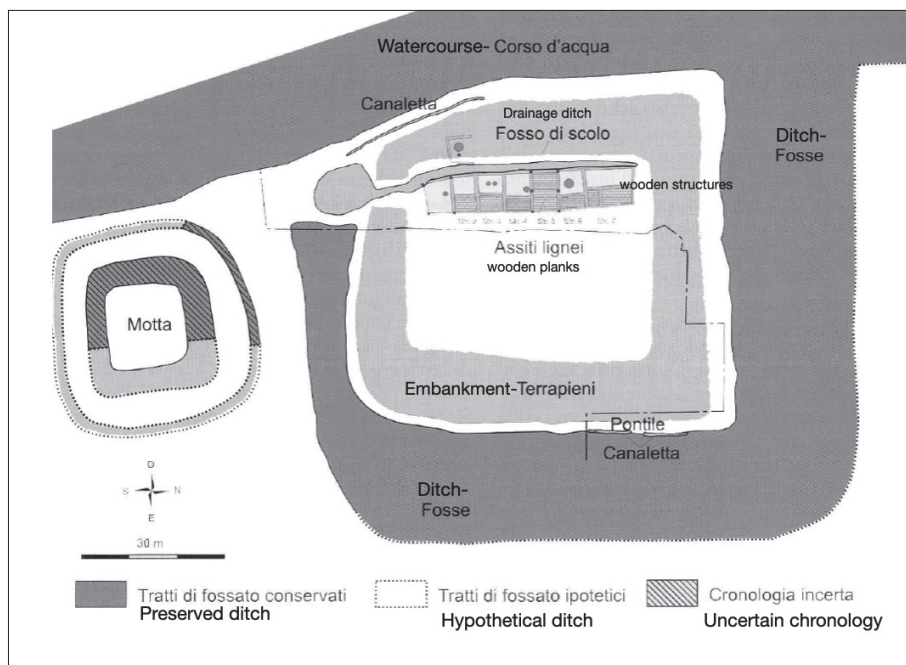


Fig. 3. Sant'Agata Bolognese between the 10th and 11th centuries. From Gelichi, Librenti, Marchesini, *Un villaggio nella pianura*, 406, fig. 4.

located on plains along roads – and fortified sites.²⁹ Generally, these fortified structures, at least in this early phase, do not appear to have fostered any particular centralization of settlement.³⁰ Furthermore, between the 10th and 11th centuries, they were mainly located beyond a buffer zone extending roughly 10 km from cities or 20–5 km in the case of Rome). The only exceptions were, once again, castles belonging to bishops, monasteries, or aristocratic groups associated with episcopal clienteles.³¹

Between the 9th and 10th centuries, even the plains experienced a phase of denser occupation, characterized predominantly by wooden construction – likely due to the difficulty of obtaining stone materials. In the Grosseto area, villages developed around churches, and Roman-age centers were reoccupied, a process that continued into the 12th century.³² In southern Tuscany, there are also examples of sites resembling mottes, such as Vetricella, which was associated with the royal court of Valli. This settlement, established between the seventh and 9th centuries, was delimited in the late 9th century by

²⁹ Mancassola, “Castelli e chiese.”

³⁰ Cantini, Cirelli, “Mercati, economie e incastellamento,” 163.

³¹ Cortese, “Una convivenza difficile.”

³² Cantini, Cirelli, “Mercati, economie e incastellamento,” 163.

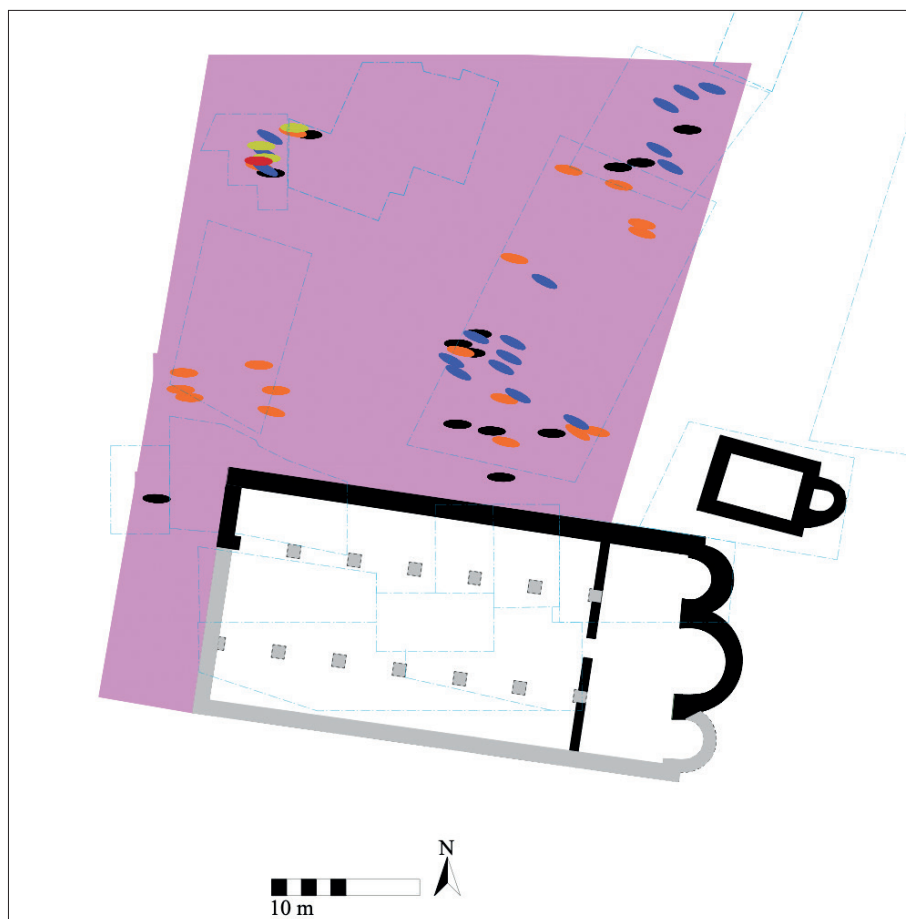


Fig. 4. The church of San Genesio in the 10th century. Plan by the author.

three concentric ditches, with a wooden tower at the center. During its period of greatest development – from the second half of the 10th to the first half of the 11th century – when its economy was based on iron processing, the innermost ditch was filled in and the tower rebuilt with a stone base. Additionally, a small cemetery developed near a wooden structure. These consolidation efforts occurred during a phase of settlement growth near the adjacent lagoon and *Portus Scabris*.³³ Similar examples are found at several sites in the Romagna plains, such as Sant'Agata Bolognese, where, between the 9th and 10th centuries, wooden structures stood within an area enclosed by two ditches. In the same site, between the 10th and 11th centuries, the internal space was

³³ Bianchi, and Hodges, *Vetricella*; Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*, 13-40.

more rationally organized, with rows of wooden buildings surrounded by new ditches and an external motte (Fig. 3). This settlement is likely to be identified with the *castrum* of Pontelongo.³⁴ Regularization of inhabited spaces by plots is also evident in other Po Valley villages (Piadena–Cremona; Nogara, Poviglio, and Bovolone in the Veronese plain), where residential construction continued to consist predominantly of perishable materials.³⁵

Returning to Tuscany, in villages situated along major road and river routes – which played a significant economic role in the early Middle Ages, hosting public courts and parish churches – we observe, from the 10th century onward, significant investments in the renovation of ecclesiastical structures. This is exemplified by the village and church of San Genesio, which was rebuilt and expanded into a triabsidal basilica with three naves (Fig. 4).³⁶ This renovation may have reflected the bishop's desire to establish his authority in an area previously controlled by the marquises, as well as the local community's demographic growth.

With regard to models of production and circulation of goods, the dominant system appears to have been based on the transfer of services, goods, and produce from peasant farms to *curtes* serving as management centers,³⁷ and from there to cities and large monasteries where the owners resided. This is supported by the near-total absence of coins, which are found primarily in centers associated with public authority.³⁸ Nevertheless, the increase in the number of sites suggests not only widespread demographic growth but also an increase in the resources produced during this phase. In coastal areas, though rarely, some Mediterranean products were present, as evidenced by the presence of Sicilian amphorae at Brina Castle near La Spezia, dating to between the 10th and 11th centuries. However, the broad chronology does not allow us to determine whether these goods can be attributed to the early 11th century.³⁹

2.2. The 11th century

2.2.1. Cities

The beginning of the 11th century marks a period of crisis for imperial power in Italy, symbolized by the death of the last sovereign of the Saxon dynasty, Henry II, Duke of Bavaria, and by the destruction of the royal palace of Pavia in 1024.⁴⁰ With the advent of the Salian dynasty, inaugurated by the

³⁴ Mancassola, "L'incastellamento in Emilia," 356–8.

³⁵ For a synthesis see Saggioro, "Villaggi e castelli," 111–2.

³⁶ Cantini, "Valleys and power," for a preview.

³⁷ Cantini, Cirelli, "Mercati, economie e incastellamento," 158.

³⁸ Cantini, Cirelli, 160.

³⁹ Meo, "Anfore, uomini e reti," 228.

⁴⁰ Tosco, *L'architettura medievale in Italia*, 111.

coronation of Conrad II (1024-1039), bishops – now endowed with increasingly extensive powers – together with wealthy aristocrats, invested further in the reconstruction or construction of urban and suburban churches and monasteries.

In northern Italy, inspiration was drawn from the models of Cluny, Aachen, and the cathedrals of the upper Rhine, while in central and eastern Italy, from the 1060s-1070s onward, influences from Roman and Byzantine architecture also became apparent. In Milan, the

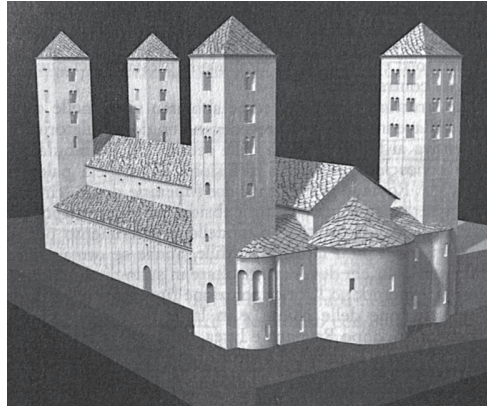


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the Aosta cathedral in the 11th century. From Tosco, *L'architettura medievale*, 109, fig. 19.

Basilica of San Dionigi at Porta Orientale was founded in 1023, followed by the Church of Santa Trinità, initiated by a member of a family of imperial minters (1030). This church featured a trilobate termination and facade towers, a design also seen during the same period at Bobbio and in the cathedral of Aosta⁴¹ (Fig. 5). In Parma, the cathedral appears to have undergone a building phase dating to the first half of the 11th century (episcopate of Hugh, 1027-44/5). In 1031, Patriarch Poppo consecrated the reconstructed cathedral of Aquileia.⁴² In Brescia, the cathedral of San Pietro was reconstructed by Bishop Landolfo II (1002-30); a few years later, the church of Santa Maria was also renovated, featuring an innovative central plan structure with a western tower at the entrance.⁴³ Other episcopal initiatives are attested in the Marche and Umbria regions, where Bishop Hugh (1028-56) promoted the construction of a new cathedral near the sanctuary of the martyr Rufinus in Assisi.⁴⁴ In Florence, Pope Nicholas II consecrated the new cathedral in 1059⁴⁵. A few years later (1064), reconstruction began of the cathedral of Santa Maria in Pisa began, which was consecrated in 1118. The funding for this enterprise included spoils of war from the expedition against the Saracens of Palermo in 1064. The inscription on the facade commemorates the citizens of Pisa, Bishop Guido (1060-76), who hailed from Pavia, and, for the first time in Italy, an architect: Buscheto, who was buried in the cathedral.⁴⁶ Almost simultaneously, the third church of San Marco in Venice was built in brick, initiated by Doge

⁴¹ Tosco, 112-3.

⁴² Tosco, 126.

⁴³ Tosco, 136-7.

⁴⁴ Tosco, 129.

⁴⁵ Tosco, 220.

⁴⁶ Tosco, 140-1.

Domenico Contarini in 1063 and consecrated in 1094. This was no ordinary church but the palatine chapel of the city's supreme magistrate, designed after the Apostoleion of Constantinople – the mausoleum church of the Eastern emperors – in the domed version assumed with Justinian's reconstruction.⁴⁷

However, bishops did not only build or rebuild churches; they also promoted the construction of palaces, often distinguished by the presence of large towers. In Genoa, on the Castello hill, the episcopal castle's *palacium* (attested from 1116) included a square tower, 11 meters per side, with perimeter walls 80 cm thick. The tower's facing consisted of regularly shaped marly limestone blocks, laid in horizontal rows, datable to the late 10th or first half of the 11th century. The building featured two arched doorways on the western side and an entrance on the first floor, accessible via an external staircase.⁴⁸

The great and long-term cathedral construction sites, which attracted foreign craftsmen, likely served as places of apprenticeship for local artisans, who in turn applied their skills to the renovation of an increasingly complex civil architecture, particularly from an engineering perspective.

In Padua, for example, alongside the *solariate* houses, it is precisely in the phase immediately following the great religious building campaigns – beginning at the end of the 11th century – that towers and fortified residences began to be erected by aristocratic families.⁴⁹ These structures featured foundations built of large, squared Roman *spolia* blocks and upper sections in reused ancient bricks (new brick production would not begin until the 13th century).⁵⁰ Their bases typically measured from 5 to 6 meters per side, with heights reaching up to 40 meters. Such towers were often accompanied by a residential building, as in the case of Capodilista, while their location was dictated by the need to control strategic areas of the urban fabric.⁵¹

The widespread use of *spolia* materials for the towers also extended to Rome, where Roman bricks were predominantly employed.⁵²

In Tuscany as well, cities were the main centers where economic resources for stone construction were concentrated. Turret-shaped buildings (in Pisa, Lucca, and Florence) (Fig. 6) and single-story stone houses or *solaria* became

⁴⁷ Tosco, 149–50.

⁴⁸ Andrews, Pringle, “Lo scavo dell'area sud del convento.” The construction of towers within episcopal complexes can be traced back to at least the second half of the 8th century. Bishop Stephen II of Naples (766–94) built two towers, later adorned with frescoes by his successor Paul III (794–819). In Rome, Pope Adrian I (772–95) constructed a tower at the Lateran, embellishing it with frescoes and marble. The addition of a tower to the episcopal residence in Parma by Bishop Sigifridus is documented in 935, and in 990 a judicial audience was held in Piacenza in the main loggia (*laubia*, a term first attested in 865 in Milan) of the archbishop's tower. The architectural complexity of episcopal complexes is evident from the fact that they often included not only towers and *laubiae* but also halls (attested from the 8th century), *camerae*, *caminatae*, loggias, *solaria* (mentioned from the 8th century in Naples), and *balnea* (Milan, early 11th century) (Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 56–64).

⁴⁹ Brogiolo, “Aspetti sociali delle architetture.”

⁵⁰ Scillia, “Le tecniche murarie.”

⁵¹ Chavarria Arnau, “Case solarate e domus.”

⁵² Molinari, “La ‘pietrificazione’ del costruito.”

increasingly widespread. Although it is difficult to date them precisely today, the systematic opening and exploitation of quarries in the Monte Pisano area from the mid-eleventh century⁵³ may perhaps mark a *terminus post quem* for this new phase, while also indicating that reuse could no longer meet the growing demand for stone buildings. Moreover, from the second half to the end of the 11th century, squared stone masonry began to extend across the entire wall faces (as seen in Pisa, *La Sapienza*), where the squaring of the blocks also appears. This development marks an improvement in stone craftsmanship that was not yet universal, as it coexisted with less refined techniques and a continued use of perishable materials, particularly for service buildings. In Lucca, the number of *case solariate* – which increased from the second half of the century – could now also include towers (1059, 1099).⁵⁴

The proliferation of these structures accompanied the rise of certain families and family clans against whom bishops and city authorities began to take action toward the end of the century (see, for example, the Daiberto decree [1088-90] for Pisa;⁵⁵ similar interventions by city governments are documented in Genoa in 1143 and 1196, and in Florence before 1180).⁵⁶

The new urbanization of city spaces also involved the reoccupation of ancient Roman monuments. In Florence, during the second half of the 11th century, the remains of the ancient theater – until then largely abandoned – were once again utilized. New stripping activities of the ruins are documented, the ground plans were regularized through artificial leveling and terracing, and stone buildings were constructed in the orchestra area (Fig. 7).⁵⁷

The petrification of the urban landscape progressed at varying rates, influenced by factors such as the availability of raw materials. For example, the first stone and brick buildings in Venice date back to the 11th century, and their



Fig. 6. Lucca. base of an 11th-century tower, Palazzo Mazzarosa. From Redi, Romiti, *Dentro e fuori*, 24.

⁵³ Tumbiolo, "I materiali lapidei dell'edilizia."

⁵⁴ Cantini, "Specchiarsi nella pietra."

⁵⁵ Garzella, *Pisa com'era*, 103.

⁵⁶ Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione."

⁵⁷ Bruttini, "Enclavi urbane a Firenze," 10-3; Bruttini, *Archeologia urbana a Firenze*.

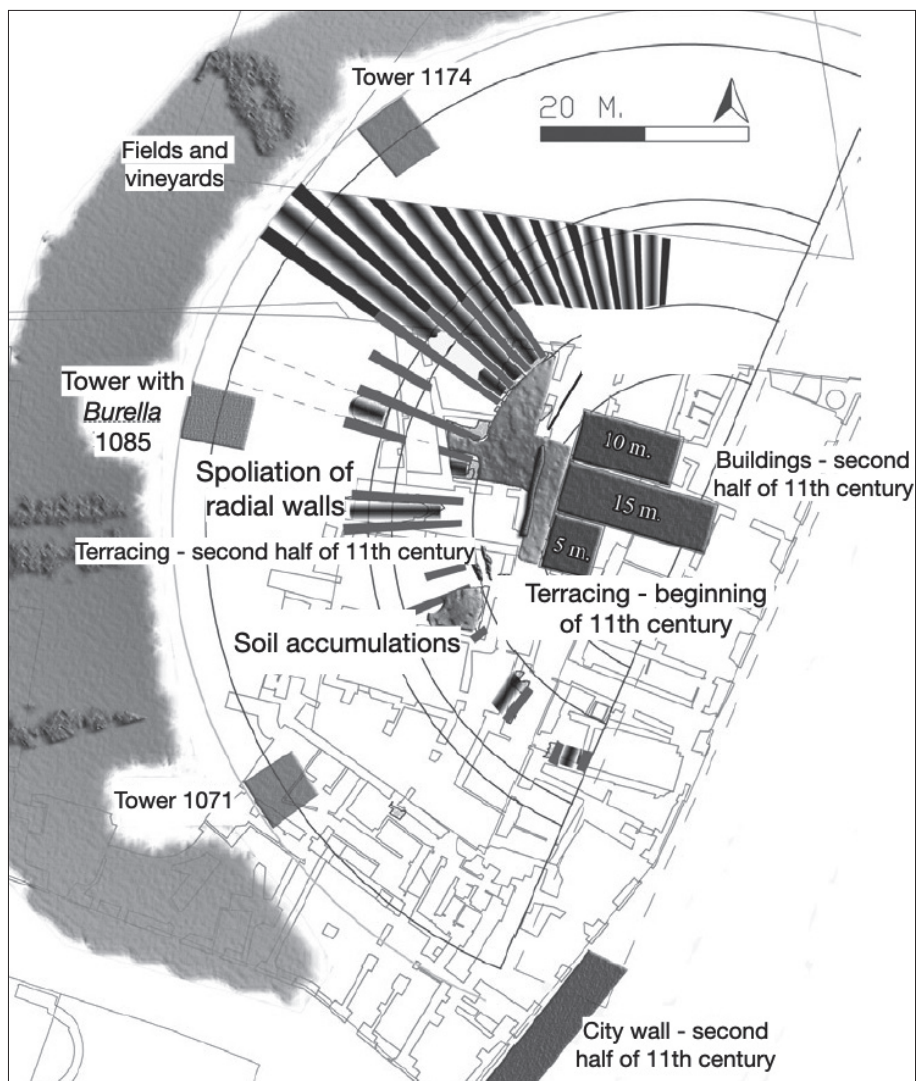


Fig. 7. Florence. Reconstruction of the settlement on the Roman theater between the second half of the 11th century and the third quarter of the 12th century, with buildings of the second half of the 11th century on the remains of the orchestra. From Bruttini, Jacopo. *Archeologia urbana*, 196, fig. 99.

number increased in the following century, although they still remained half the number of those in wood according to written sources.⁵⁸

But where did the wealth invested in the broader diffusion of masonry originate? The contribution of Mediterranean trade still appears marginal:

⁵⁸ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 523.

for Venice, only 35 commercial documents from the 11th century are attested, although capital loans for maritime enterprises are already documented as early as the 1020s-30s, linking the city primarily to the Byzantine lands and Egypt (the areas from which alum began arriving around 1070). The role of coastal cities as intermediaries between the sea and the hinterland also seems limited, as evidenced by the fact that in northern Italy, Mediterranean pottery from the second half of the 11th century do not go beyond the Verona-Modena line. Similarly, the textiles traded by Venice, probably destined for the mainland, were likely linen products from nearby Padua.⁵⁹

The role of maritime cities was still primarily that of military powers, which nevertheless must have facilitated the arrival of Mediterranean goods. Pisa, more than any other, appears to have operated throughout the 11th century across a range of geographical contexts, including Calabria and Sicily, Algeria, Tunisia, and Spain⁶⁰. There were also Pisan families, such as the Casapieri, who likely maintained commercial ties with Majorca from the early 11th century. Urban excavation contexts, however, show that it was mainly from the second half of the century onward that Tunisian turquoise and white tin-glazed pottery, as well as Spanish wares (*verde y morado* majolica) and possibly early examples of *cuerda seca parcial* (dating from the mid-eleventh to the late 12th century), began to arrive in significant quantities – together with Sicilian pottery (*pavoncella* glazed wares) consistently associated with single-fired glazed pottery from Latium.⁶¹ The presence of *Turclis*, *Libicis quoque Parthis* in Pisa likely also contributed to the increases appearance of glazed pottery on urban tables, as noted by the Benedictine monk Donizone in his life of Matilda of Canossa, written between 1111 and 1116.⁶² However, there seems to have been a decrease in Sicilian amphorae, possibly connected to the crisis of Palermo.⁶³

Genoa, whose economic growth was already underway at the beginning of the 11th century – as evidenced by the existence of an urban expansion outside the walls in 1034⁶⁴ – often accompanied Pisa in the looting of Spanish (1015-6) and Tunisian cities (1087). However, it was only from the mid-eleventh century onward that Genoese merchants became active in Egypt.⁶⁵ The imported ceramics in Liguria during the 11th century reflect this. Examples include polychrome and monochrome glazed ceramics (San Paragorio di Noli, first half of the 11th century),⁶⁶ glazed ceramics painted in brown and green

⁵⁹ Wickham, 508, 510, 527.

⁶⁰ Wickham, 599.

⁶¹ Meo, "L'ordinario e l'eccezione," 63 (archaeological excavations of Piazza Dante, via Cavaleca, Piazza dei Cavalieri).

⁶² Donizone, *Vita di Matilde*, Lib. I, XX, vv. 1370-1373. On the relationship between ceramics and allochthonous communities, see also Molinari, "Riflessioni sulle economie," 169.

⁶³ Meo, "Anfore, uomini e reti," 229. Fatighenti, "I contenitori da trasporto," 36.

⁶⁴ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 538.

⁶⁵ Wickham, 537.

⁶⁶ Frondoni, "I bacini di S. Paragorio."

from Sicily and Tunisia,⁶⁷ and green tin-glazed ceramics *a boli gialli* from Tunisia.⁶⁸ Between the mid-eleventh and the first half of the 12th centuries, we also have evidence of lusterware, probably from Egypt (Savona).⁶⁹ During the 11th century, light-colored slipware also arrived from the Aegean area.⁷⁰ In the Venetian lagoon, imported ceramics appear only from the mid-eleventh century onward. These include Egyptian products (fritware?, monochrome sgraffito wares, polychrome tin-glazed ceramics, and polychrome painted glazed wares),⁷¹ as well as rare polychrome glazed ceramics from Sicily and the Maghreb (generically dated to the 11th century).⁷² Within a broader, less precisely defined chronological range – between the 11th and 13th centuries – we also find Aegean amphorae with grooved walls, some likely used for wine (such as Malvasia from Attica).⁷³

2.2.2. *The countryside*

Even in the countryside, between the late 10th and early 11th centuries, a season of renewed religious construction began. Marquisal patronage appears to have been directed primarily toward monastic institutions. In the Aleramic march – in Piedmont and southern Liguria – we find the Abbey of San Quintino in Spigno (991), founded by Marquis Anselmo, and the Abbey of Santa Giustina in Sezzadio (Alessandria) (1030), which preserves in the mosaic pavement of its crypt a commemorative inscription for Marquis Otbert, identified as *reparator et ornator*. In Piedmont, the Arduinic marquises of Turin established a network of religious institutions in the Susa Valley, including the Abbey of San Giusto (1029). In Emilia, the Canossa family, under Marquis Tedaldo, founded the Abbey of San Benedetto al Polirone in 1007 on an island of the Po River near Mantua. In the Apennine area between eastern Liguria and Emilia, Marquis Otbert II (of the Obertenghi family) founded the monastery of San Giovanni in Vigolo Marchese at the beginning of the 11th century, within the diocese of Piacenza.⁷⁴ In Tuscany, during the same period, the monastery of San Salvatore al Monte Amiata was rebuilt, with two towers added to its façade, and consecrated in 1036 by the Patriarch of Aquileia and

⁶⁷ Benente, “Ceramica d’importazione islamica,” 134-7.

⁶⁸ Benente, 137-8.

⁶⁹ Benente, 146; Benente, “La ceramica d’importazione dal Mediterraneo;” De Vingo, “La céramique d’importation.”

⁷⁰ Gardini, “La ceramica bizantina in Liguria,” 56.

⁷¹ Gelichi, “Islamic Pottery in the Neighbourhood;” Gelichi et al., “Importare, produrre e consumare,” 94-5; Gelichi, “The Other Than Self,” 433-7. Globular amphorae continue to arrive from the East and Southern Italy (Gelichi, et al., “Importare, produrre e consumare,” 55-72).

⁷² Saccardo et al., “Ceramiche importate a Venezia,” 398.

⁷³ Gardini, “La ceramica bizantina in Liguria,” 52-4.

⁷⁴ Tosco, *L’architettura medievale in Italia*, 117-20.

eighteen bishops.⁷⁵ In the Venetian lagoon, Doge Pietro II initiated the reconstruction of the basilica of Torcello.⁷⁶

New investments also involved the renovation and enlargement of parish churches, as in the case of San Genesio (San Miniato, Pisa) (Fig. 8), which contains crypts intended for relics. The construction of these buildings required greater investment in the procurement of stone than that of castles: in northern Italy, the stone used for fortified settlements was typically sourced from areas up to 5 km away, whereas the material used for parish churches come from distances of up to 50 km.⁷⁷

Fortified structures, however, underwent renovations, though not according to standardized urban planning models. This perhaps reflects the different financial resources of their owners – whose composition appears socially broader than that of those active in the 10th century – and perhaps also the initiative of rural communities. The Tuscan evidence reveals an extremely varied range of interventions, from the construction of wooden palisade, following early medieval traditions, to true walls made of split stones bound with soil or lime (fig. 9). In some cases, particularly in structures belonging to prominent aristocratic families, squared ashlar were employed at the corners, as shown by the castle of Prato, attributable to the Alberti. Stone towers also became more widespread, though those requiring substantial investment continued to be associated with major noble families, as in the case of the Cadolingian tower in Fucecchio (before 1043), where reused materials still predominated in the masonry.⁷⁸ Moreover, between the second half of the 10th and the 11th centuries, some castles also came to include churches (for Tuscany, see the cases of Montemassi, Rocca San Silvestro, and Mirandulo).⁷⁹ A similar situation can be observed in other regions of central and northern Italy.⁸⁰

Construction for lower classes, on the other hand, shows little variation from the preceding period. This may reflect the fact that landowners had not yet demonstrated an interest in consolidating their power over rural areas through the improvement of their subjects' living conditions. Their primary objective instead appears to have been the intensification of resource extraction, allowing them to invest in cities, often by exploiting tolls levied along roads, bridges, and river ports, as attested on the Arno and Tiber.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Tosco, 133.

⁷⁶ Tosco, 126.

⁷⁷ Cantini, e Cirelli, "Mercati, economie e incastellamento," 149.

⁷⁸ Cantini, "Specchiarsi nella pietra."

⁷⁹ Mancassola, "Castelli e chiese," 129-30.

⁸⁰ Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione," 89-92; for central eastern Emilia, see Mancassola, "L'incastellamento in Emilia," 360-2.

⁸¹ Cantini, e Cirelli, "Mercati, economie e incastellamento," 167.



Fig. 8. The church of San Genesio in the 11th century. Plan by the author.

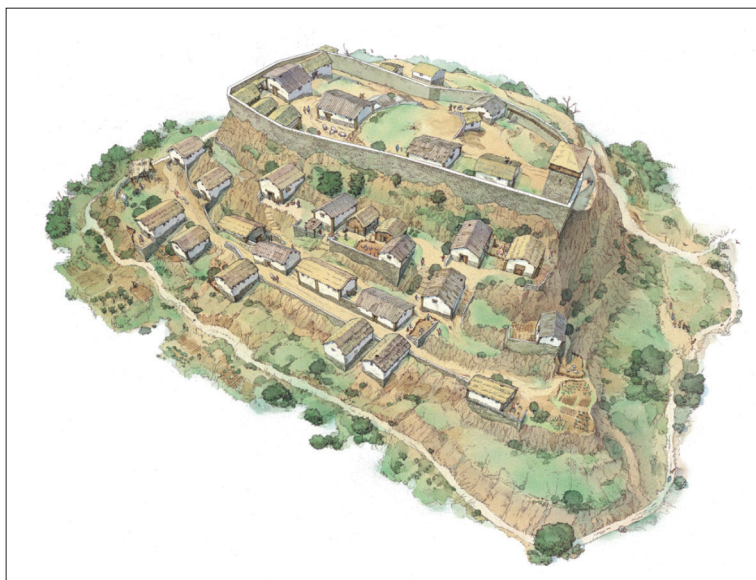


Fig. 9. The Montarrenti Castle in the late 10th and early 11th century, from Cantini, *Il castello di Montarrenti*, 234, tab. 51.

2.3. The 12th century

2.3.1. Cities

In the 12th century, the developments of the previous century fully took shape and spread across central and northern Italy. The emergence, between the late 11th and mid-twelfth centuries, of agnatic lineages with equal succession among all male children⁸² likely contributed – together with a widespread economic growth – to bringing many more actors into the arena of urban confrontation than in earlier centuries.

The construction of towers was now also promoted by the urban middle classes, as evidenced in Padua, where they were built along the main thoroughfares, near the bishop's residence, and in the area where future public buildings would rise. The lower three-four meters were constructed from large blocks of reused white limestone or trachyte, while the upper parts were made of ancient bricks.⁸³ This does not mean that the urban fabric had become entirely petrified: a large number of smaller structures made of wood and perishable materials still remained.⁸⁴

Large blocks of ancient marble were likewise used in the bases of towers in Brescia, which were also characterized by the use of ashlar.⁸⁵

In Genoa, from the beginning of the 12th century, instead, large squared and smoothed blocks (sometimes also ashlar ones) from nearby quarries were employed and laid in horizontal courses (*opus novum*).⁸⁶

In Pisa, from the late 11th or early 12th century, a new architectural model also emerged: the tower-house, with a rectangular plan, often featuring arcades on the ground floor and numerous openings. This type of residential building was subsequently adopted in other urban centers from the second half of the 12th century, using local stone material.⁸⁷

The vertical development of construction appears to have been the defining feature of both residential and military stone architecture in the 12th century, as is also evidenced in Mantua, where the distinction between *domus alta murata*, *domus alta murata sive turris*, and *turris sive casaturris* sometimes appears rather uncertain.⁸⁸

Even in Rome, it is from the late 11th century – and more clearly from the 12th century onward – that a broader diffusion of masonry construction can be observed as a prerogative of the city's nobility. These elites invested in architectural complexes that included "towers, warehouses, shops, service struc-

⁸² Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione," 85-6.

⁸³ Carocci, 117.

⁸⁴ Chavarria Arnau, "Case solarate e domus."

⁸⁵ Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione," 117.

⁸⁶ Carocci, 118.

⁸⁷ Cantini, "Specchiarsi nella pietra."

⁸⁸ Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione," 122; Gardoni, *Fra torri e "magnae domus"*, 26.



Fig. 10. The *domus* of the Crescenzi in Rome.

tures such as ovens and baths; porticoes, small squares, residential houses for the various families forming the kin group; other houses rented to followers and intended to accommodate new families of the same kinship group”, alongside churches under family patronage and, from the late 12th century, *domus magnae e palatia*.⁸⁹ From the point of view of building materials, the towers continued to employ ancient brick – at least in the external facing – while tufa blocks were used for the internal walls.⁹⁰

Regarding the *domus magnae*, Rome offers exceptional evidence of a renewed use of celebratory epigraphy – inscriptions that honor not only the builder of the *domus* but also the build-

ing itself. The inscription on the Tor dei Conti, dating to the second half of the 12th century, refers to a previous structure, *quam fortis intus nimis composita foris*, and to a builder, one *Petrus, strenuus ille fidus miles fortissimus atque*, belonging to the Roman nobility, who, unfortunately, remains otherwise unknown. To the first half of the same century are attributed the four inscriptions displayed on the façades of the so-called house of the Crescenzi, a building owned by a certain *Nicolaus*, son of *Crescens* and *Theodora*, perhaps associated with a *domus magna* and constructed of bricks and numerous marble *spolia*. In this case, it is the building itself that speaks, defining itself as a *grandis honor* for the Roman people, as well as *optima tecta* and *domus sublimis*, which, with its *culmina, surgit in astra*⁹¹ (Fig. 10).

In Genoa, at the end of the 12th century, the powerful Embriaci family built a *domus magna*, adjoining it to two pre-existing towers in the Castello area, which had been dominated since the second half of the 11th century, by the *palatium castri*. The complex formed the nucleus of the *curia Embriacorum* (1186), which comprised a series of properties facing a square.⁹²

⁸⁹ Carocci, “Nobiltà e pietrificazione,” 104-5.

⁹⁰ Carocci, 118.

⁹¹ Carocci, “Epigrafi e attività edilizia.” I thank Sandro Carocci for giving me the opportunity to read the text while it was still in draft form.

⁹² Benente, “Indagini archeologiche.”

The proliferation of stone structures – predominantly tower-like – was sustained by the strong identity value these buildings assumed for families and, especially from the mid-century onward, for *consortia* of families.⁹³ In addition to sharing construction costs, these groups also made the towers instruments of solidarity and political promotion, in a context increasingly marked by competition for power within the new forms of urban self-government – no longer restrained by royal authority, as still occurred in France, Spain, and southern Italy, where, in fact, the phenomenon of urban towers never developed.⁹⁴

For many cities of central-northern Italy, we might adopt the image offered by a foreign traveler who, at the beginning of the 13th century, compared the number of towers in Rome to the ears of wheat in a field.⁹⁵ If Rome had at least 300 towers, Bologna had over 200, and Florence 186.⁹⁶

The investment in stone, however, also extended to non-tower residences, such as buildings with porticoes built in Rome between the late 12th and early 13th centuries.⁹⁷

The expansion of the urban real estate market is also evidenced by the rise of property prices – partly driven by currency devaluation – which reached their peak in the cities of northern Tuscany (Florence, Lucca, Pistoia, and Siena) during the second half of the 12th century. The only exception was Pisa, where this phenomenon occurred already in the first half of the same century. This price increase affected urban areas more than the countryside and coincided with a rise in the number of sales contracts.⁹⁸

From the mid-twelfth century onward, particular attention was paid to public infrastructure. Numerous projects for the construction or restoration of city walls date from this period: in Tuscany, we find the cases of Pisa (from 1155), Florence (in the 1170s), Pistoia (from the second half of the century), Lucca (between 1188 and 1198), and Arezzo (between 1194 and 1200).⁹⁹ In Rome, the commune even commemorated, with a public inscription, the restoration of the urban fortifications carried out in 1157 and, perhaps in 1191, that of the Pons Cestius.¹⁰⁰ In the same period in Tuscany, work also began on renewing roads and improving water drainage systems.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Cantini, “Specchiarsi nella pietra,” 83.

⁹⁴ Carocci, “Nobiltà e pietrificazione,” 109, 136-7, 140.

⁹⁵ Carocci, “Portici, palazzi, torri,” 18.

⁹⁶ Carocci, “Nobiltà e pietrificazione,” 112, 117.

⁹⁷ These structures followed different models: some featured marble entablatures connecting ancient columns of uniform size, topped with newly crafted Ionic capitals similar to those found in churches; others had brick arches linking columns of varying sizes, fitted with either ancient or newly crafted Ionic capitals – or, in some cases, with abaci; in other examples, brick arches connected sections of columns resting on tuff walls (see Carocci, “Portici, palazzi, torri,” 11-2).

⁹⁸ Faini, *Firenze nell'età romanica*, 112-6.

⁹⁹ Cantini, “Specchiarsi nella pietra,” 83 with previous bibliographical references.

¹⁰⁰ Carocci “Epigrafi e attività edilizia.”

¹⁰¹ Cantini, “Costruire lo sviluppo,” 139.

It seems, instead, that was mainly toward the end of the century – after the death of Henry VI (1197) and following a period in which the representatives of the commune held their assemblies inside or near certain religious buildings – that the construction of the first public buildings began.¹⁰²

The expansion of the building sector also led to the reactivation of brick production: in Pisa from the beginning of the 12th century, in Lucca from the 1170s, and in Pistoia from the 1180s.¹⁰³

On the ecclesiastical side, from the late 11th century onward, the constructive koine that had characterized the preceding centuries was broken. It gave way to a series of local traditions that would endure beyond the Middle Ages,¹⁰⁴ accompanying the rise and development of communal government structures. Sacred architectures, and especially episcopal ones (Pisa, Modena, Parma, Bergamo, Brescia, Genoa, Novara, and Milan), become the stage upon which the identity values of communal society were expressed. Indeed, Roman sarcophagi containing the remains of members of the urban elites were displayed right in front of, or along the perimeters of, the cathedral facades.¹⁰⁵ In Pisa, works on the episcopal church continued

under the master Guglielmo, active in the mid-twelfth century. The city also expanded its cultural and commercial horizons by participating in the Crusades; it was, in fact, the Archbishop of Pisa, Daibert, who was elected the first canonical Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. It is no coincidence that the Baptistery of San Giovanni – whose construction began in 1152/53 and for which columns were quarried on the islands of Elba and Sardinia – was inspired by the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. The construction of the episcopal complex, to which the bell tower was added in 1173, gave rise to a veritable architectural school that influenced not only urban buildings but also parish churches in the surrounding countryside (Cascina, Vicopisano, Calci).¹⁰⁶

In Rome, a new phase of investment in the restoration of ancient architectural heritage and in the construction of new churches¹⁰⁷ began during the pontificate of Paschal II (1099-1118). Notable examples include the reconstruction of the Basilica of San Clemente, in which the early Christian building was buried and a smaller church erected above it, consecrated in 1118, and the construction of Santa Maria in Trastevere, completed in 1148 with *spolia* from the Baths of Caracalla. The latter church closely follows the late antique basilica models, particularly that of Santa Maria Antiqua.¹⁰⁸

The construction or reconstruction of churches in Rome between the late 11th and the first half of the 12th century (San Clemente, Sant'Adriano, Santa

¹⁰² Tosco, "Potere civile e architettura," Augenti, "Identità urbane in Italia," 160.

¹⁰³ Cantini, "Specchiarsi nella pietra," 83.

¹⁰⁴ Tosco, *L'architettura medievale in Italia*, 157.

¹⁰⁵ Cantini, "Le fonti archeologiche."

¹⁰⁶ Tosco, *L'architettura medievale in Italia*, 208-11.

¹⁰⁷ Guidobaldi, "Un estesissimo intervento."

¹⁰⁸ Tosco, *L'architettura medievale in Italia*, 245-51.

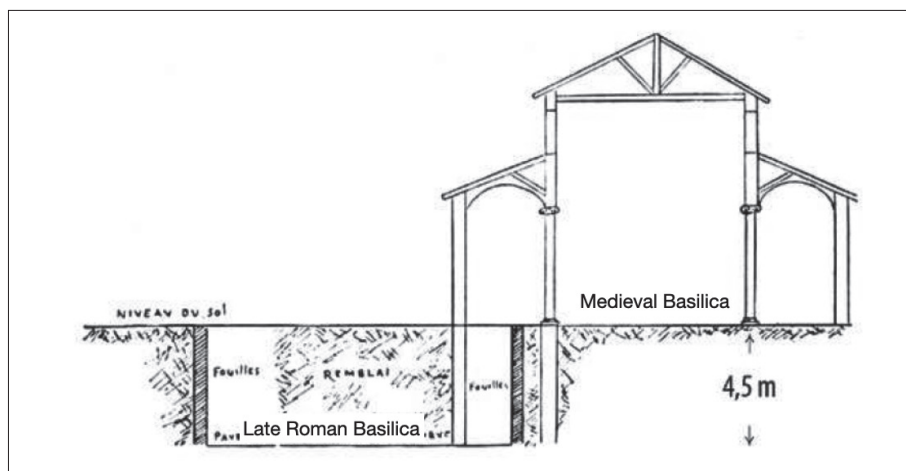


Fig. 11. Section of the Church of San Crisogono, showing the floor levels of the Early Christian and Medieval churches. From Guidobaldi, “Un estesissimo intervento,” 591, fig. 11.

Maria de Inferno, Santi Quirico e Giulitta, Santa Maria in Via Lata, San Marcello, San Nicola de Calcarario, San Crisogono (Fig. 11), and Santa Pudenziana) was accompanied, beginning with the pontificate of Paschal II, by extensive landfilling (ranging from 2 to 4 meters) in the low-lying and flat areas between the city’s hills. These large-scale interventions were likely necessary to reclaim marshy urban sectors and to make pathways – particularly those used for papal processions between the Lateran and the Vatican – once again traversable and suitable for construction. These routes were sometimes obstructed by the ruins of ancient monuments, which were occasionally demolished deliberately in order to recover marble elements for reuse or to be burned in lime kilns.¹⁰⁹

Significant artificial landfills, dating from the 11th to the first half of the 12th century, have also been documented in Florence’s Piazza della Signoria, over the remains of a Hadrianic-era thermal complex. These were intended to eliminate differences in floor levels and to create new horizons for construction.¹¹⁰

This new phase of investment was also sustained by the expansion of regional markets and the consolidation of Mediterranean ones.

Venice signed a treaty with Verona regulating the trade of cloth and hides in 1107,¹¹¹ while it had already been trading with the Levant since 1083 and ob-

¹⁰⁹ This period – marked by a significant intensification of urban interventions associated with the construction and reconstruction of sacred buildings – was also characterized by the emergence of specialized craftsmen, such as the so-called Cosmatesque masters, who would soon achieve great renown. These projects were primarily financed by the Roman Church, whose coffers were likely replenished through donations linked to papal privileges, tributes, pilgrimage revenues, and other forms of contribution (see Guidobaldi, “Un estesissimo intervento”).

¹¹⁰ De Marinis, et al., “Piazza della Signoria.”

¹¹¹ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 525.

tained concessions in Jerusalem and Tripoli from 1110.¹¹² At the same time, in exchange for military support, the Crusaders granted Genoa trade privileges in Antioch, Lādhīqiya, Caesarea, and Acre, as well as exemptions from port duties between (1098-1109).¹¹³

In 1139, the Genoese began minting silver coins after obtaining half of the silver mines in the Kingdom of Arborea in 1138.¹¹⁴ That same year, they renovated the port,¹¹⁵ which was frequented by merchants from Spain, northern France, and the Netherlands. Between 1128 and 1149, the port received slaves from Barcelona; bales of wool or hemp from northern Europe; fabrics and weapons from northern Italy; iron from Pisa; cotton from Sicily, Alexandria, and Antioch; as well as spices, coral, tin, and copper, dyes and alum, grain, salt, flax, oil, and almonds. Duties levied on these goods significantly enriched Genoa's coffers.¹¹⁶

The city's Mediterranean orientation is also evident from the analysis of stratified waste pits discovered within a tower belonging to the *curia Embriacorum*: between the late 11th and early 12th centuries, these deposits contained Beirut glazed ware, Syrian fritware, Fustat Fatimid sgraffito, *cuerda seca total* from Spain or Morocco, and North African jugs (Fig. 12).¹¹⁷ Genoese and Ligurian finds reveal brown painted, green-glazed or green-tin-glazed Tunisian ware (12th century),¹¹⁸ white-slipped ware (12th-early 13th century) with clear yellowish, yellow-brown, or green glaze (12th century) from Attica,¹¹⁹ Byzantine sgraffito ware,¹²⁰ and monochrome green-glazed wares with *decoraciones estampilladas* from Spain and the Maghreb (12th century).¹²¹ In Genoa, 12th-century contexts also yield green monochrome glazed ware from Attica/Corinth and brown monochrome ware from Spain and Greece,¹²² while in Savona unglazed basins from Mallorca or Valencia have also been found.¹²³

Demographic growth compelled cities to secure primary goods essential for the population's sustenance. To this end, Genoa signed a treaty with the King of Sicily for grain imports in 1156, part of which had already been arriving from Corsica and Sardinia (from 1120-40).¹²⁴

Meanwhile, the Pisans – who had established consuls since the early 12th century – continued their military ventures, sacking Majorca in 1113-4, at-

¹¹² Wickham, 515.

¹¹³ Wickham, 549.

¹¹⁴ Wickham, 549-50.

¹¹⁵ Wickham, 538.

¹¹⁶ Wickham, 541.

¹¹⁷ Benente, "La cucina, la mensa e la dispensa," 116-8.

¹¹⁸ Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 139-40.

¹¹⁹ Gardini, "La ceramica bizantina in Liguria," 57-8; Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 148-9.

¹²⁰ Benente, "La ceramica d'importazione dal Mediterraneo."

¹²¹ Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 138-9.

¹²² Gardini, "La ceramica bizantina in Liguria," 56.

¹²³ Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 150.

¹²⁴ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 536.



Fig. 12. Beirut glazed ware from the Embriaci Tower in Genoa, 12th century. From Benente, “Circolazione e produzione,” 23, fig. 3.

tacking Amalfi in 1134, clashing with Genoa over control of Corsica and Sardinia between 1118-23, and being noted as arms producers in 1140.¹²⁵ At the same time, they developed a commercial network across various Mediterranean regions, in which prominent families playing key roles. The Embriaci family, for instance, were involved in sending cloth from Piacenza to Constantinople and Alexandria in 1130; by 1140, Pisan colonies had been established in Constantinople, Alexandria, Messina, Egypt, and Béjaïa (Algeria).¹²⁶

Pisan expansion also extended into the Tuscan territory. Probably from the death of Matilda (1115), the city controlled Elba, and by the first half of the 12th century, the entire coastal strip up to Piombino,¹²⁷ where Mediterranean imported ceramics likely arrived through Pisa’s mediation.¹²⁸ The urban center was frequented by French and German merchants, as indicated by a treaty with Lucca in 1140: Lucca preferred to use the port of Genoa to import raw French fabrics, which it then dyed and refined into luxury goods.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Wickham, 559, 566.

¹²⁶ Wickham, 563.

¹²⁷ Wickham, 560.

¹²⁸ Cantini, Grassi, “Produzione, circolazione e consumo.”

¹²⁹ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 581.

This phase of economic development in north-central Italy was scarcely affected by the wars against Barbarossa in the third quarter of the century and by the imposition of imperial taxes.¹³⁰

In the second half of the 12th century, the phenomena described above multiplied: treaties between the cities of the peninsula¹³¹ and with Mediterranean¹³² centers became more frequent, and merchant mobility increased, often leading traders to settle in foreign cities.¹³³

The Venetians maintained their relations with Egypt (Alexandria, 1172), where they purchased pepper, alum (1170, 1180) and flax (1188), and exported timber, partly sourced from Verona (1173). They established colonies in Tyre and Acre (1173), where they sold iron (1162); imported wine from the Byzantine world (1173); and exported slaves and copper (1170).¹³⁴

From the mid-twelfth century onward, the importation of polychrome sgraffito Byzantine ware¹³⁵ and fritware from Egypt and/or Syria became increasingly significant, while Islamic ceramics from the western Mediterranean – such as Tunisian cobalt and manganese ware – remained rare until the late 12th century. From the Byzantine sphere also came Gunsenin III-type amphorae, produced on Euboea.¹³⁶

Meanwhile, a wide range of products were exported from Genoa's port: textiles (especially fustian) from Milan and Piacenza (1158, 1160), more rarely linen, hemp and wool; Sicilian or Spanish silk, resold in Egypt; and cloth from northern France (St-Requier), possibly from Paris, as well as from Lucca, where wool fabrics from Bologna and Verona¹³⁷ were already recorded in the 1140s. These textiles were resold by the Genoese in Salerno, Sicily, the Levant, Béjaïa, and Spain.¹³⁸ By the end of the 12th century, textiles contin-

¹³⁰ Wickham, 475-6, 498, 500.

¹³¹ Venice signs treaties with Cremona (1173), Ferrara (1177, 1191), Treviso (1198), and other cities until 1200; Genoa with Pisa (1149, 1175) and Lucca (1153) (Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 541-2).

¹³² Genoa entered into a series of trade agreements with Provence and Languedoc, Valencia (from which silk was imported), Byzantium, Sicily, and the Almohad Caliphate (1150). It subsequently concluded further agreements with Sicily (importing spices, dyes, pepper, large quantities of cotton, wheat, and salt), North Africa, Alexandria, the Levant, Byzantium, Southern France, Spain, Sardinia, mainland Italy, southern Liguria, and Lombardy (from 1154 to 1164) (Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 541-4, 547).

¹³³ In Genoa there were, as residents, people from France, Salerno, Milan, Piacenza and Lucca (Wickham, *The donkey and the Boat*, 545).

¹³⁴ Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 517-9, 527. For pottery of the 12th century, see Gelichi et al. "Importare, produrre e consumare," 58.

¹³⁵ These wares were produced in Corinth (*Corinthian Sgraffito Wares*), where a Venetian colony was established in the 12th century; by the end of the century, *Zeuxippus ware* ed *Aegenan Ware* (Saccardo et al., "Ceramiche importate a Venezia").

¹³⁶ Gelichi et al. "Importare, produrre e consumare," 95-96; Saccardo et al., "Ceramiche importate a Venezia." Molinari, "Le anfore medievali come proxy," 300.

¹³⁷ Wickham, *The donkey and the Boat*, 548, 585. In Tuscany wool production seems to have taken hold with the start of transhumance from the Garfagnana areas towards the coast (from 1150 onwards: Wickham, 491).

¹³⁸ Wickham, 548.

ued to arrive from northern France, together with fustian from Milan, Pavia, and Piacenza, destined for Sicily, from where raw cotton was imported and sent to Lombardy.¹³⁹ This overview shows how textiles – including Lucchese silk – played a major role in Genoa's economy, although German copper and Verona and Pisa iron were also traded.¹⁴⁰ Economic growth was accompanied by urban (the new borough established in 1150 was larger than the old *civitas*; urban sewers were recorded in 1162, and three markets in 1186) and by demographic growth (reaching some 20,000 people),¹⁴¹ as well as by the arrival of new Mediterranean ceramics that heralded the beginning of production in Savona (archaic sgraffito) which was widely exported.¹⁴² This picture is also confirmed by the analysis of late 12th to early 13th-century waste pits of the *curia Embriacorum*: finds include green-glazed and metallic lusterware from Al-Andalus, Byzantine Zeuxippus ware,¹⁴³ green monochrome slipped ware from the Aegean-Anatolian area, early Savona productions (archaic sgraffito, Ligurian protomajolica), and southern Italian (spiral ware, Apulian and Sicilian protomajolica), along with Tunisian ceramics (cobalt and manganese), soapstone from the Central Alps, a Black Sea amphora, an Islamic jar (from Spain or Morocco), and some Pisan archaic majolica dating to around the mid-thirteenth century.¹⁴⁴ The picture becomes even broader when considering excavation finds and Ligurian basins as a whole, which include: Egyptian and Al-Andalus lusterware;¹⁴⁵ glazed slip wares with green-splashed decoration from the Aegean-Anatolian area (mid-twelfth to early 13th century);¹⁴⁶ Byzantine slip-painted wares (12th-early 13th century);¹⁴⁷ Egyptian sgraffito glazed wares with siliceous fabric;¹⁴⁸ Syrian Raqqa ware (late 12th-13th century);¹⁴⁹ and Minai ware and moulded ware from Iran (12th-early 13th century).¹⁵⁰

Pisa followed a similar trajectory, signing new treaties with Egypt (1154) – to which it exported iron, weapons, timber, and pitch, and from which it imported alum – and with Saladin (1173). Some Pisan ships arrived at the port from Byzantium, Sicily, Egypt, Syria, and Africa (1150), while others departed for Alexandria via Venice (1174).¹⁵¹ In 1173, a Pisan merchant was in Saint-Gilles, near Arles, and in 1179, fabrics from northern France reached

¹³⁹ Wickham, 552-3.

¹⁴⁰ Wickham, 553-4.

¹⁴¹ Wickham, 539.

¹⁴² Wickham, 555-6.

¹⁴³ For the findings in Savona see Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 149-50.

¹⁴⁴ Benente, "La cucina, la mensa e la dispensa," 118-33.

¹⁴⁵ Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 146-7.

¹⁴⁶ Benente, 149.

¹⁴⁷ Gardini, "La ceramica bizantina in Liguria," 60.

¹⁴⁸ Benente, "Ceramica d'importazione islamica," 147-8.

¹⁴⁹ Benente, 148; De Vingo, "La céramique d'importation," 287, the Raqqa Ware found in the Palazzo Ducale in Genoa is dated to the first half of the 12th century.

¹⁵⁰ Wickham, *The donkey and the Boat*, 554-5; Benente, "La ceramica d'importazione dal Mediterraneo."

¹⁵¹ Wickham, *The donkey and the Boat*, 562.

the city.¹⁵² As in Genoa, Tunisian cobalt and manganese ceramics also flooded the Pisan market, surpassing Sicilian productions.¹⁵³ Andalusian white tin-glazed and *esgrafiada* ceramics, as well as green- and tin-glazed stamped ware, were likewise imported, while Egyptian lusterware began to be attested with some certainty alongside Spanish lusterware (now also with sgraffito) from the mid-twelfth century.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, Palermo painted amphorae,¹⁵⁵ Aegean amphorae,¹⁵⁶ Tunisian, and possibly Spanish transport containers, as well as Campanian red spiral-painted jugs – documented through excavations in the area of Sant'Eufrasia, Via Cavalca, and Piazza Dante – were also imported.¹⁵⁷ Kitchenware was partly imported from the Ligurian area as well.¹⁵⁸ The conquest of markets and regions rich in raw materials led to renewed clashes with Genoa over control of Corsica and Sardinia (1162-75).¹⁵⁹

During this phase of major expansion in Mediterranean trade, Rome too saw an increased presence of imported ceramics and goods: Sicilian amphorae (from Santa Cecilia in Trastevere) and table wares (Foro di Nerva); pottery from Euboea;¹⁶⁰ Campanian green-glazed and painted-glazed wares; and Tunisian glazed wares. Imported pottery was used both on the table of the wealthiest households and as architectural decoration on bell towers (Foro di Nerva, Santa Maria della Luce, Santa Croce di Gerusalemme, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Santi Giovanni e Polo, San Bartolomeo all'Isola).¹⁶¹

2.3.2. *The countryside*

The 12th century – particularly its second half – represents a phase of new, broader, and more widespread investment even in rural areas. Among the protagonists of this period were once again bishops and the great noble and comital families, who promoted the foundation of new villages (*terre nuove* and *borghi nuovi*) from the 1220s onward, while the cities undertook such ventures mainly toward the end of the century, as in the case of Verona, which founded Villafranca in 1185.¹⁶²

¹⁵² Wickham, 564.

¹⁵³ Wickham, 571-2.

¹⁵⁴ Meo, "L'ordinario e l'eccezione," 64, 66; Meo, "Anfore, uomini e reti," 232.

¹⁵⁵ On the issue of the possible residuality of Sicilian amphorae in the 12th century see Molinari, "Le anfore medievali come proxy."

¹⁵⁶ Baldassarri, "La ceramica di produzione," 38: five amphorae defined as Byzantine come from the excavation of Piazza Consoli del Mare, from a context dated between the mid/late 12th and early 13th century.

¹⁵⁷ Meo, "Anfore, uomini e reti," 230-1.

¹⁵⁸ Baldassarri, "La ceramica di produzione," 38.

¹⁵⁹ Wickham, *The donkey and the Boat*, 560.

¹⁶⁰ Molinari, "Le anfore medievali come proxy," 299.

¹⁶¹ Russo, "I romani e il gusto esotico", 131-2.

¹⁶² Brogiolo, "Aspetti sociali delle architetture."

At the initiative of major aristocratic families – again beginning from the second half of the century – new urban settlements were established. Poggio Bonizio (Siena) immediately saw the involvement of specialized craftsmen engaged in constructing two- or three-story buildings, measuring 29 x 9 meters in plan, with well-squared travertine ashlar facades, double-arched entrances, and limestone slab roofs, equipped with masonry cisterns and silos. By the end of the 12th century, when it became a commune, the settlement had expanded to over seven hectares, with urbanization advancing through row houses built by merchants and entrepreneurs (Fig. 13).¹⁶³

Within castles, bishops and noble families began to construct the first palaces, following the model of urban residences, while towers multiply and churches were incorporated – often also serving as cemeteries.¹⁶⁴ City authorities also promoted the reconstruction of castle walls, as in Ripafratta (Pisa), where more refined techniques were applied, using squared stones on horizontal courses.

Case solariate and stone tower-houses (*case-torri*) spread between the 12th and 13th centuries, even in open settlements, both in the plains (San Genesio) (Fig. 14) and in the hills, such as those of the Reggiano Apennines. These were characterized by similar ground plans (12 x 8 meters) and by openings with monolithic lintels.¹⁶⁵

However, some initiatives must also be attributed, already from the beginning of the century, to the *milites castri* (see, for example, the case of Manzano).¹⁶⁶ These emerging social groups began to build towers in order to mark their social distance from the peasant classes, who still lived in wooden houses within rural castles. Especially from the second half of the 12th century onward, this dynamic often generated local conflicts between families, prompting bishops to respond by ordering the demolition of the tallest houses and their defensive structures, as also occurred in cities (see the case of the villages under the lordship of the bishop of Verona).¹⁶⁷

The consolidation of rural construction is also evident in areas lacking stone quarries, where until this moment wood and earth had been used for building houses. From the end of the century, the introduction of brick made this transformation possible (as seen at San Genesio).¹⁶⁸

Lordships now tended to use castles as a means to control the workforce employed in exploiting their territories' resources, whether agricultural or otherwise (metals, primarily iron and later coinage metals, stone, and so forth).¹⁶⁹ Especially from the second half of the century onward, fortified centers increas-

¹⁶³ Francovich, e Valenti, *Poggio Imperiale*.

¹⁶⁴ Cantini, e Cirelli, "Mercati, economie e incastellamento," 168.

¹⁶⁵ Zoni, "Edilizia civile in pietra."

¹⁶⁶ Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione," 87; Fiore, *Il mutamento signorile*, 72.

¹⁶⁷ Carocci, "Nobiltà e pietrificazione," 87-8.

¹⁶⁸ Cantini et al., "Il borgo di San Genesio." On the spread of brickmaking in Tuscany see Frati, "La tecnologia del laterizio."

¹⁶⁹ Cantini, Cirelli, "Mercati, economie e incastellamento," 169.



Fig. 13. Reconstruction of Poggio Bonizio in the second half of the 12th century. From *Poggio Imperiale a Poggibonsi*, 152.



Fig. 14. San Genesio in the third quarter of the 12th century. From Cantini et al., "Il borgo di San Genesio," 74, fig. 27.

ingly concentrated settlement at the expense of dispersed habitation, resulting in the expansion of villages with stone structures (Montecatini, Pistoia).¹⁷⁰ The improvement in the economic status of rural populations is also evidenced by the growing presence of currency – especially from the mid-twelfth century – within castles and villages across central-northern Italy.¹⁷¹

New investments also concern the parish churches, whose restructuring, expansion, or reconstruction strongly reflects the models of urban cathedrals.¹⁷²

3. *Possible explanations*

Between the 10th and 12th centuries, from a material standpoint, the most evident changes can be observed in the building sector, which was – and remains – an economically significant indicator of greater or lesser wealth within a society.

Building new structures requires labor: the more complex the building, the greater the level of specialization required of those managing and working on the site. The size of the structure also affects the number of men needed to retrieve, work, and deploy construction materials, as well as the time dedicated to the project.

However, there is also a need for entities that can invest capital and/or impose unpaid labor.

At least since the last quarter of the 10th century, the most active patrons of construction were secular public authorities (such as kings and marquises), bishops, and abbots, whose initiatives primarily favored urban spaces and religious structures rather than royal or marquis palaces, at least in quantitative terms. After all, the main source of wealth, namely land and its associated resources, was predominantly concentrated in fiscal and ecclesiastical holdings, administered through the manorial system. From the Ottonian period onward, this wealth, hitherto mainly accumulated or redistributed among their entourages, began to be invested primarily in the restructuring or reconstruction of churches, and in the maintenance or renovation of episcopal as well as royal and marquis palaces. The number of stone or reused-brick residential buildings belonging to the aristocracy and to middle- or lower-ranking social groups still appears limited, reflecting the reduced availability of resources among these subjects. Nonetheless, this was a period in which demand did not yet exceed the supply of *spolia* readily available from the Roman ruins that still dotted the landscape of many cities.

¹⁷⁰ Cantini, “Specchiarsi nella pietra,” 85.

¹⁷¹ Cantini, e Cirelli, “Mercati, economie e incastellamento,” 145.

¹⁷² For San Genesio see Cantini et al., “Il borgo di San Genesio.”

A similar, though less intense, pattern can be observed in the countryside, where the principal agents of substantial new building activity continued to be members of comital families, marquises, or bishops. However, the rural landscape had changed compared to the past: the number of inhabited sites had increased, occupying not only elevated areas – with perishable structures built on stone foundations – but also the plains, where villages with regular plots of wooden houses were spreading.

These data may point to demographic growth and a broader exploitation of the countryside – possibly also favored by a climatic optimum, which appears to have begun precisely around the mid-tenth century,¹⁷³ and by the absence of plagues¹⁷⁴ – which brought new wealth into the hands of landowners.

It must have been a season of widespread but low-intensity growth, which made possible – especially from the 1160s-1170s onward – a new phase of investment manifested in the renovation of urban churches (especially cathedrals) and rural ones (especially parish churches). These projects were carried out through building campaigns that often remained active for many years, becoming spaces for the transmission of knowledge and the redistribution of wealth. Additional economic stimulus came from enterprises – predominantly military – conducted by sea from cities equipped with fleets. Demographic growth, in turn, must have placed pressure on agriculture and livestock farming in rural areas. Cities lacking large expanses of flat land, such as Genoa, were forced to turn to Mediterranean areas to meet their internal needs.

The greater availability of resources, concentrated primarily in the hands of urban groups that owned land and resources – fostered increasingly widespread phenomena of social mobility, which in turn generated a growing demand for status symbols. Among these, archaeological evidence reveals a preference, especially from the second half of the 11th century onward, for stone houses and towers, probably imitating the royal, marquis, or episcopal palaces that had already begun to be fortified from the 10th century. Across the regions examined, adherence to the same construction model can be observed, though it was realized using local raw materials and building techniques. In areas where the monumental Roman legacy was less conspicuous, this intense demand for stone led, from the mid-eleventh century onward, to the reopening of quarries, often owned by major monasteries or noble families.

New investments required new resources to be spent. These appear still to have derived primarily from internal growth rather than from the expansion of maritime trade. While some Venetian, Genoese, and Pisan merchants were already active between Spain, Egypt, and Byzantine areas, it was warfare that, throughout the 11th century, most often brought Italian cities into contact with those of the Mediterranean – cities that were plundered to obtain rich booty.

¹⁷³ Nanni, “Per un quadro ambientale.”

¹⁷⁴ Franceschi, “La crescita economica,” 12.

From the late 11th century – and especially, with exponential growth, from the 12th century onward – the number of individuals investing in the renewal of urban and rural landscapes increased markedly. This renewal was characterized by the widespread use of stone and lime within an unprecedented institutional framework shaped by the crisis of public power and the emergence of the first communes, which fostered confrontation and even conflict between the social forces at play. Investment also extended to urban infrastructure, with city walls taking precedence from the mid-12th century onward, as well as the reoccupation of previously abandoned areas. Major works of land reclamation – such as the filling of low-lying zones or spaces occupied by ancient ruins – were already being undertaken by the late 11th century.

The role of trade also expanded, encompassing not only luxury goods and iron (often in the form of weapons), but now also foodstuffs and textiles, products that circulated in large quantities and became a key driver of economic growth. To facilitate this expansion, numerous agreements were concluded both among the major cities of the Italian peninsula and between these cities and the kingdoms of the Mediterranean, where participation in the Crusades ensured trading privileges and exemptions in the Levant. But the market had also opened toward Northern Europe, particularly France and the Low Countries.

The expansion of trade – archaeologically attested by the arrival of larger quantities of imported Mediterranean pottery – and, at the same time, the growth of the agricultural economy in central and northern Italy, were such that even the clash with Frederick Barbarossa and the new taxes imposed by the Empire appear to have had little impact. In fact, during the second half of the 12th century, economic expansion intensified further. The integration between international markets and local economies is evident in the substantial investments made in the countryside, where we see the monumental renewal of castles and churches, as well as the foundation of new settlements. These developments reflect, on the one hand, a desire to control the rural population, and on the other hand, a clear sign of demographic expansion extending into rural areas. In the larger villages – sometimes veritable small towns – a complex and stratified society had now emerged, replicating urban life on a smaller scale, including the adoption of similar stone residential models that developed in height and the progressive renewal and expansion of walls.

The opening of new mints,¹⁷⁵ – beginning in the late 1130s and especially from the mid-twelfth century onward – further contributed to this growth, making it possible to accumulate wealth in forms other than land and real estate, while also facilitating its use in the international market. The growth of commerce is also confirmed by data from surveys of the Aegean seabed,

¹⁷⁵ Rovelli, “Nuove zecche e circolazione.”

which reveal an increase in both the number and tonnage of medieval shipwrecks precisely in the 12th century.¹⁷⁶

In this phase, we can recognize the moment when, to borrow the words of the historian Reinhart Koselleck,¹⁷⁷ many began to envision a future different from the past: the dialectic – until then rather static – between experience and expectation was transformed by the availability of new technological, economic, and cultural tools, fostering a more widespread aspiration to improve one's condition, as evidenced by the growing visibility of social mobility.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Molinari, "Le anfore medievali come proxy," 294.

¹⁷⁷ Koselleck, *Futuro Passato*.

¹⁷⁸ Carocci, *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo*; Collavini, Petralia, *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo*.

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Federico Cantini
Università di Pisa
federico.cantini@unipi.it
ORCID: 0000-0003-0586-7968

**Topographies of power, topographies of memory.
Persistence and transformation
in the cities of central and northern Italy
(10th-12th centuries)**

by Andrea Augenti

This essay analyzes the destiny of the Italian cities from the 10th to the 12th century. More specifically, it focusses on many aspects, including: the evolution of the urban network; the topography and the structure of the seats of power, the revival of inscriptions as means to convey different kinds of messages, including propaganda, and the impressive growth of the stratification inside the cities, due to many different factors. Many archaeological examples are considered and described, in order to give the reader a vivid picture of a urban society in constant growth.

Questo saggio analizza le sorti delle città italiane tra i secoli X e XII. Più specificamente, esso si concentra su molteplici aspetti, tra cui: l'evoluzione della rete urbana, la topografia e la struttura delle sedi del potere, la rinascita delle iscrizioni come strumenti per veicolare differenti tipologie di messaggi, inclusi quelli di carattere propagandistico; nonché la notevole crescita della stratificazione sociale all'interno delle città, dovuta a una pluralità di fattori. Numerosi esempi archeologici sono presi in esame e descritti al fine di offrire al lettore un quadro vivido di una società urbana in costante sviluppo.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, urban archaeology, medieval urban network, medieval epigraphy, topography of power.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, archeologia urbana, rete urbana medievale, epigrafia medievale, topografia del potere.

Andrea Augenti, Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Italy, andrea.augenti@unibo.it, 0000-0001-9777-8238

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Mutation, persistence, and resilience – and then turning points, twists and turns, changes of direction, points of no return... Historiography has always tackled the issue of periodisation, paying particular attention to discontinuities: those moments and periods that mark a break and a change of pace in the course of events.¹ Archaeology is now often able to contribute to this debate thanks to its increasingly refined methods and its ability to develop increasingly analytical forms of investigation. I myself have dealt with periodisation on more than one occasion, especially in relation to Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.² This time, however, I will take the opportunity offered by this conference to focus on the 10th-12th centuries. I will do so – as is only natural – from a purely archaeological point of view, by focusing on cities and specific themes that I consider particularly significant: the transformation of the urban landscape and seats of power in terms of both topography and architecture; the re-emerging of public documents; the rise in ground levels, which archaeology has increasingly highlighted and recorded in various centres, precisely in relation to the centuries in question; and finally, the role acquired by churches and monasteries as both custodians and transmitters of the memory of abandoned cities. A brief general remark: this study will focus mainly on urban contexts in northern Italy, but here and there it will also refer to and compare some cities in central Italy, first and foremost Rome.

1. *The urban chessboard*

In a brilliant and pioneering article published in 1988, Bryan Ward-Perkins identified a fundamental line of inquiry for Italian medieval archaeology: the study of the fate of cities between Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Drawing on a preliminary investigation – at a time when neither the tools nor the data now available existed – Ward-Perkins produced a map of the cities of central and northern Italy, identifying three categories: centres with continuity of habitation, abandoned centres, and newly-founded centres. Research has continued since then, and many of us have returned to the subject – some more systematically than others – in light of the new evidence generated by an increasingly vigorous medieval archaeology.³ That article and its accompanying map had a particular impact on me, and the result of that influence was the impulse, a few decades later, to establish and begin editing an *Atlante delle città medievali d'Italia* (*Atlas of Medieval Cities in Italy*): a project ex-

¹ See, for example, Delogu, *Le origini del Medioevo*; *Le trasformazioni del V secolo*; Gasparri, 774. More generally, see Le Goff, *Faut-il vraiment*. On the archaeological side, see Lucas, *The Archaeology of Time*, and Crellin, *Change and Archaeology*.

² Augenti, *A Tale of Two Cities*; Augenti, "Cutting History into Slices;" Augenti, "Late Antique and Early Medieval."

³ Gelichi, "La città in Italia;" Augenti, "Archeologia della città;" Augenti, *Archeologia dell'Italia*, 30-9.

tended geographically to the rest of the peninsula (including the islands) and chronologically to the Late Middle Ages (the 1988 map, by contrast, documented the situation only up to the year 800: Fig. 1).⁴

However much it may be integrated, expanded, or corrected, the picture captured by Ward-Perkins still highlights several fundamental trends that are essential for understanding early medieval urbanism: first, the strong and indisputable survival of the ancient (Roman and pre-Roman) urban network across the centuries; second, a certain number of abandonments, which vary in their impact on the overall settlement pattern from region to region but which are quantitatively negligible compared with the persistence of ancient cities; and finally, again in quantitative terms, the limited significance of new foundations during the period between 400 and 800.

It was precisely the work of expanding and revising that survey which made it possible to define more clearly the phenomena I have just outlined, as well as to bring others to light. More specifically, on the one hand, by extending the perspective to the entire peninsula, the low incidence of new foundations between 400 and 800 is confirmed; on the other hand, one fact emerges with great clarity: it was during the 9th-10th to 13th centuries that the most significant transformation of the urban network in Italy occurred. This is the period in which we witness a considerable number of new city foundations that are particularly concentrated between the 10th and 12th centuries. This was not the case everywhere, nor in every region, since each geographical context clearly followed its own path – and their underlying rationales likewise differed. Yet, taken as a whole, this was the prevailing trend.

Take Piedmont, for example: scholars have long highlighted the significant number of abandoned urban centres in this region from as early as the 3rd century AD.⁵ During the Early Middle Ages, this ‘die-off of cities’, which probably occurred due to the excessive scale of Roman urbanism, was not offset by any new foundations (unlike in the Veneto, for instance; Fig. 2). Between the 12th and 13th centuries, however, Cuneo, Alessandria, Savigliano, Mondovì, Casale Monferrato, Fossano, Moncalieri, and Pinerolo were founded (Fig. 3). This created a completely new and different landscape – one in which urban centres once again became widespread and gained considerable importance. Another point to emphasise is that some of these centres were fortunate enough to survive the crises of later centuries and to endure to the present day.⁶ In short, during those centuries of the Middle Ages the foundations were laid for the construction of a new urban network – one generally denser than before – which included newly-founded cities that went on to have particularly successful histories. Beyond Piedmont, the same can be said

⁴ Augenti, e Bondi, “L’Atlante delle città;” Bondi, e Benassi, “L’Atlante delle città.”

⁵ La Rocca, “Using the Roman Past;” La Rocca, “Fuit civitas;” La Rocca, “Castrum vel potius civitas;” Augenti, *Archeologia dell’Italia*, 32.

⁶ On the history of Italian cities in the period after the 13th century, see Ginatempo, e Sandri, *L’Italia delle città*.

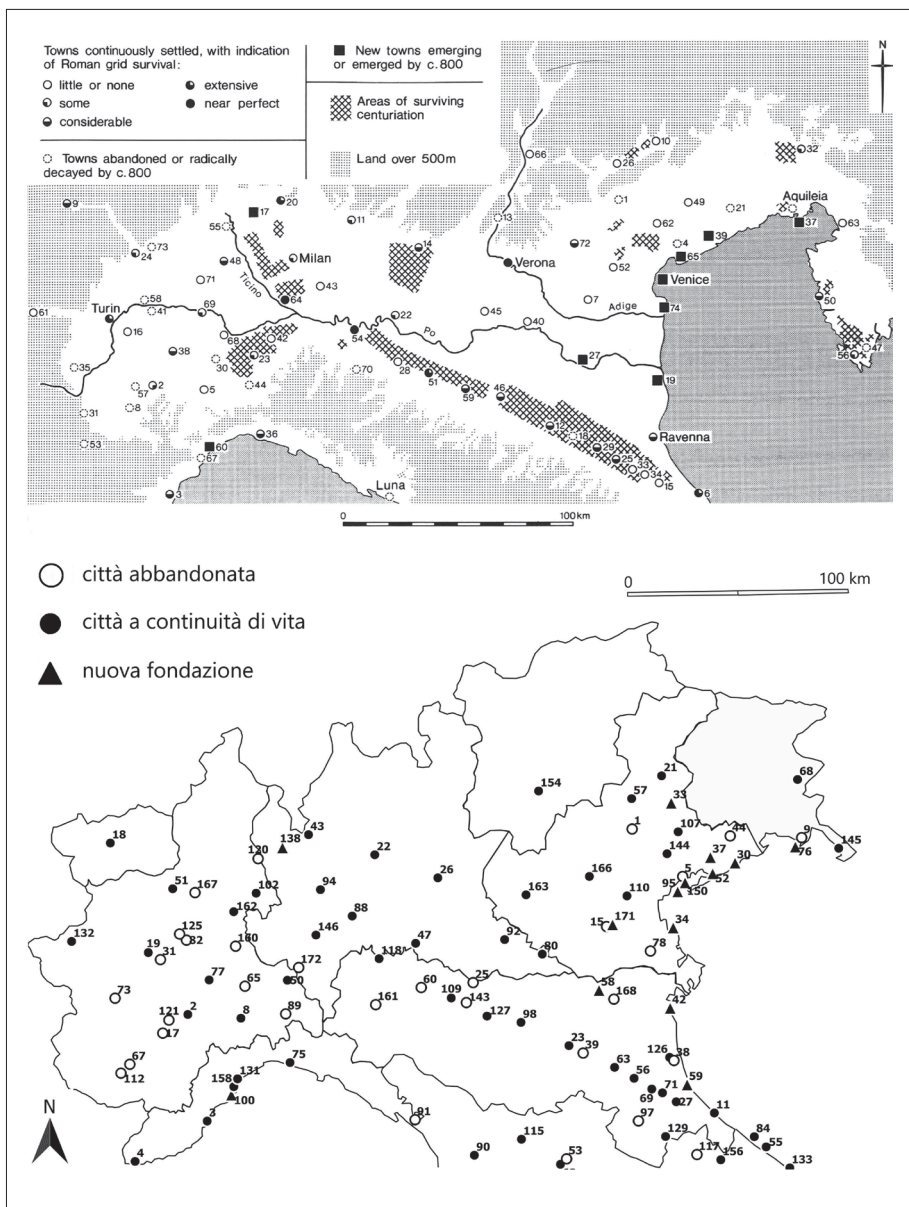


Fig. 1. Cities of northern Italy: comparison between the map drawn by B. Ward Perkins (1988, top) and that of the *L'Atlante delle città medievali* (2015, bottom).



Fig. 2. Roman cities in Piedmont: abandonment and persistence in the Early Middle Ages (9th century).

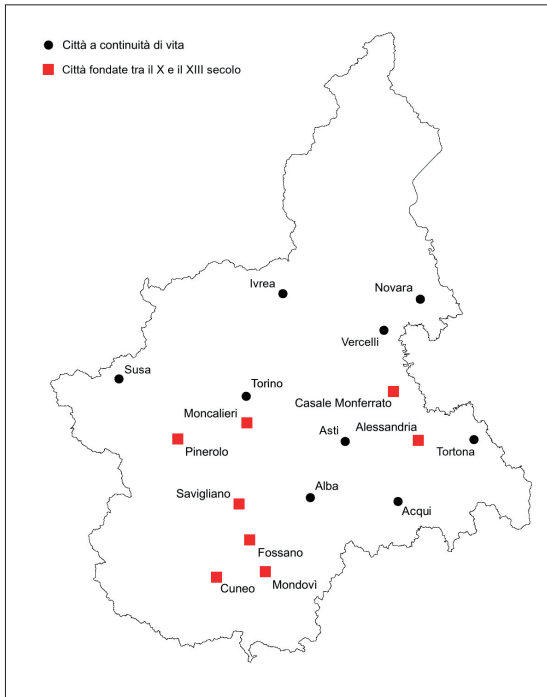


Fig. 3. Cities of Piedmont in the Late Middle Ages: newly founded centres are shown in red (12th-13th centuries).

of many other regions: not all were equally dynamic, yet all were affected by the same trend. It is enough to recall that the foundations of centres such as Crema, Udine, Bassano, Monselice, Prato, and Grosseto date from these centuries, as do those of Viterbo, L'Aquila, Troia, Foggia, Melfi, and Catanzaro. All remain places of considerable substance and importance today, demonstrating the remarkable scale and broad diffusion of this phenomenon: there is scarcely a region that was not involved.⁷

As I was saying, however, not all regions followed the same path. A special case in northern Italy is that of Emilia-Romagna. Here, the survival of ancient cities represents the most significant phenomenon from a numerical point of view, while instances of disappearance are few: these concern the cases of Brescello, *Claterna*, *Fidentia*, *Tannetum*, and *Veleia*. By stretching the point slightly, we can also include Classe among the abandoned centres, whose slow disappearance began in the 8th-9th centuries, according to the most recent investigations. I say 'stretching the point' because Classe was in fact a kind of satellite city of Ravenna, founded in the early 5th century to serve the port located within it, yet in many respects it was a city in its own right – not least because it possessed its own city walls.⁸

As far as new foundations are concerned, the available data are very limited. On the one hand, there is the particularly thorny case of Ferrara – thorny because written sources attest to its existence first (perhaps) as a *castrum* at the beginning of the 7th century (although this is second-hand information, plausible but not necessarily reliable), and later as the seat of a Byzantine duke in the 8th century. Yet we do not know exactly when the settlement became a true city, and above all there is no secure archaeological evidence to confirm a late antique foundation: the earliest material remains identified so far date only from the 10th century.⁹

Then there is Cervia, another entirely distinctive case. Apparently, Cervia did not originate as a city: it is very likely that the first settlement nucleus in this area was a Roman *vicus* called *Ficocle*, to which a rural episcopal see was attached in the early decades of the 5th century. Only later, between the 9th and 10th centuries, did the settlement move further north and consolidate into an urban form. This is the so-called *Cervia Vecchia* (Old Cervia), which is well attested in written sources from the 12th century onwards as well as in historical cartography from the 14th-15th centuries, before being abandoned during the 17th century and literally 'dismantled' to make way for the construction of present-day Cervia, that is located closer to the coastline (Fig. 4).

Since 2019, Cervia and the surrounding area have been the subject of a large-scale research project by the University of Bologna.¹⁰ The area originally occupied by the town of *Cervia Vecchia* has undergone a series of archaeo-

⁷ Ginatempo, e Sandri, 61-8.

⁸ Bondi, e Benassi, "L'Atlante delle città," 142.

⁹ Gelichi, "*Hodierni vero vocant Ferrariam*."

¹⁰ Augenti, Bondi, Cavalazzi, e Fiorini, "Cervia Vecchia."

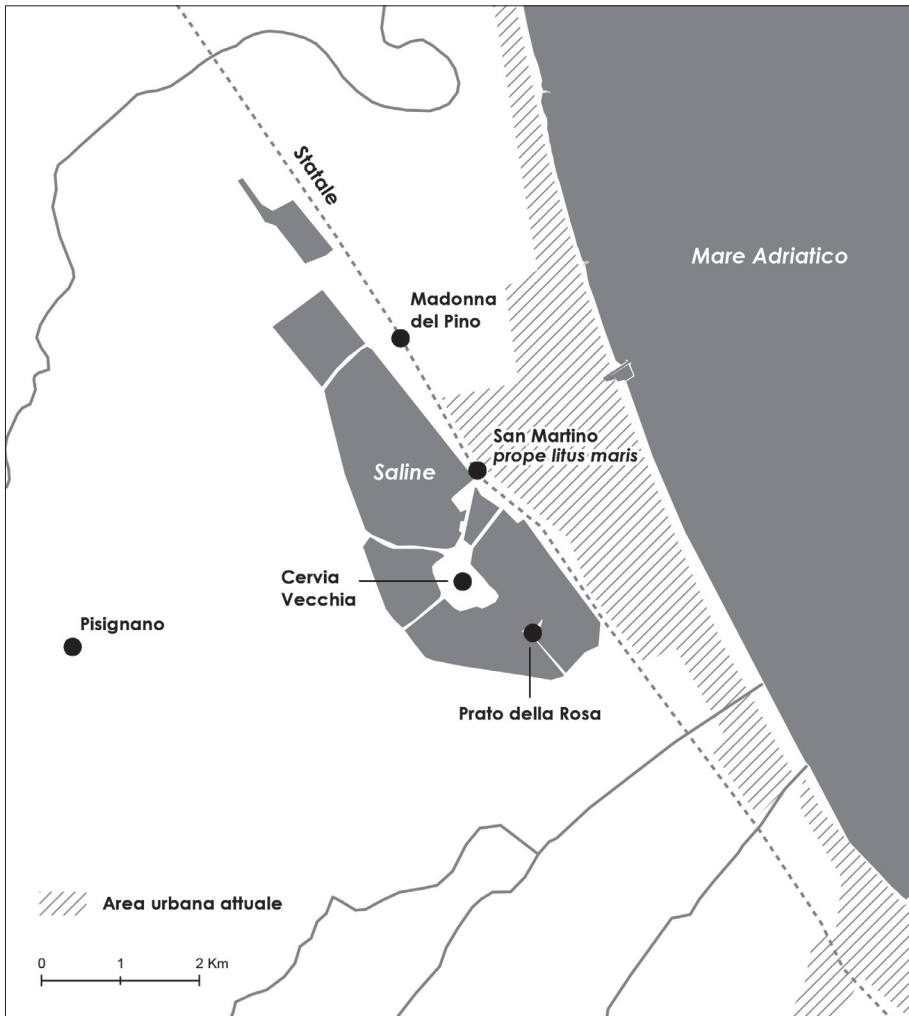


Fig. 4. Cervia: topographical diagram.

logical assessments (which are still in progress) and excavations that have brought to light the fortress, several ecclesiastical complexes, and a residential area (Fig. 5). This research is still focused on chronological horizons relating to the High Middle Ages (13th-15th centuries), but some core samples have made it possible to identify, thanks to the 14C dating of some wooden finds, an early phase of the area's occupation dating back to the last decades of the 9th century. This data obviously needs to be verified, and above all substantiated by further investigation, but if confirmed, it could indicate that Cervia was founded in the early Middle Ages, which has not otherwise been proven to date.



Fig. 5. Cervia Vecchia: the Rocca area seen from above (2022 excavations).

This finding takes on even greater significance when compared with the results of investigations carried out in 2023 at Prato della Rosa, almost a kilometre south of the *Cervia Vecchia* site. Earlier research there had revealed the presence of walls, mosaic floors, and artefacts dating from between the 3rd century BC and the 6th century AD. In our 2023 excavation, we brought to light the remains of a large cross-shaped building – most likely a church – surrounded by a more extensive architectural complex (Fig. 6). Associated with these structures, a lead seal of Pope Clement III was discovered – undoubtedly a remarkable find (Fig. 7). This seal, together with other evidence, makes it all the more plausible that these buildings were the first cathedral and episcopal palace of the bishop of Cervia, who is attested at the beginning of the 6th century as the bishop of *Ficcole*. The toponym *Ficcole* may refer to a *vicus*, or in any case to a non-urban settlement to which – probably during the 5th century – the first bishopric in this area was attached. We are therefore likely dealing with a rural bishopric (one of the very few in northern Italy, along with Voghenza and Sabiona) which was later associated with a newly-founded urban centre, Cervia.¹¹ This process can be considered to have reached completion in 1236, when the cathedral’s functions were transferred

¹¹ On rural bishoprics, see De Fino, “Le diocesi rurali.”

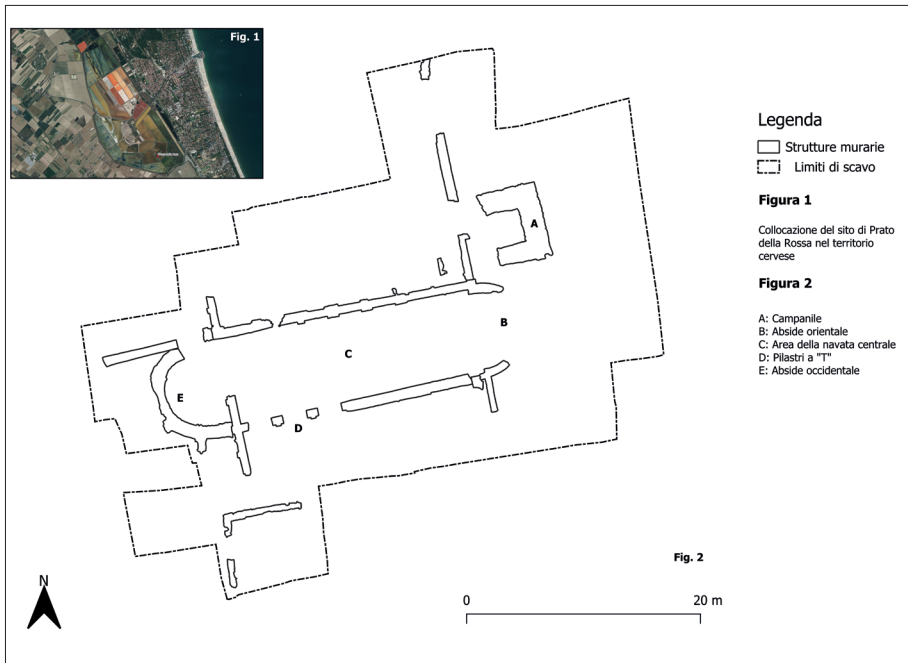


Fig. 6. Cervia: late antique/medieval building found in Prato della Rosa (2023 excavations).

to a church within Cervia's walls.¹²

Cervia's case is both interesting and significant. On the one hand, its possible foundation in the Early Middle Ages does not substantially alter the overall picture: it is still true that few cities were founded during this period, and that their presence had little impact on the broader urban landscape. At the same time, Cervia's case once again illustrates how, between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages – albeit for different reasons in each instance – the entire northern Adriatic coastline was remarkably dynamic in terms of new foundations. This process began with the establishment of Classe (5th century), continued with those of Comacchio and Torcello (both 7th century), was followed by other centres, and culminated with Cervia (9th



Fig. 7. Cervia: seal of Pope Clement III (2023 excavations: drawing by Giorgio Albertini).

¹² Augenti, "Una chiesa, un sigillo."

century?) and Venice (9th century). It is no coincidence that this area did not experience the phase of urban renewal that has already identified in Piedmont and elsewhere during the 12th and 13th centuries.

2. *Inside the city: the seats of power*

Throughout history, every urban civilisation has had its palaces – from the earliest known example in Arslantepe onwards.¹³ Of course, palaces also existed in late antique, early medieval, and medieval cities. Two specific questions thus arise with regard to the period under consideration here. The first concerns place: was the topography of power in the 11th and 12th centuries the same as in earlier times? Did the sites where power was exercised remain unchanged, or did they shift, migrating to other parts of the same urban fabric? The second concerns form: can we speak of a long, or even very long, continuity in the architecture of the palaces of power? Or did those forms likewise change over the centuries we are examining?

Let us proceed in order, beginning with the topography of power. As a crucial premise, it should be noted that this subject is not easily approached archaeologically, at least compared with most urban contexts, for a simple reason: we often have no surviving traces of the earliest buildings, as they have been absorbed – or even completely destroyed – by later phases of urban development. In some cases, however, we are more fortunate: even when the material remains of the earliest structures are lacking, topographical evidence at least allows us to locate them in space, with greater or lesser precision. Among the most emblematic and best-documented cases – both materially and textually – is that of Rome: the vast complex of the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill was certainly in use until the 8th century, and probably even in the 10th century under Otto III.¹⁴ With the birth of the commune, however, the centre of power shifted elsewhere. During the 12th century, the Palazzo Senatorio was built atop the Capitoline Hill.¹⁵ Moving to northern Italy, we find a similar situation in Pavia, where the palace of the Lombard kings – located on the north-eastern edge of the town and still in use during the Carolingian period and beyond – was destroyed in 1024. The new communal palace was erected in the city centre, in an area adjacent to the bishop's palace.¹⁶ Similarly, in Ravenna the palace successively occupied by Honorius, Theodoric, and later the Byzantine exarchs – which was only partially excavated at the beginning of the 20th century – was first abandoned towards the

¹³ Frangipane, *Un frammento alla volta*, 121-4.

¹⁴ Augenti, *Il Palatino nel Medioevo*, 74-5. For a different opinion, see Santangeli Valenzani, "La residenza di Ottone III," which nevertheless does not provide substantial arguments against my hypothesis.

¹⁵ Dey, *The Making*, 201.

¹⁶ Hudson, *Archeologia urbana*, 24 and 38, tables 2 and 4; Brogiolo, "Capitali," 144-7.

end of the 8th century and then definitively replaced, during the 12th century, by the communal palace near the bishop's palace, in an area quite distant from the earlier one.¹⁷ The case of Milan is also noteworthy: here the palace of the Lombard kings, which has been identified near the church of San Giorgio al Palazzo, was first replaced by the ducal court, which was near the present Piazza Cordusio (a telling toponymic relic), and later by the Broletto Vecchio, near the cathedral.¹⁸ Finally, the case of Brescia is equally interesting: the probable seat of the Lombard duke – which has been identified on the basis of 19th-century excavations in the Piazza Vittoria area – was replaced in 1187 by the new communal palace, one situated in a completely different location, next to the cathedral dedicated to St Peter.¹⁹

Rome, followed by Pavia, Ravenna, Milan, and Brescia, are just a few examples of a much more widespread phenomenon which I have necessarily summarised here by limiting the number of cases. Overall, it can be said that between the 11th and 12th centuries, the seats of power were relocated in many cities from their often ancient and well-established sites, which had remained in use until that time. In most instances, this new arrangement brought the ecclesiastical and civic authorities into close proximity – the new communal buildings were frequently constructed next to the bishop's complex – but at the same time it introduced a rupture in the topography of power and memory, and ultimately in local identity itself, by interrupting a centuries-old topographical continuity. The investigation must certainly be broadened and systematised, yet the prevailing trend at present appears to be precisely this, with the turning point lying unmistakably in the 11th century.

The second, equally important aspect that concerns us relates to the structure of the seats of power. I have already addressed this question in a previous study, which is worth summarising here.²⁰ From Late Antiquity, and in particular from the 4th century onwards, the architecture of palaces of power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, followed two main models.

The first is that of U-shaped complexes – that is, three wings arranged around a central courtyard. This model is exemplified by the palace of the Monte Barro *castrum* in Lombardy (from the 5th century), which was probably the residence of the commander and garrison stationed there;²¹ it also appears in what is probably the *Curia Ducis* in Brescia.²² These buildings seem to have been the preserve of an intermediate level of the ruling class, one primarily military in nature (I am not aware of any imperial, royal, or episcopal palaces displaying the same features). They clearly find their reference

¹⁷ On the palace of Theodoric and later of the exarchs, see Augenti, "Archeologia e topografia;" on that of the commune, see Rizzardi, "Il romanico monumentale," 457. The first mention of the communal palace dates back to 1193: Pini, "Il comune di Ravenna," 226.

¹⁸ Vassena, *Firmiter edificata*, 83-121.

¹⁹ Brogiolo, *Brescia altomedievale*, 55-65; Ferrari, "Il broletto di Brescia."

²⁰ Augenti, "Architetture del potere."

²¹ Brogiolo, e Castelletti, *Archeologia a Monte Barro*.

²² Brogiolo, *Brescia altomedievale*, 55-65.

model in the *principia* of the Roman world – the section of the *castra* where the legion's insignia were kept.²³

The second model, which was reserved for the highest echelons of power, is characteristic of late antique *domus* and villas, and ultimately derives from the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill in Rome. It features a large peristyle or central courtyard, around which various rooms are arranged, and – facing the side generally opposite the entrance – a spacious apsidal reception hall. Adjacent to this hall, in varying positions, there may be dining rooms, usually with three apses or more, but always odd in number (since they open symmetrically onto the two side walls, while there is always only one on the rear wall). This layout can be seen in the palaces of Honorius and later Theodoric in Ravenna (Fig. 8), and in many other imperial residences, such as the one in Trier;²⁴ the seats of prefects and other imperial authorities throughout the provinces;²⁵ and even in the few episcopal palaces for which archaeological remains survive, such as the one in Poreč in Istria.²⁶ So far we are still within the chronological span of the 4th to 6th centuries, when the formal foundations of this architectural language were first established and consolidated. What is most interesting, however, is that the same late antique language continued to be employed – if not entirely, then at least in part – even afterwards: we find it in the Papal Palace of the Lateran in Rome and at Aachen, where Pope Leo III (on two occasions) and Charlemagne built large apsidal halls between the late 8th and early 9th centuries.

Already by the 8th century, however, certain innovations had begun to emerge, and it seems that during this period palaces became a testing ground for new architectural solutions. First of all, towers appeared: Pope Zachary (741-52) added a tower to the Lateran Palace. Then came porticoes and loggias, which we find, for example, in Arechis II's palace in Salerno (758-87).²⁷

From the 10th century onwards, things changed substantially – and rather abruptly. It was at this point that palaces began to appear which differed entirely from their predecessors and displayed wholly new features. The first signs of this can be found in rural contexts: in Friuli, the *palatium* located within the castle of Broili, dating from the 10th century, is in fact a large rectangular tower; and elsewhere as well this type of building spread, especially from the 10th century onwards.²⁸ Alongside these new but all in all rather simple structures, more complex examples also began to appear. In northern France, at Mayenne, a palace (Fig. 9) has been excavated and studied which consists of a large rectangular hall on three floors, flanked by a tower. Accord-

²³ This proposal, which I formulated at a seminar in Bologna in May 2013 (later published in Augenti, *Architetture del potere*, 152-4), was subsequently taken up and developed in Possenti, "Riflessioni e nuove proposte."

²⁴ See the various contributions in Luke, and Westbrook, *Late Antique Palatine*.

²⁵ Lavan, "The *Praetoria* of Civil Governors."

²⁶ Marano, "L'edilizia."

²⁷ Augenti, *Architetture del potere*, 153-62.

²⁸ Zoni, *Edilizia residenziale medievale*, 138-42 and the comparative table in figs. 127 and 140.



Fig. 8. Ravenna, Palace of Theodoric (reconstruction: Andrea Augenti, Giorgio Albertini).

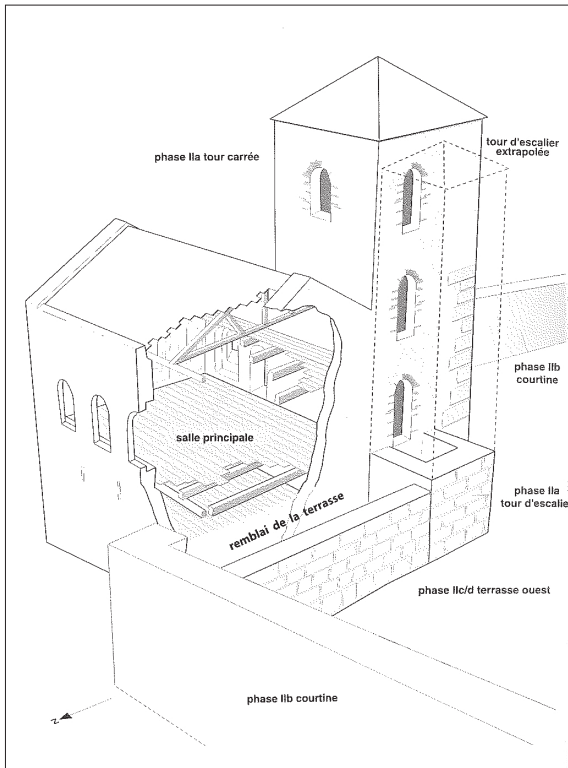


Fig. 9. Mayenne: 10th-century palace.

ing to the most recent chronological assessments, the palace at Mayenne is currently the earliest known example of its type, dating to the 10th century.²⁹

A palace of the same type – a simple hall flanked by a tower – was built in Pistoia in the 11th century and served as the bishop's residence. The episcopal palace of San Lorenzo in Genoa dates to roughly the same period (the second half of the 11th century), according to the most recent hypotheses.³⁰

In short, from the 10th century onwards – although the evidence is sporadic and unevenly distributed across the territory – we can discern the emergence of a new model of palatial architecture, one entirely different from its predecessors. The block composed of a tower and a rectangular hall represents an extreme simplification of the idea of the palace: no longer a separate and varied world where, once inside, one moves through a sequence of courtyards and halls of differing sizes, and where circulation patterns served to define power relations between the owner and his guests or clients, as had already been the case in urban *domus* and rural *villae* of Late Antiquity.³¹ In these new palaces, the emphasis shifted to compactness, verticality (towers and upper storeys), and defensive functionality – features dictated by an age marked by a high degree of conflict, even within urban contexts, both among competing powers and between individual families.

It should also be noted that the model just described does not appear to be the only one. For the moment, it is certainly the best documented from an archaeological point of view, but it is not unique. Alongside it, we can tentatively identify another type of palace characterised by a linear layout, with rooms juxtaposed and aligned along the same axis. The episcopal palace at Parma, which has been dated – though unfortunately not on archaeological grounds – to the 11th century, provides an example of this.³² Yet a single case is far from sufficient, and this therefore represents another line of inquiry to be pursued in future research.

So far, so good. We have identified the emergence of at least two types of palaces between the 10th and 11th centuries: the block type, consisting of a hall flanked by a tower, and the linear type. Research in this area – especially from an archaeological perspective – still lags behind: the subject has yet to be addressed systematically, even within the peninsula's individual regions. It is therefore difficult to trace the development of these architectural styles over time with precision. The most recent studies nevertheless seem to highlight at least one noteworthy point: in the subsequent period, namely the 12th and 13th centuries, newly-built urban palaces fit quite neatly into the mould

²⁹ Augenti, "Architetture del potere," 162-5; Heber-Suffrin, et Sapin, *L'architecture carolingienne*, 85-9; 239.

³⁰ Cagnana, "Residenze vescovili."

³¹ Bowes, *Houses and Society*.

³² Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 174-5.

defined by these two models.³³ I am thinking, for instance, of the results of a recent survey of palaces in several Piedmontese towns – Saluzzo, Savigliano, Mondovì, Cuneo, and Fossano – all of which share the same features already observed while also reviving older, early medieval elements such as porticoes and loggias.³⁴

It seems reasonable to conclude that the decisive break with the centuries-old late antique and early medieval tradition – the most significant shift in the architectural language expressed by these buildings – occurred during the 10th century, and that this new idiom continued to be spoken for a long time thereafter.

3. *Monuments speak: inscriptions*

I believe that epigraphy should play a much greater role in archaeological analysis. This is a lesson that classical archaeologists learned long ago: they recognised the informative potential of inscriptions, while also understanding that epigraphic evidence can reveal even more when examined through the lens of archaeology – whether from a topographical perspective or within the archaeology of production.³⁵ Unfortunately, the same cannot yet be said of medieval archaeologists, who still tend to neglect this type of source, or at least fail to make the most of its potential, although there are some notable exceptions.

Retracing the centuries-long history of urban epigraphy, two undisputed and sophisticated masters – Armando Petrucci and Carlo Carletti – have shown that Italy, too, was not exempt from the progressive ‘ecclesialisation’ of inscriptions between the 5th and 11th centuries.³⁶ This process affected not only the locations in which inscriptions were set up, but also their commissioners: apart from funerary inscriptions, throughout that long period (especially from the 6th century onwards), the principal patrons of displayed inscriptions were members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy at every level.³⁷ Despite the continuity of epigraphic production – which never disappeared entirely – it is important to stress the marked decline in the typological variety of inscriptions on display:

³³ See Tosco, “I primi palazzi” for an interesting hypothesis regarding the derivation of this typology from Cistercian architecture – specifically, a rectangular building divided into two naves by a row of pillars and with a porticoed façade.

³⁴ Longhi, e Rao, “Palazzi comunali” (but more broadly, throughout the volume containing this essay – one of the first surveys on the subject – there are numerous examples from different regions of Italy that point in the same direction). See also the very useful general reflections in Tosco, “I primi palazzi comunali,” and now also Gabrielli, “Politiche urbanistiche.” For the subsequent period – the ‘palaces of the people’ (mid-13th to 14th century) – see Maire Vigueur, *Così belle*, 104–34; and more generally, the detailed survey in Garrigou Grandchamp, “L’architecture civile.”

³⁵ Manacorda, “Epigrafia.”

³⁶ Petrucci, *La scrittura*, 34; Carletti, “Dalla ‘pratica aperta’;” Carletti, “Produzione epigrafica.”

³⁷ Carletti, 363.

few commemorations of new foundations (of buildings or towns) and very few lapidary documents, the majority being epitaphs.³⁸

New trends began to emerge beginning in the final decades of the 11th century, however. The first was the use of the exterior walls of ecclesiastical buildings as surfaces on which to display inscriptions that no longer referred exclusively to their foundation. Thus, in Pisa, for example, we find the large inscription celebrating the victories achieved by the Pisans at Messina (1005), in Sardinia (1015-6), and at Bona (1034) – a piece of evidence that Giuseppe Scalia has definitively shown to date from an unspecified moment, but certainly before 1087-90.³⁹ This phenomenon intensified during the 12th century, as demonstrated by the examples of Lucca (1111) and Nepi (1131),⁴⁰ culminating in the extraordinary case of the statutes of Ferrara, inscribed in 1173 on one side of the cathedral.⁴¹ The last three examples all relate to lapidary documents – that is, inscriptions reproducing the text of a document in stone. Between the 11th and 12th centuries there was a general return to a more varied epigraphy in terms of content, to forms of patronage once again closely associated with civil authorities, and to a broadening of scope regarding the places chosen to accommodate this new flourishing of public inscriptions.⁴²

The second trend broadens the scope of the first, extending it to the sphere of urban infrastructure. The earliest signs of this can be seen in Viterbo, with the inscription on Porta Sonza – the original version of which dates to 1095, though it survives in a later redaction from the following century⁴³ – and again in Pisa, on the Porta Aurea, where, immediately after 1115, an inscription was affixed to commemorate the victory over the Saracens in the Balearic Islands.⁴⁴

Examples of this kind multiplied during the latter part of the 12th century, and the practice became firmly established. In Genoa, we find the inscription on Porta Soprana (1155); in Milan, that on Porta Romana (1167); in Assisi, the inscription on Porta dell'Archicciolo (1190); and in Reggio Emilia, the one on Porta S. Croce (1199).⁴⁵ This sequence is fairly rapid and clearly illustrates a new use of epigraphy – one focused entirely on the setting of city walls.

Let us return to the case of Rome, however. For this chronological period, two inscriptions from the city are of particular interest: they commemorate the restoration of the Aurelian Walls (1157) (Fig. 10) and that of the Ponte Cestio (c. 1191).⁴⁶

³⁸ Augenti, "Epigrafia e città."

³⁹ Scalia, "Tre iscrizioni e una facciata;" see now Ammannati, *Menia mira vides*.

⁴⁰ Bottazzi, "L'epigrafia" (for the cases of Genoa, Assisi, and Reggio Emilia); Bottazzi, *L'epigrafe di Porta Romana* (for Milan).

⁴¹ Bottazzi, "L'epigrafia dell'Italia comunale," 27.

⁴² Giovè Marchioli, "L'epigrafia comunale," 272.

⁴³ Carosi, "Le epigrafi medievali," 20-2; Bottazzi, "Città e scrittura," 283-5.

⁴⁴ Guerrini, "Scrivere sulle mura," 23-4.

⁴⁵ Guerrini, 22.

⁴⁶ The first inscription was recently discussed by Guerrini, 10, n. 60; both inscriptions were discussed by Dey, *The Making*, 206-7; Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 335-9 (see also Internullo, "Una prospettiva politica"); and Carocci, "Epigrafi e attività edilizia."



Fig. 10. Rome, Aurelian Walls: inscription on Porta Metronia (1157).

With regard to the first, a recent clarification by Dario Internullo is especially important: “control of the Aurelian Walls (by the Roman Senate) was acquired between 1154 and 1157”.⁴⁷ This clearly indicates that, once control of the entire defensive circuit had been secured, the Roman Senate undertook the first restoration works and felt the need to proclaim this renewed sphere of institutional activity through a formal medium recalling ancient traditions.

It is certainly worth mentioning the case of the Ponte dei Mulini in Mantua. This structure, which was built to connect the city with the village of Cittadella, functioned not only as a bridge but also as a dam. This and other works related to the regulation of water in the area were commemorated in 1190 on a slab containing highly detailed information, including the names of the magistrates who had promoted the project and of the *magister* who designed it, Alberto Pitentino.⁴⁸

The examples of Rome and Mantua are particularly significant in this context, as they clearly belong within the same phenomenon while extending it to other types of infrastructure: bridges. In the case of Rome, the reference to antiquity – and to local memory – is unmistakable: next to the new inscription of 1191, passers-by crossing the Ponte Cestio could still see the much older one dedicated to Emperor Gratian (AD 370).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 337. Dey, *The Making*, 207, comes to the same conclusion.

⁴⁸ Bottazzi, “L’epigrafia dell’Italia,” 28, figs. 4 and 42, n. 8.

⁴⁹ Internullo, “Una prospettiva politica,” 1.

All things considered, some of the most important infrastructure for the proper functioning of cities – namely, walls and bridges – began to feature inscriptions commemorating their construction or restoration from the first half of the 12th century onwards; and, in all known cases, these works were commissioned by civil authorities.

Shortly thereafter, another trend was documented in Rome: the self-celebration of members of the local nobility, again through epigraphs. According to the latest analysis by Sandro Carocci, both the inscription on the Torre dei Conti (most likely originating from another monument) and the one visible on the lintel of the Casa dei Crescenzi's entrance date to the second half of the 12th century. We have no evidence of this use of epigraphy in other Italian cities during the 12th century, with the exception of Ascoli Piceno, where Leonida Ternani's palace (1165) provides one example.⁵⁰ These instances – together with the later one (1250) from Giovanni Toscano's tower in Volterra⁵¹ – nevertheless suggest that we may be looking at the few surviving traces of a phenomenon more widespread than we might imagine: the use of inscriptions by members of the urban elite which were displayed outside their homes as a means of enhancing their social position.

In conclusion, we can draw several interesting observations regarding epigraphy. Firstly, as early as the 11th century, and particularly in the 12th, we see a veritable 'epigraphic revival', which manifested primarily in the diversification of inscription types and content. Inscriptions no longer merely commemorate the foundation or restoration of ecclesiastical buildings, but also military exploits and political acts. Furthermore, this innovation extends to the locations where such inscriptions are displayed: no longer are they almost exclusively churches, but can now also sometimes be significant pieces of civic infrastructure, such as city walls and bridges.

Another factor – one closely connected to the previous one – is political in nature. It was the new political actors – citizens, the various communes, and the Roman Senate – that resorted to inscriptions to celebrate their achievements. More generally, it seems to me that the idea of a new form of administration was taking hold, one that was far more attentive and systematic in its interventions than its predecessors. This new administration took charge of 'urban matters', renovating and restoring the infrastructure and other key elements of the urban fabric in order to return them to community use and bring them back to decent and dignified standards (the *decus*, which Dario Internullo has written extensively about in relation to Rome).⁵²

Finally, one last trend can be observed: from at least the 12th century onwards (perhaps earlier, though we currently have no data to confirm this), private individuals – both nobles and laymen – began to 'write their houses';

⁵⁰ Carocci, "Epigrafi e attività edilizia."

⁵¹ Augenti, e Munzi, *Scrivere la città*, 61-2; Augenti, "Epigrafia e città," 31-2.

⁵² Internullo, *Senato sapiente*, 321-41.

that is, to preserve their own memory through an epigraphic apparatus that is clearly visible on façades or in other parts of their residences. In short, beginning in the 11th century the city of the central Middle Ages was one of the key sites for the revival of exposed writing. Inscriptions once again became valuable artefacts to be conceived and displayed – vehicles for political propaganda and for the transmission and celebration of memory, not only of institutions but also of individual families and citizens.

4. *Stories from the earth: rising levels*

In 1954, Mortimer Wheeler published *Archaeology from the Earth*, the first detailed manual on stratigraphic archaeology.⁵³ That book – the cornerstone of stratigraphy as we still understand it today – contains, among other things, two very important drawings: two sections intended to dissuade archaeologists from persisting in the practice of excavation conceived as the unconditional removal of soil from archaeological sites. The first of these sections illustrates the damage and research problems produced by so-called level excavation (i.e., the removal of soil according to depths predetermined on paper); the second addresses the same issue in relation to excavation conducted along walls – a method known as ‘chasing the walls’ (Fig. 11).⁵⁴ These are two hasty and ill-advised practices that were widely employed at the time (and for several decades thereafter). They attest to a single underlying idea, which Wheeler vigorously opposed through his drawings: that, with few exceptions, archaeologists had long regarded soil as an impediment and a tedious obstacle to their vision and understanding of what they deemed most important, namely walls and objects. Wheeler overturned this conception, devoting sections of his book to demonstrating that soil is a valuable source of information that must be handled carefully during excavation.

This attitude towards soil – and recognition of its fundamental importance in archaeological contexts – was gradually adopted in Italy as well through the ‘stratigraphic revolution’ of the 1970s. It should nevertheless be noted that only very recently have we begun to explore and fully appreciate the informational potential of soil. It may be said that at least two closely-connected perspectives lie behind this growing awareness. On the one hand, soil is now being analysed with increasing precision in terms of its composition: this is where geoarchaeology comes into play, a discipline that has steadily gained ground and that, among other things, examines the formation and origins of layers.⁵⁵ On the other hand, we have also begun to consider soil in a historical dimension, especially in relation to urban contexts. Why are some

⁵³ Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*.

⁵⁴ Wheeler, 54, fig. 11; 74, fig. 16.

⁵⁵ Particularly significant in this regard is Nicosia, *Gearcheologia*.

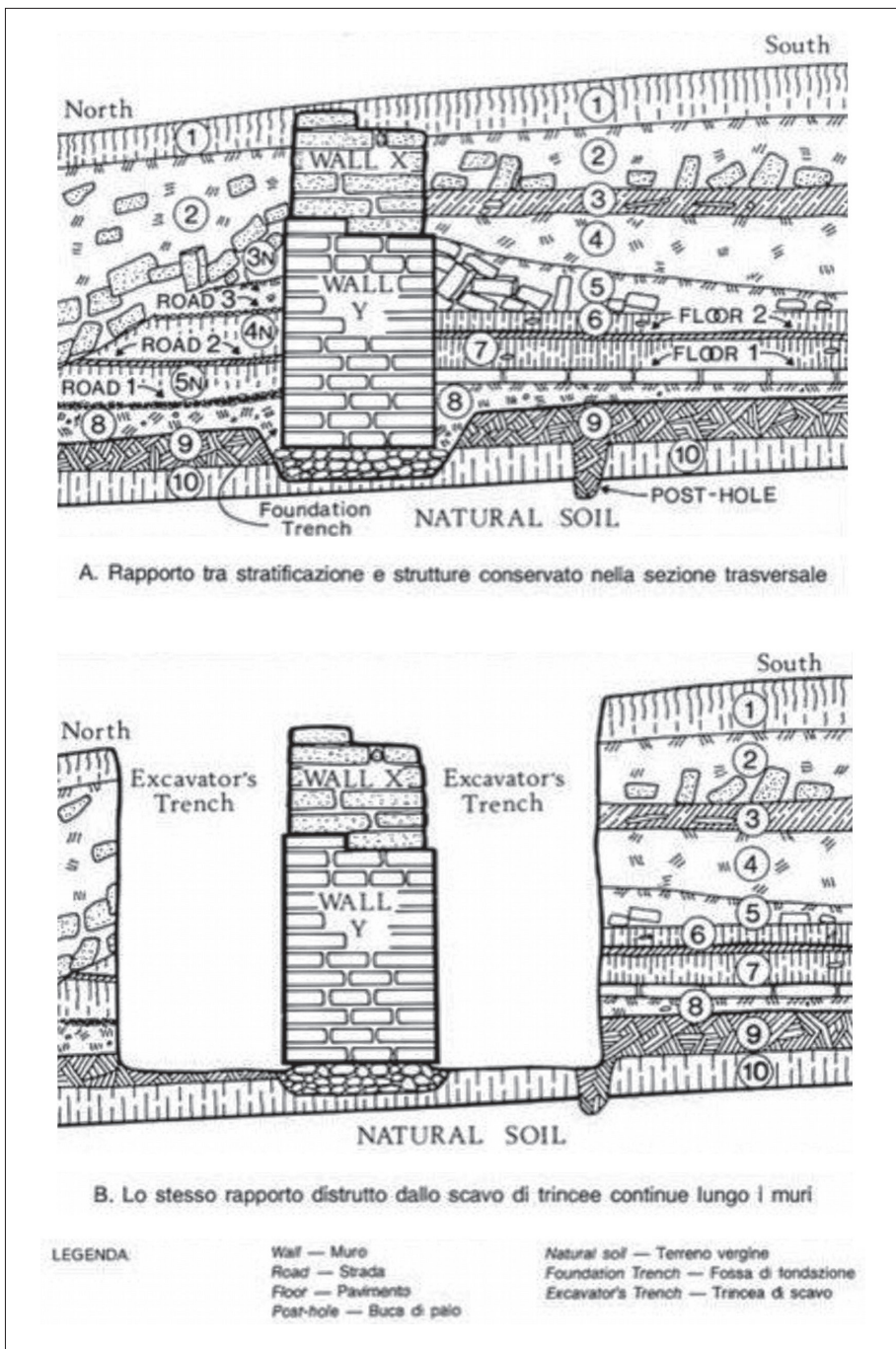


Fig. 11. The harmful effects of 'chasing the walls': drawing by Mortimer Wheeler.

fills or accumulations thicker than others? Might their origin be anthropogenic – intentional – rather than the product of natural processes? And why do such accumulations occur in certain historical periods and not in others?

With regard to this last question, various urban archaeological projects carried out since the 1980s have revealed a phenomenon that was widespread throughout Italy and beyond: from Late Antiquity through to the Early Middle Ages, urban centres experienced a rise in ground levels. From an administrative and managerial perspective, this was due to a loss of control by the authorities over the proper functioning of infrastructure. On a practical level, however, the rise in ground levels was due to a number of reasons: accumulation of waste; accumulation of debris following building collapses or natural events, such as floods; accumulation of agricultural land intentionally brought into urban areas to create space for cultivation (which was made possible by the loosening of the urban settlement network); and the deterioration of wooden buildings, which were becoming increasingly common in cities.

It is only in more recent times that consideration has been given to the fills dating from after the year 1000, and scholars have sought to understand their nature and origin. In this regard, the pioneering role undoubtedly belongs to Federico Guidobaldi, who dealt with the case of Rome in an brilliant and stimulating article.⁵⁶ Guidobaldi identified a large number of fills in different parts of the city whose origin, given their average thickness of 4–5 metres, can only be anthropogenic and therefore intentional. These fills, which are rich in rubble, are related to various buildings – both ecclesiastical and secular – located in the low-lying areas of the Forums and the Colosseum, along the Via Lata, in the Campus Martius, and in Trastevere. According to Guidobaldi's interpretation, this “extensive intervention” to raise and level the ground was the result of the will and work of a pontiff: Paschal II (1099–1118) (Fig. 12). The pope commissioned and carried out a large-scale urban redevelopment project following the Norman sack of 1084 – an undertaking rendered unavoidable by that disastrous event.

Other scholars have taken up this rather extraordinary insight, which is undoubtedly one of the most revolutionary proposals in recent studies of Rome and, more broadly, of the late medieval city in Europe. According to Hendrik Dey, the project was probably shared by Paschal II's successors, namely Callixtus II and Honorius II, as well as their rivals, Anacletus II and Innocent II.⁵⁷ Daniele Manacorda, for his part, in an excellent volume partly inspired by Guidobaldi's contribution, has identified another possible promoter (and financier) of the project: the Pierleoni, one of the city's most powerful and wealthy aristocratic families. Alternatively, it may have been a ‘joint’ initiative involving both the popes and the Pierleoni family.⁵⁸ As we can see,

⁵⁶ Guidobaldi, “Un estesissimo intervento.”

⁵⁷ Dey, *The Making*, 202.

⁵⁸ Manacorda, *Roma*, 147–65.

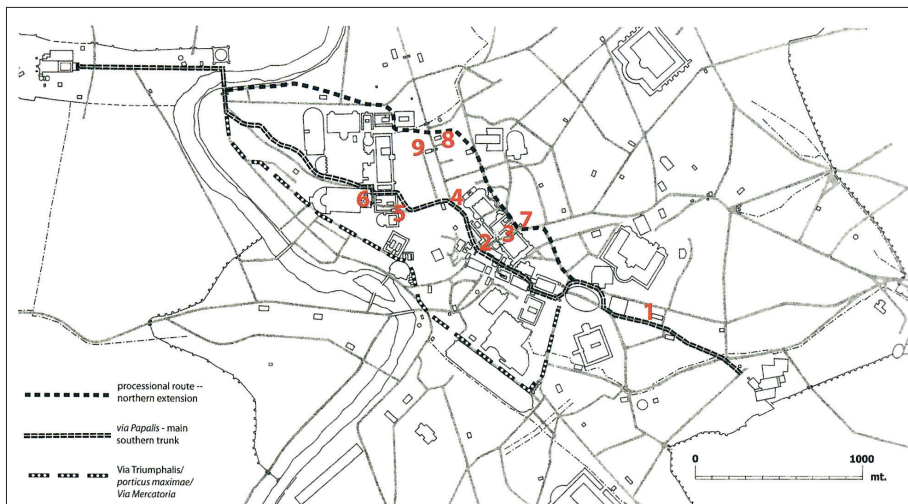


Fig. 12. Rome: the locations where 12th-century fills have been identified (F. Guidobaldi, reworking by H. Dey).

the debate so far has focused mainly on this great project's authorship— an issue that is unlikely to be definitively resolved – but no one has questioned the scope and novelty of the undertaking. According to Manacorda, we can even speak of a broken history of Rome, or at least one divided into two segments: the one preceding the great earthworks of the 12th century and the one following them; two Romes, separated by metres and metres of soil and rubble.

Moreover, does all this concern only Rome and its specific, distinctive history in the 11th and 12th centuries? Or can we identify similar situations in the subsoil of other Italian cities? Before attempting to answer this question, it should be borne in mind that Rome is unique both in terms of the number of stratigraphic excavations carried out to date and in terms of the amount of data available. Moreover, we must also consider that this kind of careful, informed gaze upon the urban past –from a vertical, cross-sectional perspective that is attentive to the earth as a source of important information – has only recently begun to come into play. All things considered, research in this field is therefore still in its infancy.

Although perhaps this line of research may prove fruitful, especially if we examine the excavations carried out in more recent times, which are more methodologically informed. I will give just a few examples which I believe are sufficiently significant.

The first concerns Florence, where excavations have been carried out in the area where the Palazzo Vecchio stands – more specifically, in its third courtyard. In Antiquity, this was the site of a Roman theatre that was built during the 1st century AD. Later, between the 4th and 5th centuries, the architectural complex ceased to be used for its original purpose, several collapses occurred, spoliation took place, and layers of dark earth rich in organic mate-

rial were deposited (between the 7th and 11th centuries). Then, during the 12th century, the voids created by the collapse of the vaults were backfilled, and retaining structures were built to contain the soil. During this phase, as well as in subsequent ones (13th-14th centuries), successive deposits of soil were laid to raise and level the occupation surfaces.⁵⁹

The second example takes us to Forlì. Here, the area occupied in the 16th century by the Monte di Pietà was originally, in the 11th century, an extra-urban zone. Permanent settlement began in the second half of the 13th century, and the construction of the first buildings was preceded by a series of substantial backfills intended to level the ground and allow the first building works to begin.⁶⁰

The third case concerns Verona, and differs from the previous ones. In the area occupied by the ancient *Capitolium* – the city's most important temple – several towers were erected between the 11th and 13th centuries. The foundations of some of these buildings are particularly massive; one in particular reaches a depth of about four metres.⁶¹ In this instance, the reasoning is based purely on indirect evidence: there are no data on the stratigraphic layers originally cut by these foundations, yet their considerable depth suggests that in this area – characterised by the ruins of the ancient monument – a substantial operation of clearance and ground raising was carried out on a considerable scale.

These are only three examples, one of which (the last) is somewhat uncertain; but it seems important to note them, if only to suggest a possible avenue of research. Is it likely that only Rome came to terms with its ruined landscape – its uneven and fragmented layout – and restored it to a unified appearance through substantial fills and ground-levelling? It seems more plausible that, in the 11th and 12th centuries, many other Italian cities found themselves in conditions similar to those that had prompted the intervention of Paschal II (his successors? The Pierleoni family?), and that the new political actors began to concern themselves not only with founding individual monuments but also with ensuring the broader maintenance and proper functioning of the urban fabric, making strategic and deliberate use of earth and rubble. Closer attention to this kind of evidence may, in the future, allow us to define more precisely the timing and character of these practices of backfilling and ground raising in each individual urban centre.

⁵⁹ Bruttini, *Archeologia urbana*, 49-74. It should be noted that the thickness of the fill in this area never reaches that found in Roman deposits, but the stratigraphic sequence nevertheless reveals the clear intention behind the various interventions to raise the floor levels.

⁶⁰ Guarnieri, *Il Monte prima del Monte*, 14 and the various sections on 29-33.

⁶¹ Cavalieri Manasse, "Gli scavi," 140-4.

5. *Relays of memory: churches and monasteries*

There is one final topic to address. It fits well with the lines of reasoning that have been developed so far and also pertains to the period under discussion. This time, our focus turns to a phenomenon affecting cities that disappeared during the Early Middle Ages. These disappearances were, on average, rather slow; in many cases, ancient centres took several centuries to die out completely. How definitive was this disappearance? In what form did it occur? There was no fixed pattern or codified rule, yet written sources and archaeological evidence shed light on a phenomenon that seems to have been widespread from the north to the deep south of the peninsula: abandoned cities were often replaced by ecclesiastical buildings or monastic complexes. In some cases, these were already in existence at the time of the urban centre's decline; in others, they were founded later. They might stand within the city itself or on its margins, but over time they alone remained. Through their names, they often helped to preserve the memory of the vanished city. Moreover, the sometimes peripheral position of these religious complexes could, in certain cases, give rise to toponymic shifts: the church or monastery in question attracted to itself the name of a centre that no longer existed, even though that centre had not originally stood where its namesake was now located.

Although perhaps the best way to illustrate this is through a few examples. Let us move from north to south, beginning with Pedona. This was a Roman town in southern Piedmont which, according to the most recent research, ceased to exist around the 4th-5th centuries. In the 6th century, a church was built near a suburban cemetery of Pedona; by the 8th, it had become the core of a monastic complex: the Abbey of San Dalmazzo (Fig. 13). This is one of those cases that show a displacement from the original urban site: the toponym "Pedona" was kept alive and its memory preserved, but is now associated with a location on the periphery of the Roman town. During the 11th century, the church was completely rebuilt in the Romanesque style, and the 11th and 12th centuries marked its period of greatest development. The abbey then played a formative role, attracting around itself a settlement that would become the village of Borgo San Dalmazzo.⁶²

A similar, though distinct, case is that of Classe, where I directed excavations and other investigations between 2001 and 2016.⁶³ Here, excavations conducted in the port area have revealed a pattern of progressive transformations and phases of abandonment beginning in the first half of the 7th century. The city was not definitively abandoned until the 10th century: various archaeological traces, some relating to craft activities, date to at least the 8th century, and a passage by the historian Agnellus of Ravenna records that even in his time (the 9th century) Classe was still supplying soldiers to the Raven-

⁶² Micheletto, *La chiesa di San Dalmazzo*; Micheletto, *San Dalmazzo*.

⁶³ Augenti, *Classe. Indagini*; Augenti, "Classe: Archaeologies."

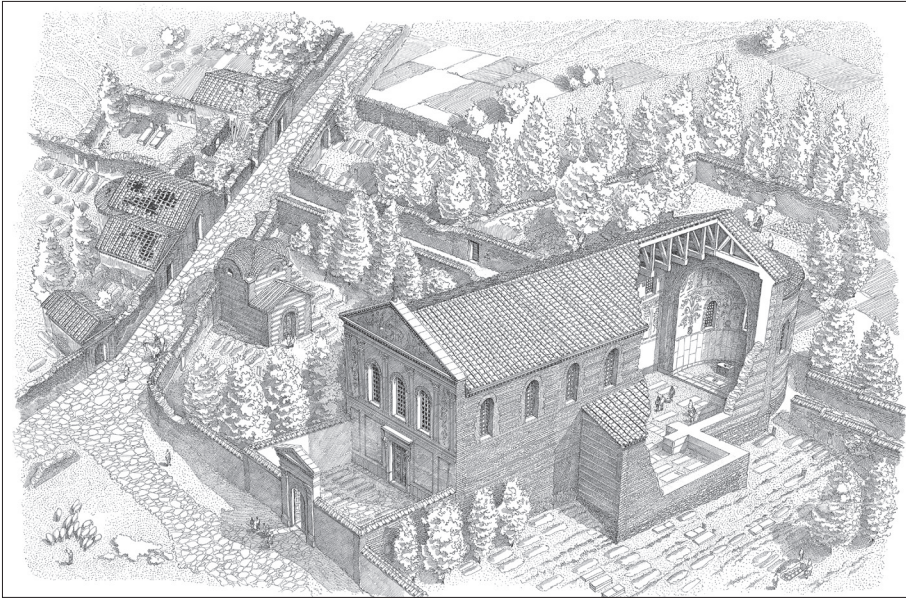


Fig. 13. Borgo San Dalmazzo (Cuneo): reconstruction of the abbey at the time of its foundation, 9th century (drawing by Francesco Corni, 2005).

na army.⁶⁴ The church of San Severo was built in the second half of the 6th century in the southern part of the city, not far from the city walls.⁶⁵ By the second half of the 9th century, when Classe was well on its way to disappearance, a large Benedictine monastery was built next to the church (Fig. 14). The complex remained in use for a long time – well beyond the demise of Classe. It underwent extensive renovation in the 12th century – its golden age, economically speaking as well – and was dismantled only in the 15th.⁶⁶ Within the now almost deserted urban area, the monastery of San Severo thus remained for centuries one of the few surviving monuments – the only standing structure amid a broad landscape of ruins. Later, after its disappearance, the place name *in Classe* was retained by another monastery in the area: that of Sant'Apollinare, which was originally located much farther south of the city, in the suburbs and near the tomb of Ravenna's first bishop.⁶⁷

Another site with a similar trajectory is the city of *Falerii Novi* in northern Lazio. *Falerii* became an episcopal see in the 5th century (465), but entered a profound crisis around the second half of the 6th century. Recent archaeological investigations have revealed the presence of forum ware (so-called *ceramica a vetrina pesante*) and other traces that seem to indicate a certain degree of

⁶⁴ Augenti, 66-7.

⁶⁵ Augenti, et al., *La Basilica di San Severo*.

⁶⁶ Augenti, e Cirelli, "San Severo."

⁶⁷ Augenti, "Classe: Archaeologies," 67-8.



Fig. 14. Classe: the monastery of S. Severo in the 13th century (reconstruction: Andrea Augenti, Giorgio Albertini).

continued habitation within the circuit of the city walls during the Early Middle Ages. This was probably a very small-scale settlement, one concentrated in only a few areas, and whose actual extent remains to be verified. Signs of a more substantial revival of activity appear between the 11th and 12th centuries, coinciding with the foundation of the monastery of Santa Maria di Falleri (Fig. 15).⁶⁸ This complex likewise remained for centuries the sole standing monument in the area, its name preserving the memory of the vanished city.

Pedona, Classe, and *Falerii Novi* are three examples of a much broader phenomenon that, as I mentioned, encompasses the entire peninsula.⁶⁹ The pattern is always the same: in or near the sites of ancient abandoned cities, a church or monastery was either expanded or newly founded between the 9th century (in the earliest cases) and the 12th. The 11th and 12th centuries, in any case, represent the period in which these institutions reached their peak,

⁶⁸ Andrews et al., "The *Falerii Novi* Project," 14.

⁶⁹ Another similar case is that of Ortona, an ancient town in the Tavoliere delle Puglie, see Favia, *Ortona XII*.



Fig. 15. Falerii Novi: plan of the urban area. In the centre, the monastery of S. Maria di Falleri.

including from an economic standpoint.⁷⁰ These churches and monasteries were the true heirs of the towns beside which they were built, and they also took on their names. Vito Loré has highlighted the fact that in this same period some monastic communities – for different reasons and within different geographical and political contexts – acted as “substitutes for centres that had ceased to exist”.⁷¹ In light of what we have seen so far, I would add that another role played by monasteries, especially between the 11th and 12th centuries, was that of ‘relay stations of memory’, so to speak: they were custodians of the topographical (and more broadly, cultural) memory of ancient cities. There were certainly practical reasons for founding a monastery near an abandoned urban centre: above all, the ready availability of building materials to be recovered and reused, as well as the presence of existing infrastructure (especially roads) around which to organise its activities. The reasons for these new foundations were nevertheless undoubtedly ideological as well: the possibility of anchoring themselves – both topographically and materially – in the past, in an Antiquity perceived as distant and glorious, was a factor that greatly reinforced the identity and political standing of those same monastic communities.⁷² It was precisely through these new foundations that the historical memory of the abandoned centres to which they were topographically connected was preserved over time. For this reason, I believe that the timing and modalities of the processes by which ancient cities were abandoned and subsequently replaced by churches and monasteries merit further study.

⁷⁰ For the Ravenna area, see Bondi, *Paesaggi monastici*.

⁷¹ See Loré in this volume.

⁷² La Rocca, “‘Fuit civitas’.” For more general information on monasteries as custodians of the memory of places, see Sennis, “Narrating Places.”

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Andrea Augenti
 Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna
 andrea.augenti@unibo.it
 ORCID: 0000-0001-9777-8238

VI

Economy

The production and circulation of money. Rhythms and dynamics of growth (10th-12th centuries)

by Alessia Rovelli

This study proposes a periodization of the monetary history of the central Middle Ages (10th-12th centuries), with a focus on the Kingdom of Italy and its silver denier coinage. Recent archaeometric research allows a revised interpretation of the monetary reforms traditionally attributed to the Ottonian period, as well as a more nuanced assessment of both growth patterns and phases of stagnation during the 11th century. In the 12th century, particularly in its second half, several processes reached maturity, revealing, from a monetary perspective, significant qualitative and quantitative changes.

Questo contributo propone una periodizzazione della storia monetaria dei secoli centrali del Medioevo (secoli X-XII). L'analisi è focalizzata sul Regno italico e dunque, per quanto riguarda la moneta, sull'area del denaro d'argento. Recenti indagini archeometriche permettono ora una nuova interpretazione delle riforme monetarie attribuite all'età ottoniana e una lettura più circostanziata sia dei ritmi di crescita, sia delle fasi di 'inerzia' che si succedono durante il secolo XI. Nel corso del secolo XII, in particolare durante la seconda metà, giunsero invece a maturazione alcuni processi che ne mettono in luce, anche sotto il profilo monetario, il cambiamento, sia qualitativo che quantitativo, rispetto al periodo precedente.

Middle Ages, 10th-12th centuries, Italic Kingdom, *Honorantie civitatis Papie*, silver denaro, ottolino, grosso, archaeometrical analysis.

Medioevo, secoli X-XII, Regno italico, *Honorantie civitatis Papie*, denaro d'argento, ottolino, grosso, analisi archeometriche.

Alessia Rovelli, University of Pisa, Italy, alessia.rovelli@unipi.it, 0000-0002-7161-0266

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1. Introduction

Periodisation presents a fundamental challenge for historical research.¹ In what follows I attempt to integrate our understanding of monetary systems with the current state of research on the period of the Central Middle Ages (10th–12th centuries), bearing in mind that a coin is an artefact that can and should be studied like any material culture, but it is also the expression of institutional and ideological aims which influence its production and circulation.²

My analysis will focus on the Kingdom of Italy, and therefore, in terms of money, on the zone of the silver *denaro*.³ I will start with the Ottonian period, even though this falls slightly outside the chronological framework of this volume. Indeed, the Saxon emperors undertook measures that gave new impetus to the mints, particularly the Palatine mint of Pavia, with obvious repercussions for monetary circulation.

These measures are well known, but the results of archaeometric analysis, when considered with archaeological and documentary data, now permit us to reassess the patterns of growth and the recurrent phases of ‘inertia’ during the 11th century, a rather ‘long’ century (at least as far as coinage is concerned). Then, over the following century, especially its second half, processes came to fruition which reveal, even from the perspective of money, significant qualitative and quantitative changes.

The monumental volume edited by William Day, Michael Matzke, and Andrea Saccocci offers a substantially revised picture of northern Italy’s coinage from the Ottonian period onwards.⁴ We can concentrate, therefore, on highlighting the main phases of development and focussing on the most recent lines of research, such as those opened by archaeometry. Likewise, the archaeological framework has recently been consolidated. The so-called ‘Tuscan model’ has produced a dataset which also makes it possible to reconstruct the dynamics of monetary circulation at a scale not simply regionally based.⁵

¹ I will refer to Paolo Delogu’s introductory pages in *Periodi e contenuti del Medio Evo* and, for the phases that are of most interest here, to Capitani, “I secoli centrali;” and Franceschi, “La crescita economica.”

² Remarks on the interpretation of hoards and archaeological finds of ancient coins are also valid for the Middle Ages: Casey, *Understanding Ancient Coins*; Howgego, *Ancient History from Coins*.

³ For an overview of monetary production in southern Italy, see Grierson, Travaini, *Medieval European Coinage*, 14. On the circulation and uses of money, see Martin, “Economia naturale;” Abulafia, “Maometto e Carlo Magno;” and von Falkenhausen, “La circolazione monetaria.” More recently, see Martin, “Les échanges monétaires;” Callegher, Morrisson, “Miliareni de follibus;” Travaini, “Monete e circolazione monetaria;” Callegher, “La Puglia bizantina.”

⁴ Day, Matzke, Saccocci, *Medieval European Coinage*, 12 (hereafter *MEC*, 12).

⁵ Valenti, “La formazione dell’insediamento;” Cantini, “Dall’economia complessa;” Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*; Cantini, “Costruire lo sviluppo.”

2. *From the Ottonian emperors to the beginning of communal coinages: a phase of monetary 'inertia'?*

We begin in Tuscany, building upon the data collected by the *ERC-Advanced nEU-Med project* led by Richard Hodges and Giovanna Bianchi.⁶ As part of this project, a number of analyses have been carried out, and the numismatic finds from Tuscan sites (both published and unpublished) for the period between the Carolingian age and the first half of the 11th century have been inventoried.⁷ We thus have a sample of 106 specimens. Of these, 71 were part of two hoards ("Galli Tassi" and "Pieve a Nievole").⁸ A third set comprises the 21 *denari* dated between the reign of Berengar I (888-924) and that of Conrad II (1024-39) which were found during the excavations of the Vettricella site (Grosseto). Whether this third series belongs to a hoard is a matter of debate, as we shall see.⁹

At a fundamental level, these finds confirm a now well-established picture typical not only of Tuscany: the increased circulation of coins in the Ottonian period. Of our set of 106 *denari*, 40 are *ottolini*. These same data also confirm, once again, the predominance of the coinage of Pavia in monetary circulation at the time, even in Tuscany. In fact, only one *denaro ottolino* comes from Milan, while four were struck in Lucca – i.e. in the local mint. Our sample therefore appears to be consistent with the rules reported in the *Honorantie civitatis Papie*, the main source on the kingdom's administration. In the chapters dedicated to coinage and mints, the *Honorantie* identifies nine *magistri monetarii* to Pavia, compared to only four for Milan.¹⁰ The mint of Lucca is not mentioned, but the material evidence from the *denari ottolini* produced in the royal mints leaves little doubt about the assertion of central control, even if the mint of Lucca, like that of Milan, appears to have played a lesser role than the Palatine mint. It is thus plausible to interpret the evidence from coinage as a consequence of the imperial will to give prominence to the capital of the newly conquered kingdom, in part by strengthening its mint.¹¹

The increased production capacity of the Pavia mint is spelled out in the provisions of the *Honorantie* and is evident in both single finds and hoards.

⁶ *Origins of a New Economic Union (7th-12th Centuries): Resource Landscapes and Political Strategies in a Mediterranean Region (nEU-Med)*. The aims and initial results of this project are discussed in Bianchi, Hodges (eds.), *Origins*; as well as Bianchi, Hodges (eds.), *The nEU-Med Project*; and, as regards the numismatic aspects, Benvenuti, Chiarantini, et al., "Metals and coinage."

⁷ Chiarantini, Villa, et al., "Economic Rebound."

⁸ On the 'Galli Tassi' (Lucca) and 'Pieve a Nievole' (Pistoia) hoards, see Saccocci, "Il ripostiglio dell'area 'Galli Tassi';" and Saccocci, "Il ripostiglio di monete." To these specimens, whose provenance is known, we can add the evidence of the so-called 'tesoro Toscana 1766', which is made up of at least 119 coins, thus bringing the total number of Tuscan finds for the period under study to over 220. An analysis of the known data up to 2013 can be found in Saccocci, "Rinvenimenti monetali."

⁹ Rovelli, "Archeologia mineraria."

¹⁰ Brühl, Violante, *Die Honorantie*; Travaini, "La moneta milanese."

¹¹ Rovelli, "Archeologia mineraria."

This is the best-known and most conspicuous feature of what has been interpreted as a genuine monetary reform.¹² One of the main aims of this reform, attributed to Otto I, was to regularise the standard weight and fineness of issues, raising it to 10/12, or 833/1000 silver (*ut numquam faciant peiores denarios quam semper fecerunt de pondere et argento de duodecim in decem*).

It is now worth examining the critical aspects of this so-called reform, turning our attention to the expansion of monetary circulation in the 11th century. Important data comes from isotopic analysis, which sought to measure the importance of Tuscan silver mines in the wider context of Italy's medieval monetary production, as well as to determine respective roles of royal power and the local authorities in the management of these resources.¹³ The results obtained, albeit taken from a relatively small sample (about 40 specimens), are quite clear (though in some ways unusual¹⁴) and shed light on some problems already raised by Peter Spufford.¹⁵ These analyses have highlighted the isotopic compatibility between silver from the mines of Saxony, the *denari ottolini* and the pennies of the same period which were struck in Magdeburg and Goslar, suggesting that the mints of the Kingdom of Italy were also largely supplied with silver from the mines of Saxony. These same analyses have also shown that silver from the Colline Metallifere is present only in negligible quantities in the *denari* from the local mint, Lucca. A similar situation is clear for the five coins minted in the name of Conrad II: all of them have an isotopic profile compatible with silver from the mines of the Harz Mountains, although one specimen also points to the possible use of silver from Tuscany.¹⁶

The varying production capacities of the kingdom's mints, clearly recognisable in the archaeological finds and hoards, is thus possibly explained through the archaeometric analyses. The predominance of coins from Pavia seems to have been a direct consequence of royal policy. As noted, the Pavia mint had a greater number of *magistri monetarii* and seems to have received larger quantities of silver. By contrast, the mints of Lucca and Milan seem to have been relegated to a secondary position so that, even in Tuscany, the *ottolini* of Pavia are the most common.

However, despite the attention paid by the Ottonians to Pavia and its mint, one cannot fail to notice a certain degree of 'parsimony' in the supply to Italian mints, including that of Pavia itself. Although the *Honorantie*, the fineness of the *ottolini*, which was theoretically fixed at 83%, has been found

¹² Herlihy, "Treasure Hoards," 6-7; Cipolla, *Le aventure*, 18; Travaini, "La moneta milanese," 226-8; Matzke, "Vom Ottolinus," 138; *MEC*, 12, 35-6.

¹³ The premises of these investigations were presented at the conference *Mine, metal, monnaie. Autour du cas de Melle, les voies de la quantification de l'histoire monétaire du haut Moyen Âge*. Paris -EPHE, 12-14 septembre 2011, and are discussed in Bianchi, Rovelli, "Production métallique."

¹⁴ Coins produced with metal from a single source, as appears to be the case here, are an exception: see Naismith, *Making Money*, 33-6.

¹⁵ Spufford, *Money*, 74-7.

¹⁶ Chiarantini, Villa, et al., "Economic Rebound."

to be highly variable. In the case of *denari* issued by Otto I, it fluctuates between 51 and 89% for Pavia issues and between 69 and 97% for Lucca ones. Similar figures can be observed in the *denari* issued by Otto III. The significant variations in the intrinsic content highlighted by archaeometric analyses bring the topic of silver back to the fore: the irregular availability of the metal may be one cause of repeated changes in intrinsic value, although probably not the only one. Furthermore, they raise the question of whether the rules that established the fineness of the *denari* ('ut numquam faciant peiores denarios quam semper fecerunt de pondere et argento de duodecim in decem') should indeed be attributed to Otto I.¹⁷

Another finding from archaeometric analysis may help to explain the slow start of the exploitation of the metal resources of the Colline Metallifere. The silver content of the local galena seems to have been rather low. The complex purification processes required to obtain silver here probably made the operation unprofitable.¹⁸ We cannot rule out the possibility – although no analysis has determined this – that a similar problem delayed the exploitation of the silver veins in the mines of Lombardy, which focussed on iron until the late 11th century, and not, as was initially thought, silver.¹⁹

This apparent 'shortage' of metal²⁰ at least partly explains why coin production in Ottonian Italy remained confined to the same few mints as in Carolingian times: Pavia, Milan, Lucca, and Verona (which replaced Treviso and came under the control of the Duke of Bavaria, fig. 1).²¹ The scarcity of local silver apparently did not prompt the emperors to send sufficient quantities of silver from transalpine mines; Pavia seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. Italy did not witness the remarkable flourishing of minting activity that took place in Germany during the Ottonian period, when some 80 mints were in operation (40 of which were granted to bishops or abbots, who initially only had rights over the proceeds), compared to the two mints that had struck coins in the name of Conrad I of Franconia.²² The granting, or confirmation, of minting rights to the bishops of Mantua and Ravenna by Otto III was disregarded until the 12th century, as was that to the bishop of Ascoli in 1033-4 and to the bishop of Padua in 1049.²³ The opening of the Susa mint, possibly by Peter I (1060-78), which imitated the coins issued by the

¹⁷ The *Honorantie* is a composite work which has come down to us in a single copy dating from the 15th century; Bougard, "*Minima Ticinensia*," Rovelli, "*De pondere et argento*," and Bougard, Rovelli, "Some Remarks."

¹⁸ Chiarantini, Benvenuti, et al., *Medieval Pb (Cu-Ag)*, 16: The Colline Metallifere Cu-Pb-Fe (Ag) ores appear to be characterised by "galena, chalcopryite, sphalerite associated with variable amounts of silver-bearing minerals, mainly fahlerz (tetrahedrite-tennantite) with up to 2% silver, pyrrargirite, proustite; the silver content of galena appears to be negligible".

¹⁹ Rovelli, "Mines et monnaies."

²⁰ References to the *penuria argenti* and *carestia monetæ* can be found in Cipolla, *Le avventure*, 29.

²¹ MEC, 12, 548-9.

²² Spufford, *Money*, 76-7.

²³ Matzke, "Il diritto monetario," 230-4.



Fig. 1. Imperial mints in Italy in the second half of the 10th century.

bishops of Vienne, must be analysed within the framework of Franco-Burgundian coinage.²⁴

The failure to open new mints leads us to reconsider the well-established view that the centralisation of coin production in a limited number of mints was the positive outcome of effective royal control of coinage, which made it possible to avoid the ‘feudal’ fragmentation of minting rights.²⁵ We might, instead, consider the decentralisation of monetary production to several mints to be not simply the inevitable and sole consequence of weak royal control, but rather the result of different choices. Clear evidence of this comes from Germany, where many new privileges to operate a mint (e.g. Otto I’s granting to the monastery of St-Gall of the right to open a mint and a market at Rorschach in 947) had the stated purpose of supplying the local markets with money.²⁶ In England, there were at least 40 mints during the reign of Æthelstan (924-39). More than 120 were active between 970 and 1100, but the issuing of coinage always remained under royal control.²⁷

What, then, led the emperors of the House of Saxony to boost the issuing of coins only in Pavia, without sending similar quantities of silver to the other royal mints and without opening new mints? Was this an attempt to supply

²⁴ Gianazza, “Susa,” 1164; Matzke, “Il diritto monetario,” 232-4; *MEC*, 12, 99.

²⁵ Toubert, “Il sistema curtense,” 50-1; Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 803.

²⁶ Spufford, *Money*, 77.

²⁷ Naismith, *Making Money*, 376-7.

the market with a greater quantity of coins, in line with what was happening in Germany? Or was it a decision dictated by 'fiscal' needs, including, as Andrea Saccocci suggests, those related to the financing of military enterprises in Italy? The answer to these questions is far from obvious.

Based on the Tuscan data, Saccocci has noted that *ottolini* are mainly found along the routes of armies and imperial processions, supporting the hypothesis that the need to supply them was the main – although not the only – driving force behind the circulation of such coins.²⁸

An economic interpretation may be supported by the discovery of 21 *denari*, dated between the reigns of Berengar I (888-924) and Conrad II (1024-39), at Vettricella, which has been identified as the centre of the royal *curtis* of Valli. This discovery has fuelled a debate on the function and supply of money by providing some quantitatively significant evidence. According to this hypothesis, by focusing on the quality of the structures of this 'out-of-scale' site (the term *fuori scala* comes from the excavators), as well as its function as a centre for the collection of raw materials and the considerable quantity of ceramic fragments, the range of productive activities that took place in Vettricella may explain the discovery of such a large collection of coins, which would have been lost in the sale or purchase of these specialised products.²⁹

A different hypothesis, which I believe to be more plausible, is that most of the coins come from a hoard that may have been partially dispersed in the Middle Ages and then further scattered by the repeated ploughing that deeply disturbed the archaeological deposit. This is an explanation for the archaeological context; but it should also be noted that the Vettricella find remains unusual and 'eccentric' compared to the finds from other 'out-of-scale' sites, where the number of single finds is typically rather limited. This is the case at Donoratico (Livorno), but also at San Genesio (Pisa), and, further afield, at Villa Clelia (Imola), Lomello (the site of a royal *curtis*, near Pavia) and Sant'Agata Bolognese (Bologna).³⁰

Leaving aside the site of Vettricella, the interpretation of which remains controversial, the numismatic data as a whole seems to me to be consistent with Simone Collavini's observations and, to some extent, those of Giovanna Bianchi too. Both of whom believe that the goods produced on 'out of scale' sites, which played a central role in the realm's economy, were redistributed mainly through non-monetary exchanges.³¹ The products of local industry, rather than being distributed through markets, would have followed paths limited to internal trade, through what has been called the 'fiscal redistribu-

²⁸ Saccocci, "Rinvenimenti monetali," 31; *MEC*, 12, 66-8, with further bibliography.

²⁹ Bianchi, Collavini, "Public Estates," 154; Fiore, "The Knots," 202; Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*, 33 and 39.

³⁰ Rovelli, "Archeologia mineraria," with bibliography on the cases cited.

³¹ Bianchi, Collavini, "Public Estates," 157; and Bianchi, "Spazi pubblici," 315. An overview focusing on central-northern Italy can be found in Cantini, Cirelli, "Mercati, economia," 144-6; and Cantini, "La gestione della produzione," 286-90.

tion circuit'.³² Following this line of interpretation, we can assume that silver from German mines sent to Italian mints, particularly that of Pavia, also followed non-commercial routes. Likewise, the lead from Frankish mines (especially Melle) that recent analyses have identified in some 9th-century 'sparse glaze pottery' produced in sites belonging to the royal fisc probably also followed non-commercial routes. The lead that Charlemagne sent to restore the roofs of some Roman basilicas arrived in Rome by similar routes.³³

The production cycles of the mine at Harz must have further affected the supply of silver to the Italian mints; it seems that silver mining did not reach full speed until around 990.³⁴ These events could explain both the fluctuations in the alloy found in the *ottolini* (the quality and stability of the intrinsic values of the Ottonian coins which were issued by the German mints were, by contrast, remarkable³⁵) and the lower productivity of the mints of Milan and Lucca compared to that of Pavia.

Silver from the Colline Metallifere seems to have played a marginal role in the mints' activities even in the first decades of the 11th century, although the volume of issues appears to have gradually increased. Isotopic analysis reveals that the coinage of the first decades of the 11th century repeatedly remelted a metal stock that had been acquired in the Ottonian period, with predominantly Saxon silver and a limited contribution from local silver veins. In our sample, silver from the Colline Metallifere was detected in only one of the five *denari* struck in the name of Conrad II.³⁶

The data examined must be viewed within a rapidly changing political context which witnessed the destruction of the royal palace of Pavia (1024). This is not the place to discuss this complex history. However, we can note that both the crisis of imperial power and the simultaneous strengthening of local authorities somewhat diminish the credibility of explaining the limited number of mints in the Kingdom of Italy and the absence of any process of 'feudalisation' of the currency by the effectiveness of royal control over the *moneta publica*.³⁷

The problems caused by the changing political and institutional framework were once again accompanied by those related to mining and the availability of metal. It is likely that by this time the flow of silver from the mines of Saxony had diminished further: by 1040 the Harz veins were exhaust-

³² Lazzari, Tabarrini, "Beni del fisco," 244.

³³ Cortese, "Beni fiscali;" Rovelli, "Archeologia mineraria," 132-3. On the lead used for ceramic linings, see Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*, 127-36, 169-70. For a different hypothesis on the trade in silver metal, see Bianchi, Feller, "Scambi mercantili" (I thank the authors for kindly sending me this article, which is in press).

³⁴ Spufford, *Money*, 74.

³⁵ Merkel, *Silver and the Silver Economy*, 184 (Appendix C, Elemental analysis of coins. LA-ICP-QMS). The silver fineness of the *Sachsenpfennige* minted in Magdeburg (and dated to 950-1000), nos. 74-85, appears to be 98.7; 95.5; 98.8; 96.1; 92.8; 97.2; 95.7; 93.5; 96.5; 95.8; 95.3.

³⁶ Chiarantini, Villa, et al., "Economic Rebound;" Rovelli, "Archeologia mineraria."

³⁷ Provero, *L'Italia dei poteri locali*.

ed.³⁸ Renewed difficulty in finding metal for the mints had repercussions not only in Italy, where the emperors were often forced to resort to ecclesiastical treasure. As Cinzio Violante reported, Henry III was even forced to pledge a crown to an ecclesiastical institution at a time when coinage was needed; the emperor was later able to redeem thanks to the intervention of Maginerius, abbot of Hersfeld.³⁹

Taking this wider view, it is difficult to imagine that emperors would have been interested in or even capable of supplying the Italian mints with regular shipments of silver. During the 11th century and the first half of the 12th, the volume of money supply increased according to erratic rhythms and by paths that we are not yet able to identify. Private documents reveal considerable regional differences in the actual availability of coinage. In Milan and Como, for example, it seems that coins were systematically used for payments of some importance.⁴⁰ Both the prices mentioned in sales of real estate and rents were defined and, it seems, paid in *denari*, *soldi*, and pounds of *denari*. Payments in *res valentes* are rare exceptions. Equally rare are references to rents in kind, or partially in kind.⁴¹ Archaeological finds of coins continue to be infrequent, but the nevertheless fairly high silver content of the *denarii* issued in the 11th century means that they were unlikely to be lost and consequently unlikely to be recovered from archaeological contexts today.

In other regions, especially Lazio and Abruzzo, the picture is different: a prevalence of payments made in *res valentes*.⁴² In central Italy, the absence of mints offers a plausible explanation for the shortage of currency that we find documented in notarial deeds. But it is not so easy to explain this absence of mints (Lucca being the only exception) and, above all, the closure of the one in Rome, which remained inactive for about two centuries from the pontificate of Benedict VII (974-83) until around 1180.⁴³

The rise and rapid decline in the circulation of the Pavese *denari* offers some concrete clues as to the dynamics of monetary circulation in the 11th century and the spread of payments in *res valentes*. In Tuscany, Lazio, Abruzzo, and southern Italy, the circulation of Pavese coinage was limited to *ottolini* and the first issues of the emperors of the Salian dynasty. This is clear from

³⁸ Spufford, *Money*, 95-6, 240-1.

³⁹ Violante, "Gli imperatori Enrico III ed Enrico IV."

⁴⁰ Vittani, Manaresi, *Gli atti privati*, I; Manaresi, Santoro, *Gli atti privati*, II; Manaresi, Santoro, *Gli atti privati*, III; Manaresi, Santoro, *Gli atti privati*, IV.

⁴¹ Manaresi, Santoro, *Gli atti privati*, II, no. 281 bis (1050), sale of various goods near the Isola Comacina for *argentum denarios bonos aut in valente libras duas*; Manaresi, Santoro, *Gli atti privati*, III, no. 454, year 1064 in a 29-year lease agreement: *segale bona ad iusta mensura Mediolanense sestaria decem et octo*.

⁴² On Abruzzo, see Feller, "Les conditions;" on Lazio, see Rovelli, "Patrimonium Beati Petri." In north-eastern Italy expressions such as, e.g. *inter argentum et alias res valentem* will gradually disappear, to be replaced by more explicit references to minted coinage, such as *argenti denariorum* (MEC, 12, 555).

⁴³ On this issue, which is still open, see Wickham, *Roma medievale*, 209-15; and Rovelli, "La produzione della moneta a Roma," 219-21.

both excavation finds and hoards. I will use the data from the excavations of the Basilica of St Peter in the Vatican as an example, restricting my analysis to coins minted in Italy. Among the coins of the Ottonian period (962-1002), which here as elsewhere show an initial increase in the money supply when compared to the previous period, those from Pavia are the most frequent. We find 17 coins from Pavia, four from Milan, three from Lucca, and one from Verona. The picture that emerges is therefore very similar to that observed in Tuscany. For the next phase, 18 *denari* of Pavia issued by Henry III and Henry IV, i.e. between 1046 and 1106, are recorded, and no specimen can be attributed to Henry V, while Venetian *denari* are well documented (181 specimens). The archaeological record also suggests that the *papienses* mentioned in the written sources of the late 11th and 12th centuries mainly served as money of account (although we must always bear in mind that the still relatively high silver content reduced the chances of accidental loss).⁴⁴ By the turn of the 12th century, the circulation of Pavia currency had essentially withdrawn to what was its natural, regional area of diffusion: Lombardy and Liguria.⁴⁵

The data pertaining to mining helps us to identify the factors which probably contributed to the weakening of coinage in the 11th century, but the problems with the supply of mints were not the only factors hindering the expansion of the circulating medium that had been initiated by Ottonian policy. The growth in monetary production during the 11th century, which accelerated towards the end of the century, is consistent with similar growth rates in the economy when viewed through the lens of material culture, starting with pottery. Alessandra Molinari has highlighted the increase in objects in circulation from the 11th century onwards, but also the limited functional range of the ceramics produced in central-northern Italy as well as the rarity of polychrome pottery. The areas of production and distribution reconstructed by Federico Cantini and Enrico Cirelli for ceramic tableware remain sub-regional. Similar data can be cited for the distribution of limestone building materials. The earliest phases of fortified sites are characterised by the use of wood, while the spread of towers and masonry buildings generally dates from the 11th and 12th centuries.⁴⁶

Obviously, the limited circulation of so many products of material culture reduced the circulation capacity of money, and therefore its use. Until the opening of the communal mints, the production of money was entrusted to the four imperial mints (Pavia, Milan, Lucca, and Verona), which were supplied with silver at irregular intervals and in irregular quantities, and

⁴⁴ More details on the circulation of the Pavia coinage can be found in Rovelli, "Patrimonium Beati Petri."

⁴⁵ Saccocci, "Billon and Bullion," 45-7.

⁴⁶ Cantini, "Dall'economia complessa;" Cantini, "Forme, dimensioni;" Cantini, Cirelli, "Mercati, economia;" Molinari, "Riflessioni sulle economie;" Molinari, Orecchioni, "Le dinamiche dei consumi;" Goodson, "Coins, their Absence, and Household Economies;" Rovelli, "Nuove zecche." On urban structures, see Augenti, "Archeologia della città;" on food supply, see Goodson, *Cultivating the City*, 128-54.

not necessarily (at least in Italy) to meet a demand for money which emerged from economic factors. The fragility of inter-regional exchanges, as revealed by material culture like pottery, had an impact on the currency and slowed down its spread to those regions of central Italy which did not have a mint. Payments in money substitutes thus became a necessity.

The archaeological data, in addition to what has been said above about the ways and means of the dissemination of *ottolini* from Pavia, thus support the hypothesis that Ottonian issues in Italy had a primarily 'fiscal' function, in the broad sense we have adopted. Their presence in the central-southern regions was mainly a consequence of the Ottonian military campaigns rather than the result of trade.⁴⁷ This does not diminish their importance and functionality, especially in the middle and upper segments of trade and in the context of forms of hoarding that favoured their long-term survival. They are often still present in significant proportions in late 12th-century hoards.

The mining data is central to dealing with questions relating to the issuing of money. Further details help us to measure monetary production during the 11th century, albeit it is impossible to provide precise estimates. We have already seen how the Saxon emperors increased the activity of the Palatine mint of Pavia without, however, opening new mints, as was instead the case in Germany. Moreover, in the Kingdom of Italy, the rare concessions of regalian rights dating back to the 11th century were initially disregarded. Interventions in the coinage's intrinsic content were also apparently limited. Issues of the imperial mints maintained a fairly high fineness until the end of the 11th century, roughly up to the years of the First Crusade (1096-1101).⁴⁸ As far as the early 11th century is concerned, the metallographic analyses available today lead us to exclude, or at least to consider irrelevant, the reuse of metal stocks that had accumulated over time and which included silver objects (sometimes in fragments) or coins (possibly foreign). Instead, these sets of heterogeneous provenances, which later sources refer to as *bolstone*, were often used by the communal mints of the 12th and 13th centuries, when the issue of *denari* increased considerably, partly due to repeated impoverishment of their intrinsic content.⁴⁹ Let us not forget that it was precisely the reduction of the intrinsic metal content, by adding copper, which made it possible to increase money supply in the second half of the 12th century before the introduction of the *grosso*. During this period, between the 12th and 13th centuries, I believe we can assume the polymetallic deposits of the Colline Metallifere were used extensively for monetary purposes, with copper being exploited even more than silver.

⁴⁷ Between 968 and 970, Otto I led several military expeditions to conquer Apulia and Calabria. Otto III repeated the feat between 981 and 982: see Gay, *L'Italie méridionale*, 289-342.

⁴⁸ *MEC*, 12, 37. Data on intrinsic values are awaiting confirmation. The evolution of the intrinsic content of the 11th-12th-century *denari* can essentially be deduced from written sources or from the destructive analyses carried out in the late 19th century; we do not yet have an adequate set of archaeometric analyses, with the partial exception of the Henrician *denari* from Verona and Venice (*MEC*, 12, 725-6).

⁴⁹ Finetti, *Numismatica e tecnologia*, 15 and n. 21.

3. *The 12th century: a turning point*

The political and institutional developments that accompanied the crisis of royal power and the simultaneous appearance of urban autonomies favoured the opening of new mints in the 12th century to respond to needs of a different nature, political as well as economic. The granting of the right to mint coins was a tool used by emperors to forge alliances or punish opponents. This happened in 1155, when Frederick I transferred Milan's minting rights to Cremona. But it was also a response to the demand for money that was being generated by demographic growth and changing economic conditions. Many aspects of material culture illustrate the ongoing processes.

In December 1138, Genoa received the *ius cudendi* from Conrad III (1138-52), which led to the first communal coinage as early as 1139.⁵⁰ Here too, the issue of metal and its provenance is relevant. Chris Wickham has recently noted that in 1131 the lords of Arborea granted Genoa half of the local silver lodes. Other silver may have reached the mint through trade with Lombard towns (and thus also from the Lombard mines), for which Genoa was the natural port. Other silver may perhaps have come from Provence.⁵¹ The importance of trade in the development of Genoese coinage – and not only Genoese coinage – is suggested, as in Venice, by metrological choices. The *grosso minore*, which was introduced around 1200, adopted the weight of the dominant coins in the markets which were of the greatest interest for Genoese trade. This was the case with the silver *miliaresi* minted in Spain and North Africa. These, in turn, were worth half the *dirham*.⁵² The plan was clearly to adopt a monetary instrument which could be easily used in the Mediterranean markets. Genoa was quickly followed by other mints, starting with Piacenza (1140) and Asti (1141).⁵³

The impact of the late 12th- and early 13th-century issues on monetary circulation was significant and rapid. By the end of the 12th century, the mints of Susa, Asti, Genoa, Milan, Pavia, Brescia, Cremona, Piacenza, Verona, Venice, Trento, Aquileia, Mantua, Bologna, Lucca, Pisa, Volterra, Arezzo, Siena, Ancona, and Rome were operating in central and northern Italy (fig. 2).⁵⁴ This is why I instead spoke of 'inertia' in reference to the 11th century at the beginning of this essay.

The excavation of Tremona Castle (Mendrisio, Canton Ticino, Switzerland), a multi-layered site from the Neolithic age to the 13th century, is an interesting case study. The numismatic finds highlight the importance of the Ottonian phase, which endured until the first decades of the 11th century, as

⁵⁰ *MEC*, 12, 254.

⁵¹ Wickham, *The Donkey*, 549 and n. 192.

⁵² *MEC*, 12, 260.

⁵³ Matzke, "Il diritto monetario," 235-44.

⁵⁴ Spufford, *Money*, 187-91. For more details on individual mints, see the entries in *MEC*, 12 as well as in *Le zecche italiane*.



Fig. 2. Map of locations cited in the text. The names of the mints which were working in the 12th century are in bold type.

well as the subsequent slowdown in the circulation of money and the new upswing from the second half of the 12th century.⁵⁵ Numismatic finds from urban excavations, e.g. Milan and Brescia, document a similar situation. In north-eastern Italy, the 12th century, particularly the second half of that century, witnessed a great expansion of the money supply with the introduction of two new *denari*: the Venetian ‘Veronese’ *denaro* and the new *denarius crociatus* or *incruciatus* issued in Verona. The *crociatus* had widespread use, and not only in Verona. *Crociati* are common among the finds in the Veneto, Trentino, Tyrol, and Friuli, and are also quite common in southern Germany, Switzerland, Carinthia, Slovenia, and Croatia. It has been calculated that, in the 12th century, the money supply increased by a factor of about 50 compared

⁵⁵ Arslan, “Le monete.” As far as the Middle Ages are concerned, the site is documented from the mid-9th century. The single finds are distributed into two main phases. The first begins with a Milanese *denaro* of Lothair II (945-50) and continues until the first decades of the 11th century with two *denari* in the name of Otto I and Otto II dated 962-7, minted in Pavia; one *ottolino* struck in Milan in the name of Otto II or Otto III (973-1002); eight Milanese *denari* of Henry II (1014-24); and three in the name of Conrad II (1026-39). The coinage following Conrad II’s *denari* is missing. After a hiatus of about a century, numismatic finds resume with issues dating from the second half of the 12th century, mainly from mints in northern Italy (but there is also one *denaro enriciano* from Lucca). There are 43 *terzoli* from Milan, and they are of the same type as the 701 specimens that, together with 103 *denari* from Cremona, made up the hoard found during the 1991 excavation campaign.

to the 8th-10th centuries.⁵⁶ These are rough estimates, based on data from single finds and hoards, but they give us an idea of the phenomenon's scale.⁵⁷

In central Italy, the diffusion of Lucca *denari* in the second half of the 12th century reflects a rapidly changing economic reality marked by the gradual introduction of *denari* from new mints in addition to that of Lucca. The excavations at Rocca San Silvestro (Livorno), the first settlement phases of which have recently been dated to the 9th century, have yielded about 520 medieval coins, starting with a Lucca *denaro* attributed to Henry III or Henry IV of Franconia. This specimen is followed by 17 *denari enriciani* of more uncertain date (possibly as late as the first decades of the 13th century). Another 24 *denari* from Lucca and 178 from Pisa, which have a high copper content alloy, have been dated between the end of the 12th century and the middle of the following century. Even more conspicuous is the nucleus of *denari* from different mints, dated between the mid-13th and mid-14th centuries.⁵⁸

It is worth noting here that a large number of mints does not necessarily correlate to a voluminous coinage (in Carolingian Francia, just to give an example, many mints are known only from a small number of specimens). Yet in 12th-century Italy, the surge in mint-places was matched by the same surge in money supply. In documents from Lazio, expressions such as *precium valens solidos* rapidly disappear with the spread of Lucca issues, which can be dated to the second half or end of the 12th century, and the arrival, around 1170, of *deniers* from the mint of Provins. The latter were joined and then replaced by the *denari provisini* struck by the mint of Rome, which reopened around 1180.⁵⁹

In another geographical context, the finds from the excavation of the cloister of the monastery of St. John in Müstair (Canton of Grisons, Switzerland) illustrate the impact on monetary circulation of the issues of the mints of northern Italy from the second half of the 12th century. Verona is the best-represented mint, with 96 *denari* that can broadly be dated between 1150 and 1200. We then have 100 specimens which are datable between 1200 and 1250 and another 96 *denari* from the next 50 years, while only 13 specimens can be dated roughly between 1050 and 1150. In total, the excavation yielded about 880 finds.⁶⁰

The quantitative data are not the only relevant evidence.⁶¹ Equally, if not more, significant are the changes introduced to the monetary systems with the adoption of different denominations. The *denarius imperialis*, which was

⁵⁶ MEC, 12, 637 and 656, Saccocci, "Wage Payments," 157-8.

⁵⁷ See Morrisson, "Quantifier le monnayage byzantin" for an analysis of the methods and problems involved in quantifying the money supply. The quality of the flans of late 12th-century *denari* makes it difficult, if not impossible, a die-study for an attempt to estimate the size of the coinage.

⁵⁸ Finetti, "I reperti numismatici," 130-4; Cicali, "Le monete del castello minerario," 81-117.

⁵⁹ Rovelli, "Patrimonium Beati Petri."

⁶⁰ Diaz Tabernero, "Die Fundmünzen," 142-3.

⁶¹ In this regard, see the opinions of Philippe Wolf, "Monnaie et développement," 777, on the question: *quel a été, à tout moment de l'histoire dite médiévale, le rapport entre la quantité de signes monétaires disponibles pour la circulation, et le volume de l'activité économique ?*

coined by Barbarossa in the nearby *borgo* of Nosedo after the destruction of Milan in 1162, was an important step in the process that led to the birth of the *grosso* and the development of an articulated and complex monetary system. Because of its silver content (about 0.50 g), which was similar to that of the *denaro* minted by the Milanese mint between 1109 and 1148,⁶² the *denaro imperiale* was worth twice as much as the coeval *denarius novus*, also known as the *tertiolus* or *terciolus*, which the Milanese mint (by then *de facto*, though not *de jure*, communal)⁶³ had begun to strike at an uncertain date, before 1150 (it is mentioned from 1148 onwards).⁶⁴ The *denaro terzolo*, with a theoretical weight of about 0.75 g, and a silver content of about 30-3% (equal to 1/3 silver, hence its name), was in any case twice as valuable as the so-called *mezzani* minted in other Lombard mints (Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Mantua, and Pavia) from the late 12th century onwards.⁶⁵

The most important innovation, however, was the introduction of the Venetian *grosso*, which was an absolute novelty in terms of both weight (2.18 g) and fineness (98.5% silver). According to Alan Stahl, the first *grossi* of 24 (later 26) Venetian *denari* may have been minted as early as 1194 (the traditional chronology is 1202).⁶⁶ According to Andrea Saccocci, their issuing was made possible by the renewed availability of large quantities of silver from mines in the Eastern Alps.⁶⁷ The introduction of the *grosso* was therefore not due to the need for currency to finance the construction of a fleet and the imminent crusade.⁶⁸ Moreover, its success seems to have been favoured by its metrological consistency with the *miliarese*, a coin of account widely used in Mediterranean trade and corresponding to 1/12 of the 'old' gold *hyperpyron*.⁶⁹

Economic interests, supported by a nascent and prudent monetary policy, now seem to prevail over military ones. As we have seen, a similar choice was adopted in the same years by Genoa. The new *grossi* joined the *denari* and the half-*denari*, although the latter continued to be uncommon, except in Genoa and Venice, where a new fraction was also introduced: the *quarto di denaro* or *quartarolo*.⁷⁰

⁶² Matzke, Tabernero, "Eine Börse." In the absence of an adequate series of analyses, the intrinsic content of the *denarius imperialis*, which had a standard weight of about 1.00 g., has been estimated at around 50%. See Spufford, *Money*, 225; *MEC*, 12, 55-8, 75 and 418.

⁶³ On the rights to operate a mint, see *MEC*, 12, 20-1; on the specific case of Milan, see 73-4 and 416-9.

⁶⁴ *MEC*, 12, 418.

⁶⁵ *MEC*, 12, 741.

⁶⁶ Stahl, "The mint of Venice;" Stahl, *Zecca*, 16-27 and 354-7; *MEC*, 12, 637-40.

⁶⁷ Saccocci, "Tra Bisanzio, Venezia e Friesach;" *MEC*, 12, 16 and 637-40.

⁶⁸ On this earlier hypothesis, which is widespread and partly based on Martin da Canal's account, see Spufford, *Money*, 226 (and the bibliography in n. 2).

⁶⁹ *MEC*, 12, 640 and 740; Morrisson, *Byzance et sa monnaie*, 12-28, and 61-104 for an analysis of the Byzantine monetary system and coin use.

⁷⁰ *MEC*, 12, 13. In Venice, the introduction of the *quartarolo*, probably in 1205, led to a momentary interruption in the minting of *denari*, which were issued again from around 1268. In this period, the *crociatus* of the Verona mint successfully replaced the Venetian *denaro*, thanks to the good integration of Verona issues with the Venetian monetary system (*MEC*, 12, 558).

At different levels of exchange, thus different denominations and petty cash allowed people to negotiate price fluctuations in urban markets and, more generally, in small-scale transactions.⁷¹ The *denari* of the late 12th century, which had by then lost about 80% of their intrinsic value as specified by the *Honorantie* for the *denari* of the royal mints, were practically pocket change. The *denari* issued in Pavia around 1170 contained about 0.2 g of silver, those from Venice about 0.1 g, and those struck in Verona a little later about 0.08 g.⁷²

Byzantine *folles* from the late 10th or early 11th century have been found, mainly in the regions bordering on the northern Adriatic (but also in Lombardy). Since these are bronze coins, it is possible that they were used as pocket money in the absence of similar local issues.⁷³ Their circulation in a structurally different monetary context, such as the silver coinage in the 10th-11th centuries, could reflect a first response to a growing demand for small change. As far as local issues were concerned, this problem would find a solution in the debased *denari* minted from the second half or end of the 12th century.

In this framework, which was so different from that of the 8th-10th centuries and, in some respects, of the 11th, the spread of rents in kind between the 12th and 13th centuries is anything but paradoxical, as Liubov A. Kotel'nikova has already argued. It corresponds to the desire to make the best possible profit from the sale of agricultural or craft products in urban (and not only urban) markets.⁷⁴

The payment of rents in kind reflects different monetary and economic phenomena from payments in *res valentes*, although they are apparently similar, since in both cases they are made without the use of coinage. In the charters of Farfa Abbey (Rieti), purchases made with coin substitutes account for about 2/3 of land sales in the 11th century, reflecting the need to deal with a shortage of coinage. Consequently, the seller would receive various goods from the purchasing monastery for a value that was described with expressions that varied in form, but not in substance: *de mobilibus appraetiatum iuste valens solidos...*; *precium valens solidos...* In Lazio, but also in Abruzzo, these formulas quickly disappeared at a time that coincides with the arrival of the Provins *denarii* and the later issues of the Rome mint, which reopened around 1180, imitating the Provins types. The simultaneity of the two phenomena, namely the reopening of the mint and the rapid abandonment of payments in *res valentes*, suggests that the latter method of payment was adopted because of an actual shortage of currency in circulation.⁷⁵

⁷¹ For an overview, see Naismith, *Small Change* (on Italy: Goodson, "Coins, their Absence, and Household Economies"; Norrie, "Gendering Money"; Rovelli, "Small Change in Early Medieval Italy").

⁷² Spufford, *Money*, 225; Saccocci, *Contributi*, 76-7.

⁷³ Callegher, "Presenza di «folles anonimi»."

⁷⁴ Kotel'nikova, "Rendita in natura," 93-112.

⁷⁵ For Tuscany, a recent review of these issues can be found in Tomei, "Il valore delle cose;" for some numismatic data: Degasper, "La moneta nel medio Valdarno;" on Lazio: Rovelli, "Patrimonium Beati Petri."

Considering local variables and the varying types of exchange, it is therefore possible, for the period under consideration, to go beyond the recurring historiographical question of whether a 'natural economy' or a 'monetary economy' prevailed by assessing the proportion of transactions carried out with coined money as compared to those carried out in kind. A question posed in this way addresses only one side of the problem, namely the supply of money, while ignoring the demand for money, as Enrico Stumpo has pointed out.⁷⁶ And it is the latter aspect that best reflects the changes that took place.

The issue of *denarii* with different intrinsic values, a phenomenon facilitated by the establishment of the new communal mints, was therefore an important step towards the concrete use of coinage. In the second half of the 12th century, the monetary system evolved, in a few decades, from an essentially single-denomination one into much more complex forms.⁷⁷ The monetary system was now able to drive and even be driven by a wide range of economic and financial activities in which coinage took on an increasingly broader role: the marketing of agricultural products; real estate transactions; and the payment of rents, wages, and taxes. The conversion of the royal *fodrum* into money, which is routinely mentioned from the last third of the 11th century,⁷⁸ and the parallel development of new forms of taxation based on payments in money are phenomena that allowed Patrizia di Mainoni to speak of a 'fiscal revolution' in northern Italy during the 12th century. Numerous innovations were introduced as a corollary of the inventories ordered by Frederick Barbarossa and the new forms of surveying which led to the analytical description of landed property, cadastral surveys and the monetary valuation of rents.⁷⁹

Without going into the details of this development (which did not eliminate taxes in kind for the same reasons that rents in kind did not disappear), it is important to note that the public authorities – i.e. the issuing authorities, whether royal or communal – were interested in increasing the money supply. This created the conditions for a gradual return to the synergy between the issuing of money and taxation that is characteristic of tax-based states – a synergy rooted in the Roman imperial model, which lived on in Byzantium and was in turn adopted in the Muslim world.⁸⁰ The monetisation of the tax system once again became a driving factor in the production and circulation

⁷⁶ Stumpo, "Economia naturale," 548-51; Palermo, "Strumenti e meccanismi."

⁷⁷ On the Carolingian monetary system, see Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 1, 194-9; on Italy: Rovelli, "Some considerations;" Rovelli, "Produzione e circolazione monetaria," 484-7; on the debate about the use (or non-use) of small coins in early medieval economies, see Naismith, *Small Change*.

⁷⁸ Menant, *Campagnes lombardes*, 463-77 and 530-49 on the evolution of taxes in rural communes.

⁷⁹ Mainoni, "A proposito della 'rivoluzione fiscale';" Cammarosano, "Le origini della fiscalità."

⁸⁰ Hendy, *The Economy, Fiscal Administration*; Hendy, "East and West;" Morrisson, "Byzantine Money;" Molinari, "Le anfore medievali," 303.

of money. The contemporary development of wage labour went in the same direction.⁸¹

The opening of new mints was accompanied by the simultaneous development of wide-ranging regional monetary policies, which increased the interconnectedness and economic complexity that is a central theme in current historical and archaeological research.⁸² An example of this is the treaty drawn up between Lucca and Pisa in 1181, which not only put an end to the Pisan imitation of Lucca's *denari*, but also gave rise to commercial agreements.⁸³

4. *Conclusions*

I have here suggested a 'monetary periodisation' of the central Middle Ages in central-northern Italy, focusing on the main junctures as they are attested by documentary sources as well as by the emerging data from numismatic, archaeological, and archaeometrical analysis. I started with the Ottonian period because recent research has reopened for debate several concepts that had long been taken for granted. There is no doubt that the Ottonian period marked the first important change of pace in the production of money in the Kingdom of Italy, with a significant expansion of minting thanks to the influx of silver from German mines. Moreover, this phenomenon concerned mainly the Palatine mint of Pavia. The volume of issues increased, but this is perhaps the only innovative element that can be attributed to the Saxon dynasty: as a whole, its minting activity is marked by a considerable degree of continuity with the Carolingian age and that of the 'Kings of Italy'. This continuity concerned not only the mints, which remained limited to Pavia, Milan, Lucca, and Verona, but also the way in which money was distributed. The monetary system retained its previous structure, based on the exclusive issue of *denari*. The peculiar 'rigidity' of the monetary system and the patterns of redistribution of the goods produced on the vast seigneurial estates – including those of the royal *fiscus* – help to explain the still marginal role of money as a medium of exchange. Coin production followed intermittent phases, which were often triggered by the need to provide a rapid response to contingent needs, such as military ones. However, one should not underestimate the positive impact of *ottolini denari* on the monetary circulation as they enabled a first concrete increase in the money supply. Part of the surplus produced on seigneurial estates was in fact destined to be sold in markets other than the *curtes*.

What happened in the 11th century and the first half of the 12th is in some respects more elusive, and not only, as we have seen, in monetary terms.

⁸¹ Saccocci, "Wage payments;" on wage labour in the Early Middle Ages, see Feller, "Le vocabulaire de la rémunération."

⁸² Wickham, "Prima della crescita," 103; Molinari, "Le anfore medievali," 300-3; Wickham, *The Donkey*, 15 and 621.

⁸³ Baldassarri, *La monetazione*, 12.

The crisis of imperial authority, and therefore of issuing authority, probably slowed down the royal mints' activity without, however, creating the conditions for the development of seigniorial or urban mints (the first was Genoa in 1138-9). Monetary production increased but remained limited by contingent factors. Among these was surely the metal stock, which lacked adequate sources of growth. In this 'in-between' phase, the problems caused by the still-limited availability of money were most noticeable in those regions which lacked mints and where payments in *res valentes* became more common. This aspect seems particularly relevant for the present attempt at 'monetary periodisation'.

The driving forces that converged in the second half of the 12th century had significant consequences which marked a real turning point: the return to a multi-denomination monetary system, the creation of new mints, and the increase in the volume of coinage. The spread of *denari* from Verona in northern Italy and of *denari* from Lucca in central Italy was the result of a very different phenomenon from that which had allowed the Pavian *ottolini* to reach the southern regions. The driving force behind the circulation of money was no longer the imperial armies, to whose needs the *ottolini* had been functional: this circulation was now driven by the expansion of trade circuits at various levels of exchange.

The evolution of the monetary system towards more complex forms is thus consistent with the development of an economy that was itself becoming more complex. Coinage was an integral part of this new complexity.

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Alessia Rovelli
Università di Pisa
alessia.rovelli@unipi.it
ORCID: 0000-0002-7161-0266

Economic changes and political changes in the cities of northern and central Italy, 1050-1150

by Chris Wickham

Northern and central Italian cities went through substantial political changes in the century after 1050, above all with the development of city communes. Also, some cities in the region were beginning already to develop commercially, particularly the ports of Genoa and Pisa, and one or two cities in the Po plain, particularly Piacenza and Milan. This article argues that these two developments were largely unrelated, using the case studies of Genoa and Piacenza. If they are related anywhere, Piacenza is the most likely city, given its close links to Genoa (and to an extent Pisa) and the considerable precocity of the development of its institutions.

Le città dell'Italia settentrionale e centrale attraversarono profondi cambiamenti politici nel secolo successivo al 1050, soprattutto con lo sviluppo dei comuni cittadini. Inoltre, alcune città della regione stavano già iniziando a svilupparsi sul piano commerciale, in particolare i porti di Genova e Pisa e una o due città della pianura padana, soprattutto Piacenza e Milano. Questo articolo sostiene che questi due sviluppi furono in larga misura non correlati, utilizzando come casi di studio Genova e Piacenza. Se esiste una relazione in qualche luogo, Piacenza è la città più probabile, dato il suo stretto legame con Genova (e in parte con Pisa) e la notevole precocità dello sviluppo delle sue istituzioni.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Genoa, Piacenza, city communes, commercial exchange.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Genova, Piacenza, comuni cittadini, scambi commerciali.

Chris Wickham, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, chris.wickham@history.ox.ac.uk, 0009-0001-0834-6204

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1. Introduction

There are two main problems facing anyone who wishes to discuss the relationship between political and economic changes in north-central Italy between 1050 and 1150. First, the topic is too vast for any single essay. Second, the two did not actually have that much to do with each other. They were not entirely unrelated, of course; large-scale processes are rarely entirely independent of other broad contexts. But the basic causal elements of each were different. Here I would like to lay out, as rapidly as possible, the main lines of each, and then discuss some empirical examples of developments of one that seem to have been influenced by the other, at least in my view.

The political changes are too well known to require a detailed introduction. The collapse of the Kingdom of Italy, the main change of the first half of this period, and the emergence of the city communes, the main change of the second half, were the result of civil war after 1080 and the felt need on the part of local societies, dominated by cities in most cases, to generate their own solutions, given the absence of government. I have offered elsewhere my interpretation of the origins of communes in Italy, and I will not discuss it again here.¹ My main divergence from the traditional narrative concerns the level of awareness city leaders had of what they were doing in the first decades of the 12th century and the level of enthusiasm with which they embarked on an initially very uncertain journey. But it is not controversial simply to say that communes appeared with different chronological pacing, and initially in rather simple forms; that the first institutionalised communes were the two port cities of Genoa and Pisa, which began to develop formalised structures as early as the 1110s; that the major cities of the central Po Valley, the Lombardy of the 12th century, followed a generation later; and that a full self-consciousness for communal regimes developed, where it was not already established, during the wars with Frederick Barbarossa.

The economic changes of the period are less fully studied, but I have discussed them recently and can at least summarize my opinion of them.² The period of economic take-off in northern Italy did not occur in the period we are examining, except for the ports, Venice, Genoa, and Pisa. For most of the

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LI I/3 = Puncuh, Dino, a cura di. *I Libri Iurium della repubblica di Genova*, I/3. Genova: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 1998.

¹ Wickham, *Sonnambuli verso un nuovo mondo*. This article is the English version of my paper to the December 2022 conference, with a minimum of added footnotes. I also discuss some of the issues raised here at greater length in Wickham, *Le due facce del Comune*.

² Wickham, *Lasino e il battello*, chapter 6.

inland cities, the take-off had not yet begun in 1150, and indeed it usually occurred after 1180 or sometimes later still; the last two decades of the 12th century are the earliest moment in which we can identify clear signs of the movement of artisanal goods between cities, and overseas via Genoa (Genoa, as is well known, is by far the best-documented of the ports, and perhaps – but this is less certain – it was also the most active.) I here set aside Venice, which was not part of the Kingdom of Italy and was primarily linked to the internal economy of the Byzantine empire. The early maritime activity of Genoa and Pisa was initially military, as Pino Petralia has made clear in an authoritative article,³ and only from about 1130 did it begin to be more visibly commercial. In the case of Genoa, in fact, for the next half-century we are looking at a city that prospered by transporting goods from *other* Mediterranean regions – Sicily, North Africa, Egypt, the Levant – rather than as an outlet for Italian productions themselves. Pisa, on the other hand, exported more, thanks to the iron mines of Elba and the Colline Metallifere, increasingly under Pisan control from the 1110s onwards, and to metalworking both locally and in the city, and indeed the Pisan hinterland and the coast to its south appears to have been the most economically complex area of mainland Italy throughout the 12th century, as archaeologists of both Pisa and Siena have made increasingly clear.⁴

Neither city, however, had much economic impact on inland Italian cities until the last years of the century. The exceptions are Lucca in the case of Pisa (documents emphasize its economic ties with Genoa, its ally, but archaeology highlights its relations with its enemy Pisa);⁵ and the import of cotton from Sicily, through Genoa, to some inland Lombard cities, notably Milan and Piacenza, which becomes visible around 1160, as we shall see – but, again, only important from 1190. The cities of the Po Plain and inland Tuscany were certainly expanding in the 1050-1150 period, and the wealth of their elites begins to be visible in urban tower-houses and the rebuilding of churches. But in most cases it is difficult to link this phenomenon to broader artisanal developments, or economic connections outside individual dioceses and counties. That the early communes were governed, for the most part, by a stratum, large and stable, of militarised elites is of course well known, thanks to the work of Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur; in most cities, the elites were first and foremost landowners, and their commercial activities tended to be very secondary, until much later than our period.⁶ Instead, I would argue that urban expansion before 1150 was the product of demographic increases in the

³ Petralia, “Le ‘navi’ e i ‘cavalli’.”

⁴ See for example Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*; Bianchi and Dallai, “Le district minier des Collines Métallifères;” Grassi, *La ceramica, l'alimentazione*; Gattiglia, *Pisa medievale*; Cantini, e Rizzitelli, *Una città operosa*.

⁵ For documents, see Giovanni Scriba, nn. 559, 740, 976, 1038, 1261; Poloni, *Lucca nel Duecento*, 37-8; the archaeological evidence in e.g. Cantini, “Ritmi e forme,” 116, 119-22.

⁶ Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri e cittadini*.

countryside, linked to land-clearance and agricultural expansion, and also the increase in the wealth of urban elites as a collectivity, linked to the accumulations of landed property and the growth of signorial powers; the take-off of artisanal activity would have been impossible without this wealth, because it depended on increased demand, and it came later.

We are facing two very different processes, then. And I would also rule out the most obvious connection that this brief discussion might suggest, namely that the early political development of Genoa and Pisa derived from the early economic development of each. The dates do not coincide: both cities were developing communal institutions as early as 1110, but their real commercial take-off had not yet begun and, to repeat, is hardly visible before 1130 at the earliest. In my view, underlying the early dating of their communes was the rapidity of their land conquests, well outside their traditional *contadi*, which did not yet have a parallel elsewhere (most other cities were limited to fighting border wars with their neighbours), plus, perhaps above all, the need to organize for fighting wars abroad – predatory attacks such as those of the Pisans in Mallorca in 1113-5, or the colonial conflict the two cities fought against each other in Corsica and Sardinia – since maritime warfare required complicated and expensive logistics. However, as noted at the start, large-scale processes and changes are rarely *completely* disconnected. So I will devote the rest of this paper to a discussion of some of the potential links between them. I will, inevitably, be very brief and schematic in doing so.

The first is negative. The fall of the Kingdom of Italy did not promote the economic development of its cities; quite the opposite. The investment in metalworking and other production on public lands, stressed by a number of scholars in recent years, was a feature of the 10th and early 11th centuries, and did not continue beyond the wars of the 1080s (indeed, it seems to have begun to weaken even earlier).⁷ More generally, in the 11th and early 12th centuries, the German king-emperors were also constantly being asked by individual Italian cities for exemptions from trade tolls, in the Po Plain or elsewhere, and they were happy to do so, no doubt for considerable sums of money. This demonstrates some generalised commercial activity in north-central Italy, but it was still on a limited scale, since the cities concerned were not asking for so very much in practice; in 1014, for example, Henry II agreed that the men of Mantua should be exempt from tolls *pro negocio* as far as Brescia and Lake Garda, which are by no means far away, as well as down along the Po to the sea, but not elsewhere.⁸ And even this small-scale connectivity ended with the failure of the kingdom. In terms of economic development, the division of Italy into autonomous communes was, at least at first, problematic. It led to wars and continued destruction, of course. But it also brought a new series of toll barriers and insecurities for merchants outside the territory of

⁷ See for example Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*; Collavini, “Mutazione signorile.”

⁸ Bresslau, und Bloch, *Die Urkunden Heinrichs II.*, n. 278.

their own city, that is to say transaction costs, which had to be overcome by individual agreements between cities, painstakingly recreated city by city, such as those, preserved in the *Registrum magnum* of Piacenza, between that city and Ferrara in 1181, Florence in the same year, and Cremona in 1183, for the safety of merchants traveling into the territory of the other city, although still paying tolls.⁹ It also meant that, with respect to capital investment, each city initially had to depend on the accumulation of land resources that was possible in its own city territory, because investing in another city was rare and risky (I have only seen examples of it in Genoa).¹⁰ Autonomy fostered economic expansion only when cities as communities started to build up local infrastructures, digging canals, widening and paving roads, draining marshes, beginning to create urban sewage systems, which was in almost all cases a development of the 13th century – we have, for example, an explicit example in a series of Milanese witness depositions from 1207, referring to the 1160s, which speak of an open area just outside Porta Vercellina where the Milanese went to *ludere ad ossa* [play dice] *et cagare et pixare*; it is clear that Milan's sewer system was not yet operational.¹¹ In the 13th century, there is no doubt about urban economic protagonism and infrastructural commitment; but it generally took a long time to get started.

All the same, if we look carefully at individual cities after 1100, we can already see some examples of economic changes influencing political choices or vice versa. Not many, but at least some. I will discuss two of them here, Genoa and Piacenza. In my discussion of Genoa, I will argue that economic and political changes may indeed have had mutual connections. But Piacenza, which I will discuss at the end, may be the clearest example in Italy where economic relations probably directly influenced political developments in the city in the 12th century.

2. Genoa

Let us start with Genoa, then. First, its economic history up to the mid-12th century, filling in with some more detail my previous generalisations; and then its political-institutional development, to see to what extent the latter reacted to and aimed to structure the former. As is well known, when it comes to 12th-century maritime trade, no part of Italy – or the Mediterranean as a whole – is as well documented as Genoa. By far the oldest notarial register survives here, that of Giovanni Scriba from the years 1154-64, which records more than 1,300 documents, and which focuses substantially on commercial transactions from the very beginning. In addition, we have for Genoa the most

⁹ Falconi, e Peveri, *Il Registrum Magnum*, vol. 1, nn. 39, 45, 215.

¹⁰ See, before 1180, *LI I/1*, nn. 32, 57, 132, 202, 243, 246, 249.

¹¹ Merati, "La rappresentazione dell'esperienza," 477, 480, 482, 485-6, 490.

detailed civic chronicle of 12th-century Italy, starting in 1099, which pays great attention to the city's Mediterranean projection; and one of the most substantial surviving series of *Libri iurium*, dating initially to the mid-13th century, which also contains a great many texts concerning Mediterranean relations from 1098 onward.¹² If there is one place where the easy platitudes of the historiography of the "commercial revolution" are actually valid, it is here: for it is on the basis of Genoese evidence that they were primarily developed.

Genoese documentation before 1100 is more or less limited to land transactions, as is normal in Italy. However, occasional references to Genoese trade in Egypt are found in the letters of the Cairo *geniza* for the mid-11th century; and by the early 12th century there was a more stable Genoese presence there. This fits the fact that the rights in Levantine cities, which the victorious Crusaders granted to the Genoese in 1098-1109, focus so firmly on trade privileges.¹³ But the *geniza* also shows that the scale of Italian (and even Byzantine) involvement in Egyptian trade before the 12th century was relatively modest, and any growth could not occur quickly. The rise in Mediterranean trading dates, I would argue, to the 1130s, when we first have lists of Genoese customs tolls, and the 1140s, when Genoese treaties with other Mediterranean powers first begin to be documented.¹⁴

Giovanni Scriba's register of 1154-64, with hundreds of foreign trade transactions, gives us for the first time an idea of the size of this traffic and also of the goods involved. Most Genoese contracts mention only investments and profits in money; however, there are a reasonable number of references to particular types of goods in the register – not enough to offer statistics, but enough to use as rough guides. The Genoese regularly imported spices and dyes; pepper was so common in the city that it was used as an alternative to silver coin in transactions; so were bales of cotton, bulk goods imported from Sicily on a particularly large scale.¹⁵ As for exports, the most frequently mentioned is cloth, the classic bulk commodity, on some thirty occasions. In Giovanni Scriba's register, the fabric most commonly identified is fustian, the mixture of linen and cotton that in the 13th century was associated primarily with Lombard cities, and indeed on two occasions fustian is explicitly stated as coming from Milan and Piacenza.¹⁶ Markets for this fabric were evenly dis-

¹² See Giovanni Scriba; *LI I/1*, *LI I/2* and *LI I/3*; Belgrano, *Annali genovesi*, vol. 1; Belgrano, e Imperiale di Sant'Angelo, *Annali genovesi*, vol. 2.

¹³ For the letters (following the abbreviations used in the Princeton Geniza Project: <https://geniza.princeton.edu/pgp/>), see ENA NS 2.13, T-S 10J16.17, Bodl. MS Heb. b 3/26, edited in Gil, *Bemalkhut Yishma'el*, nn. 749, 420, 794; Kedar, "Genoese merchants in Alexandria," and Musarra, "Genova e il mare nell'Alto Medioevo." Trade agreements: *LI I/1*, nn. 61, 119, with Imperiale di Sant'Angelo, *Codice diplomatico*, vol. 1, nn. 7, 12.

¹⁴ *LI I/1*, nn. 3, 6, 123; for treaties, e.g. *LI I/1*, nn. 118 (Valencia), 181 (Byzantium), *LI I/2*, n. 289 (Sicily). For modest northern Mediterranean trade to Egypt before 1100, see Goldberg, *Trade and institutions*, 19-21, 306-9, 334-5.

¹⁵ Examples are Giovanni Scriba, nn. 8, 88, 152, 256, 846, 1064, 1301.

¹⁶ For fustian, see Giovanni Scriba, nn. 383, 678 (the two which cite Milan and Piacenza), 689, 1095, 1110, appendix 10.

tributed among the standard overseas destinations for Genoese shipments to the Mediterranean after 1150.

By contrast, an important absence in Giovanni Scriba is that of significant references to the Lombard cities of the Po valley, or those of most of Tuscany: that is, of any connection with the rest of central and northern Italy. Men from a dozen or so cities are mentioned, it is true, mostly as witnesses to transactions; but the total number is very small, with the exception of Lucca. A few north Italians (mostly from Lodi and Piacenza) were involved in maritime trade or lent money.¹⁷ The fustians from Milan and Piacenza mentioned above – only two out of hundreds of texts – are the only references to goods actually coming from the Po Plain, even if most of the other fustians and much of the rest of the cloth, whose origin is not specified in the contracts, could well have come from Lombardy as well. We have no reason to think, on the basis of this register or other texts prior to 1190, that Genoese relations with Lombardy were as yet complex or – apart from cotton going in one direction and fustian in the other – large-scale. Overall, then, Giovanni's register shows a Genoese commitment to the sea and to the maintenance of a complex network of trade interconnections as an intermediary between Mediterranean regions. Conversely, what Genoa was not, in the years around 1160, was an organic outlet for the complexities of the northern Italian economy. In very general terms, this is because there was not yet a complex economy of northern Italy to connect to organically. However, Genoese political innovations had an effect at least on Piacenza, as we shall see.

As to politics: I have already doubted that the origins of the Genoese commune were influenced by its economic activity. And indeed even later, most of the city's institutional developments responded to the difficult politico-military events of the second half of the century, not to economic changes. Genoa stayed out of Barbarossa's wars, but faced many other challenges. One was the heavy debts that the commune had accumulated after the costly conquest of Tortosa in Catalonia from the Spanish Muslims in 1148, which led to political stasis in the 1150s, until the city paid what appears to have been its main creditor, the commune of Piacenza, 6,000 pounds in money and goods in 1154-5.¹⁸ Another was the serious, and again costly, war with Pisa, on the sea and in Sardinia, particularly in the years 1162-75; this is the most likely context for our first reference in 1165 to a tax, *collecta*, based on an *estimo*, a calculation of personal landed and mobile wealth, here valued at 6 *denarii* per *libra*, 2.5%. This is one of the first clear references to an *estimo* actually levied anywhere in Italy (the others are for Pisa and Piacenza; I will return to the latter).¹⁹ A third challenge was the factional conflicts among the main

¹⁷ For Lucca, see above, note 5. For loans and trading by north Italians, *Giovanni Scriba*, nn. 232, 500-1, 842, 855, 858, 925, 962.

¹⁸ *LI I/1*, nn. 170-5, 178; see, for the *maximum debitum* that was the result of the Tortosa campaign, n. 113. See also Belgrano, *Annali genovesi*, vol. 1, 33-5, 37-8.

¹⁹ Belgrano, 188; see Banti, *I brevi*, 49-50, for Pisa.

Genoese families, who of course also controlled the communal government, which peaked in the early 1190s before a comprehensive peace in 1194-5; the institutional change most closely related to this was the transition to the rule of “foreign” (non-local) *podestà*, a slow process here as elsewhere, but explicitly linked by the city’s *Annales* to the need to overcome factional rivalries.²⁰ These challenges certainly did not undermine Genoa’s economic activity, which indeed grew rapidly in the same years; but the political developments associated with them did not obviously respond to the evolution of the city’s economy.

Conversely, the details of consular legislation were more responsive to the economy, and quite early as well. More than might be expected, this legislation concerned urban infrastructure. The city was expanding rapidly in the 11th and early 12th centuries; its *burgus* was larger than the old *civitas* by the late 1150s, when, as in many other cities, the consuls built a new city wall encompassing both. The city’s population was also becoming denser; tower-houses appear, as in almost all the cities of mainland Italy, with regularity in texts from now on. This, at least, produced a focused consular response. In 1133-4 the consuls decreed that the colonnade in front of the houses along the sea should be made of stone, not wood, and established rules for building above it; they also legislated on the width of new streets and instructed specific citizens about how to build their own sections of these colonnades. In 1138 they also reordered the harbour. Then in 1145 the consuls twice made sure that open spaces were preserved. One of these was the *vacuum de Sarzano*, at the southern edge of the *civitas*, which needed to remain unbuilt because the city’s *populus* (i.e., urban assembly) met there. Similarly, the monastery of S. Siro was allowed to build on the Castelletto hill, north of the city, as long as the overall space remained *vacuum*, so that “the *populus* could see the city and the sea from there”.²¹ The concern for planning demonstrated by the colonnades and these open spaces, which had as yet no known parallels in other cities, shows how much the consuls of the commune of Genoa saw the city’s urban planning as a collective good, which also extended to urban services. Here, that is, we can see that the ruling group of the Genoese commune was already engaged in the 1130s-40s in reordering the city to adapt it to its developing economic role in the same period; and it seems to have been the only city in Italy to do so, with such commitment, so early. The urban economy and urban institutions were here developing in parallel, and with some mutual interconnections. So far, not so many, but elements of a reciprocal effect are beginning to be visible.

²⁰ Belgrano, e Imperiale di Sant’Angelo, *Annali genovesi*, vol. 2, 36; see for internal conflicts Inguscio, *Reassessing civil conflicts*.

²¹ *LII*/1, nn. 24, 53, 63, 172, *LII*/3, nn. 567-8. For Genoese town planning in general, see Grossi Bianchi, e Poggi, *Una città portuale del medioevo*, 40-75.

3. Piacenza

Second, Piacenza, which is much more difficult to study than Genoa. Its historiography has up to now been relatively weak. Furthermore, most of its main documentary collections are unpublished, so it is still unclear exactly how its economy functioned, although editions of its *Registrum magnum* and some scattered financial and legislative texts allow us to gain a sense of some outlines of its political development.²² But at least we can say, as far as the economy is concerned, that evidence we have for the growth of textile production in the central Po Plain in the 12th century focuses particularly on Piacenza, along with Milan. A bas-relief in the cathedral, dated to c.1150, one of a series of reliefs depicting urban trades, depicts two women cutting cloth. This shows at least some production for sale, early enough; and 'Lombard' textiles, as well as arms, are mentioned in the Genoese regulations of 1128-30. That these textiles came, at least in part, from Piacenza is implied by its proximity to Genoa in the 1140s, as evidenced by Piacenza's loan to Genoa after 1148 – the Piacenza loan was in fact facilitated by a consul who was very active in the documents of the latter city, Folco Stretto, who in return obtained trading rights in Genoa in 1149 – and even more so by the fact that the debt was repaid in 1155 in part in raw cotton and dyeing materials.²³ Moreover, in the 1130s some Piacenza textiles were being exported abroad via Pisa; and a contract from the city shows an artisan and his wife giving a pledge in exchange for cotton in 1146. A set of witness accounts of the oppressions of Barbarossa's officials in Piacenza and its territory, dating from 1164 and referring to 1162-4, mentions the taxation of both fustian and its raw materials, linen and cotton.²⁴

These are scattered, anecdotal references, but they at least give a sense of some artisanal activity, which we do not yet see elsewhere except in Milan. Large-scale cloth weaving in Piacenza may have begun somewhat earlier than in Milan, which until the mid-12th century has more evidence of ironworking – although Milanese dyers, at least, were already active in the 1130s, and some cotton-workers a decade later.²⁵ Later, at the end of the century, cloth production in Piacenza was certainly complex; its mercantile statutes, whose earliest clauses can in my view be dated to the 1190s, list cloth workers of a

²² Falconi, e Peveri, *Il Registrum Magnum*; Solmi, "Le leggi più antiche;" Güterbock, "Alla vigilia della Lega Lombarda." Racine, *Plaisance*, has dominated the historiography for forty years, but is very weak for the 12th century. Fugazza, *Diritto, istituzioni* is a good institutional analysis. The new thesis by Valente, *Vescovi, consoli e assemblee*, which appeared when this article was in press, however transforms our understanding of the city in this period.

²³ For the capitals and other evidence for cloth, see Racine, *Plaisance*, 122, 293-300. For Folco Stretto, see Racine, 301-4; *LI*, I/1, nn. 121, 132, cf. 249 for his sons (and 174, 178 for the Genoa debt). For 1128-30, *LI*, I/1, n. 3.

²⁴ Beyer, *Die lombardische Briefsammlung*, nn. 56-7; Drei, *Le carte degli Archivi parmensi*, n. 171; Güterbock, "Alla vigilia della Lega Lombarda," 68, 71, 73-4.

²⁵ For the dyers and the cotton-workers, see the citations in Wickham, *L'asino e il battello*, chapter 6, notes 317, 320.

wide variety of types. There are complex rules about the size of long pieces of cloth and pieces of fustian, and about the proportion of cotton thread in the latter. The workshops seem to be run at least in part with a putting-out system, a *Verlagssystem*. Fustian and its cotton base are the most important in this text, but woollens also play a significant role. Probably, these statutes reflect the level of cloth production in Milan as well, which by then had come to match that of Piacenza; a clause dated to 1199 requires wool weavers, both male and female, to weave in the style of the cloth of Monza, one of Milan's satellite towns.²⁶

Politically, Piacenza was also early by northern Italian standards in the development of some of its institutions. Its city assembly is documented from 1093, its consuls from 1126, and its consular courts begin in 1133, these being dates typical of the central Po Plain and rather later than Genoa and Pisa. But as early as 1135 the city was legislating as a public body, shortly after Genoa (1130) and just before Pisa (1140); other cities are not documented as legislating until a generation later.²⁷ And, especially for our purposes, as noted above, it is also one of the same three cities with early documentation of taxation based on an *estimo*, dating back to the early 1160s; the witnessing about the oppressions of imperial officials shows that an *estimo* was already being collected regularly by the city in 1162-4. The *estimo* also appears in all three of the surviving *brevia consulum* for Piacenza, dated to the years 1167-81, and we have several documents from the last decades of the century that attest to its apparently regular collection, at least inside the city itself.²⁸

I have doubted that the early institutionalisation of the commune of Genoa was related to its economic activities; but the situation was different in Piacenza. It is not coincidental that Piacenza, which had the closest economic links with Genoa before the Barbarossa wars and unusually early evidence of cloth weaving on a substantial scale, some of which was exported through Genoa, had such a similar course of development to Genoa in its institutions. The lines of economic connections in this case facilitated political imitation. The development of the *estimo* in Genoa was a response to expensive military challenges; in Piacenza it was not, and here it is more likely that it was simply associated with new ideas about how to manage economic resources needed for city government, which came from the port city to which it was most closely linked. It is true that in 1162 the military danger posed by Frederick Barbarossa was very present, not least in Piacenza, an ally of Milan, which was destroyed that year. But most other Lombard cities faced this danger with less complex financial measures – compulsory military service, compulsory

²⁶ Castignoli, e Racine, *Corpus statutorum mercatorum Placentiae*, especially 66, 100-4, 136, 158, 168-9, 179-89, 195, 202, 248.

²⁷ Fugazza, *Diritto, istituzioni*, 6, 20; Solmi, "Le leggi più antiche," 55-7; Falconi, e Peveri, *Il Registrum Magnum*, n. 53; vol. 3, n. 804.

²⁸ Güterbock, "Alla vigilia della Lega Lombarda," 65 ff. for *ipso ultimo estimo*; Solmi, "Le leggi più antiche," 60-81; Racine, *Plaisance*, 1374-97.

labour service to build defences, simpler taxes, ad hoc requisitions. Milan itself did not establish an *estimo* until 1240; nor, for that matter, is there any communal legislation documented there before 1170.²⁹

We could ask why economic ties with Genoa, which Milan certainly already had as well, did not have the same effect on Lombardy's largest city. It is a question that can only have hypothetical answers, but it may be that Milan was sufficiently self-confident that it did not need to follow the institutional paths traced by others; it may also be – we do not have the data to say – that Piacenza's economic ties with Genoa were more organic than Milan's, as indeed perhaps Folco Stretto's career might suggest. In any case, Piacenza had no parallels in its early communal institutionalisation in the Po Plain, and, again, this seems significant. A city had to choose to follow this path, and other cities did not choose it; and they would not choose it for at least another generation. And even in Piacenza we have no sign in this period of the reverse causal relationship, that is of political actions by the city government to structure or develop the economy, of the type we have seen in Genoa – apart from the making of trade treaties with other cities, as was common in Italy from the 1140s onwards, which had its roots in the 11th century in the requests to kings for toll rights, already mentioned. It must be concluded that the signs discussed here of the influence of economics on politics and vice versa, even if they exist, were still few.

In the 13th century, there is no doubt that city governments throughout communal Italy were very capable of making infrastructural and other policy interventions to help urban economic growth, and examples of conscious actions of this kind are numerous. I do not wish to revive the old image of a consular government so simple in structure that the appearance of podestà could be interpreted as a radical change; Paolo Grillo dismantled this idea in an important article in 2009.³⁰ But the development of communal institutions was not immediate. That economic opportunities could lead to changes in the organisation of cities before 1150 is perhaps only visible in Piacenza. Nor was the emergence of the idea that one of the roles of urban government was to help promote the economy an early development; we see only the beginnings of this before 1150, and only in Genoa. We need to follow the institutional development of city communes in the 12th century more carefully than we have done so far; but I believe that when we do, we will find that their involvement in promoting the economy was one of the last developments to appear.

²⁹ Milan's legislation in 1170: Manaresi, *Atti*, n. 75; for the *estimo*, Biscaro, "Gli estimi del comune di Milano," 350-73; Grillo, *Milano*, 522-9.

³⁰ Grillo, "La frattura inesistente."

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Chris Wickham
Universities of Oxford and Birmingham
chris.wickham@history.ox.ac.uk
ORCID: 0009-0001-0834-6204

Land price trends as markers of economic cycles? Inflation, debasement and exchange rates in the central Middle Ages

by Lorenzo Tabarrini

Can we write a meaningful history of land prices during the early and central Middle Ages? According to a line of research inspired by economic anthropology, the answer would be no: land primarily served to construct networks of alliance and cannot be regarded as a mere commodity. Nevertheless, several classic studies have used price fluctuations as tools for periodisation – sometimes, in fact, as markers of profound social and economic changes. Yet this raises a further problem: scholars have not always attributed the same importance to monetary dynamics as factors capable of influencing prices. This article reviews the existing historiography on these issues with reference to northern and central Italy; its concluding remarks focus on a specific aspect of price analysis, namely exchange rates.

Si può fare la storia dei prezzi della terra durante il Medioevo alto e centrale? Secondo una corrente di pensiero ispirata dall'antropologia economica, la risposta sarebbe negativa: simboli di prestigio e mezzi per costruire reti di alleanze, i beni fondiari non possono essere considerati come una merce tra le altre. E tuttavia, alcuni classici della medievistica hanno attribuito all'andamento dei prezzi un valore addirittura periodizzante, considerandoli, cioè, specchio di movimenti più profondi dell'economia e della società. Un altro problema, però, emerge a questo punto: non tutti gli autori hanno fatto uso del dato numismatico (e, in generale, della storia monetaria) come di un elemento utile a indagare l'andamento dei prezzi. Il presente articolo si propone di riconsiderare l'intera questione attraverso una rilettura della storiografia esistente per l'Italia centrale e settentrionale; la sezione finale è dedicata invece al problema delle variazioni dei tassi di cambio.

Lorenzo Tabarrini, Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Italy, lorenzo.tabarrini3@unibo.it, 0000-0003-0331-0971

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1. *Introduction*

The study of land prices during the Middle Ages has raised serious methodological questions, especially over the last forty years. It has been argued that land was not an ordinary commodity: it symbolised the status of its owner and was often exchanged in order to build or consolidate networks of alliance or allegiance. As a consequence, the value at which land was marketed in pre-modern economies was determined not only by the laws of supply and demand, but also by the wider social environment in which buyers and sellers operated, and which inevitably influenced the formation of prices. Some scholars, in fact, doubt that the laws of the modern economy can be usefully applied to the early Middle Ages at all.¹ This interpretative framework, nourished by anthropological thinking, has generated a certain scepticism regarding the construction of price series for landed estates and their scientific reliability. Are we really entitled to draw price curves and analyse price trends if the very reasons that prompted individuals to conclude each transaction – kinship, patronage, profit? – can hardly be discerned? Not to mention that, especially for the earlier periods, the surviving evidence is so fragmentary that any quantitative reasoning would be simply misplaced. As a result, even historians of medieval rural societies have sometimes deliberately avoided investigating the prices of landed estates.²

This leaves us with the question of how we should interpret the land-price trends that have been identified, including those presented in some classic studies that will be discussed in the following pages. Such trends have generally been regarded as reflections of underlying economic dynamics, if not as markers of specific economic cycles. It has often been implicitly assumed that the market provides the only possible explanation for the long-term tenden-

I would like to thank Tiziana Lazzari, Alessia Rovelli, and Chris Wickham for critiquing this paper.

¹ A seminal article on the subject, centred on Tuscany, is Wickham, “Vendite;” see the essays collected in Wickham and Feller, *Le marché*, and Feller, Gramain, et Weber, *La fortune*. Examples of dissatisfaction with the use of classical economic theory and its application to the early medieval period can be found in Feller, *Richesse* (see, for instance, 55, where mercantile exchange is said to become the norm for the circulation of wealth only from the 12th century onwards) and Little, *Religious Poverty*, 8, where the author argues that a profit-oriented economy replaced a gift economy only after 1050.

² As has been acutely remarked – for the Kingdom of Italy between the 10th century and the last quarter of the 12th – by Menant, “Les transactions,” and by Carocci, “Il mercato,” section 2. On the formation of prices and the existence of different systems of evaluation, the research carried out by Wendy Davies is essential: see, for instance, Davies, “Sale.”

cies observable when a sufficiently large number of land prices is examined over several decades; hence the need to frame these prices as elements that may be relevant to the periodisation of medieval economy. But here another problem arises. It is generally acknowledged (though not universally, as we will see) that the quality of the coinage influenced the formation of prices. Since the value of the currency was not determined solely by the trust placed by the public in the issuing authority – a principle that became fully generalised only from the mid-19th century³ – the intrinsic value of the coins (i.e., their material characteristics, especially weight and fineness) could help determine the purchasing power embodied in one particular specie. If the quality declined, nominal prices might rise as a result; and this decrease in material quality is what we refer to as debasement.⁴

This should nonetheless be seen as a tendency, rather than a rule. Users' awareness of debasement is difficult to ascertain – and so too is the precise correlation between changes in coin quality and changes in prices.⁵ However, the idea that debasement affected prices, at least to some extent, has often been recognised by scholars, as a couple of examples taken at random can illustrate. In a recent overview of the well-known inflationary spike of the early 4th century, Gilles Bransbourg emphasised that the reduction in the silver fineness of the Roman *nummi* from 301 and their weight reduction from 307 – both decided by the ruling authorities (through what we would call state-driven or, when explicitly declared, 'official' debasement) – could hardly go unnoticed by users, thereby adding to the price increases that had already begun in the 270s.⁶ Another spike which is worth mentioning occurred in England in the early 13th century. Paul Latimer convincingly attributed a central role to the deteriorated state of the coinage – in this case caused by coin-clipping, the fraudulent trimming of coins by private individuals for profit – in triggering inflation. With the royal recoinage announced in late 1204 for the following year, the public began to lose confidence in the currency, particularly as a store of wealth, and hastened to dispose of low-quality money; sellers, in turn, raised prices.⁷ The amount of information concerning debasement-induced inflation increases massively for the later medieval period and has allowed for more sophisticated analyses of the relationships between the mint prices offered for precious metals, the reductions in weight and fineness, and the resulting variations in exchange rates and domestic prices.⁸

³ With the widespread creation of central banks: see Capie, Goodhart, and Schnadt, "The Development."

⁴ This dual standard in determining the value of a currency reflects the distinction between the *cours légal* (set by the ruling authority) and the *cours commercial* (determined by the general public), as already emphasised by Bloch, "Mutations."

⁵ See, for instance, Naismith, *Money*, 165–6.

⁶ Bransbourg, "Inflation."

⁷ Latimer, "English Inflation."

⁸ For a comprehensive overview, see Spufford, "Debasement." A macro-example is France during the Hundred Years' War: Sussman, "Debasements." A local example, studied relatively

With this theoretical background in mind, the following pages offer a review of the existing historiography on land-price trends in northern and central Italy during an earlier period, the central Middle Ages. The discussion will focus on two phases marked by upward movements: the decades straddling the 10th and the 11th centuries (although followed by a price drop in some regions during the 1020s), and the final quarter of the 12th. I shall also briefly consider Catalonia, which has been the subject of a long and influential tradition of studies and must be taken into account if we are to set out fully the range of issues worth examining here. Broadly speaking, land-price trends have been used as proxies for economic growth or depression, much as a modern price index would be. Yet we must ask whether inflation was driven by the expansion of aggregate demand, or whether it stemmed from a crisis of confidence in the currency. In fact, the two types of inflation could coexist. One of the explanations for debasement – alongside the scarcity of bullion, the rising scale of minting and the increased use of coinage – is the expansion of state demand. The state sought to make the public deficit and the payment of military salaries more sustainable by issuing debased currency whose nominal value nevertheless remained unchanged. The crisis of confidence that could result from that policy was, in that specific context, a by-product of state demand.⁹ Despite this potential overlap, the distinction between inflation driven by demand and inflation driven by distrust – and the possible relations between the two – seems to me particularly important. Drawing such a distinction may bring closer to grasping the actual historical-economic meaning of the land-price trends and may add a further element to the anthropologically oriented analytical framework that has gained prominence in recent years. As I will try to show, there is still research to be done on this point. The authors I will discuss have, in fact, offered very different assessments of the role played by monetary phenomena in influencing price dynamics.

The final section is devoted to a particular aspect of the history of prices, namely exchange rates, and focuses exclusively on the 12th century. Much like land prices, the exchange rates between different currencies can be – and have been – used to reconstruct broader political and economic dynamics. However, the principles underpinning the formation of rates remain, to an extent, obscure. Was the intrinsic value of the coins the main factor determining the foreign-exchange rate of a given specie? Or was it the trust placed by the public in the issuing authority? And if both factors played a role, what was the balance between them? Again, these questions seem important to me: a ruler's capacity to impose legal tender – that is, a rate not dependent on the material characteristics of the coinage – is an expression of political power and economic dominance. This makes it all the more relevant to outline the

recently, is Albi in the 1350s: Biget, "Monnaies." For some general remarks, see also Allen, "Currency Depreciation;" Santiano, *La monnaie*, 347-53.

⁹ A classic reference on the causal relationship between economic expansion, on the one hand, and devaluation and debasement, on the other, is Cipolla, *Le avventure*, 21-46.

problem for northern and central Italy after 1100, a period that witnessed the successful attempts of urban communes and rural lordships to assert their authority at the local level – a development usually described in the historiography as ‘seigneurial transformation’ or ‘feudal revolution’.¹⁰

In general, the main thrust of this essay is a call for closer collaboration between historians of the written evidence on the one hand, and archaeologists and numismatists on the other. This seems the only fruitful way to advance research on debasement, prices and exchange rates. While the study of nominal prices must rely on notarised charters and registers, the serial analysis of coin finds provides the essential foundation for any attempt to achieve a comprehensive understanding of these phenomena. Admittedly, my *pars construens* is modest; the following pages aim simply to outline a couple of potential research avenues that may merit exploration in the future.

2. Land prices (late 10th-11th century)

I take as the starting point of my analysis the recent overview of medieval economic history by Paolo Cammarosano (2020). The reason is simple: he has provided, in an original way, a comparative summary of the evolution of land prices across several regions of Latin Europe during the 10th and 11th centuries, drawing on the classic studies by Cinzio Violante (on the Milanese hinterland), Pierre Bonnassie (on Catalonia) and Laurent Feller (on the Abruzzi). According to Cammarosano, the fact that land prices followed similarly upward trends from roughly the 960s/970s to the 1020s leads to the conclusion that the only possible explanation for this evenly paced inflation – even in regions that were distant from one another and barely integrated, if at all – was the general increase of agricultural production, followed by a slowdown towards the middle of the 11th century.¹¹ Cammarosano explicitly rejected the possibility that the variations in the intrinsic value of a given specie could affect price levels; indeed, he appears to consider such variations ultimately unimportant. In a footnote, he remarks that

the value of money is simply the quantity of commodities it can purchase; prices do not go up because coins contain a certain percentage of precious metal (...). Things change when sovereign power deliberately reduces one specie and assigns to it a nominal value higher than its real value; this occurred only in the fourteenth century, however, and does not alter the fundamental fact that the value of money consists solely in the

¹⁰ An overview of the Kingdom of Italy is provided by Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation*; for the place of urban communes within this framework, see Wickham, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’.”

¹¹ Cammarosano, *Economia*, 127-49. The slowdown seems harder to explain: according to Cammarosano (148), “it coincided with an adjustment and a new balance between the rural areas framed within the territories ruled by castles and the development of cities” (translation mine).

quantity of commodities and services it can buy. In the long term, any diminution of the specie rapidly leads to a rebalancing of the value of money.¹²

Cammarosano had taken a somewhat different stance in his book on the Sienese family of the Berardenghi (1974), where he appeared to assign greater importance to monetary dynamics in the formation of land prices, particularly with regard to the issue of money supply – a classic problem of economic history. He argued that the overall increase in the provision of money towards the end of the 12th century may have been one of the factors that caused the devaluation of the specie used in Siena, thereby possibly contributing to the general inflationary trend recorded in the northern outskirts of the city between 1171 and 1220.¹³ It has to be noted, however, that the key term here is devaluation, not debasement. As one commodity among others, money is subject to the law of supply and demand: if its overall quantity increases, its unit cost declines. The study of the material characteristics of coins – and thus of changes in weight and fineness – was not considered relevant.

I shall return later to the chronology proposed by Cammarosano for the onset of ‘official’ debasement (which, he argued, began only after 1300). For now, I would like to focus on the three authors he cited in his 2021 book, beginning with Cinzio Violante. Violante’s volume on Milanese society in the centuries preceding the full development of the urban commune (1953)¹⁴ included a meticulous analysis of the evolution of land prices from the 9th to the 11th century, based on slightly more than 100 documents. He showed that prices remained fairly stable until the 960s/970s; then they rose steadily until the end of the century. Between 1000 and 1025, they continued to increase, albeit with a tendency towards stabilisation. In the decades 1025–50, by contrast, it is more difficult to discern a general trend because of major oscillations in the recorded prices.¹⁵ Violante interpreted this inflation as a symptom of the broader resurgence of social and economic life, whose earliest signs he detected under Ottonian rule. More specifically, Violante criticised the view expressed by Alfredo Bosio in his volume on the origins of the Milanese commune (1933). Bosio believed that inflation reflected a crisis of confidence in the currency, which he claimed had lost around 65% or 75% of its value by the end of the 10th century. This, in turn, was taken as evidence of a broader crisis in that period and of the uncertainty it engendered (Bosio, however, did not explicitly connect uncertainty to debasement).¹⁶ Violante acknowledged that the absence of data on the quantity of circulating coins and on the avail-

¹² Cammarosano, 143, n. 34 (translation mine).

¹³ Cammarosano, *La famiglia*, 350: “the importance of rents in kind and tenancy relations based on the *colonatus*... may have been determined by the *de facto* devaluation of the currency” (translation mine).

¹⁴ Violante, *La società*.

¹⁵ Violante, 99–110.

¹⁶ Bosio, *Origini*, 25–8.

ability of precious metals effectively left him with no option but to interpret the evolution of prices as part of the changing social and economic structures of the central Middle Ages. Yet he did take numismatics – and the problem of intrinsic value – into account. He noted that from the age of Charlemagne to that of Conrad II the silver *denarius* appears to have lost half its weight; this decline, however, could not, in his view, explain a thirty-fold increase in land prices over the same period.¹⁷ At this point, one must ask whether the relationship between debasement and prices is one of strict inverse proportionality, or whether, conversely, decreases in weight and fineness may have exerted a multiplicative effect on inflation. This, for now, remains an open question.

I will now turn to Pierre Bonnassie's classic study on Catalonia (1976).¹⁸ To begin with, it should be noted that Bonnassie's main dataset consisted of prices for vineyard land measures (*modiata*), which were numerous enough – though not very numerous: ninety-five between 970 and 1050 – to construct a series. These prices were expressed for the most part in gold coins or ounces; and even if gold species did circulate to some extent in eastern Iberia, one must assume that notaries sometimes used them merely as units of account – the actual transactions being conducted in other silver and gold currencies. At any rate, Bonnassie's results basically matched Violante's: from the 980s to around 1020, prices in Catalonia increased fivefold (with a peak of +311% from 981 to 990 compared to the previous decade); the thirty years between the 1020s and the 1050s witnessed a downturn trend, before inflation resumed from 1050 onwards.¹⁹ Again, not unlike Violante, Bonnassie believed that inflation was both a symptom and a driving force of commercial expansion and thus, more generally, of growing prosperity – even though, in an earlier article, he attributed the surge in the price of agricultural commodities (not land) during the 980s to the disastrous aftermath of the Muslim military campaigns against Barcelona and Pamplona.²⁰ According to Bonnassie, there were two possible reasons for the slowdown which occurred in the first half of the 11th century: the hoarding (*thésaurisation*) of coins and the limited availability of precious metals, both of which would have had deflationary effects. However, the evidence for either phenomenon is weak (let alone for their scale), and it is equally difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate that hoarding and bullion famine occurred *precisely* in the decades during which inflation temporarily came to a halt.²¹ It should be stressed that Bonnassie did not consider the possible effects of devaluation and/or debasement on price trends, although some isolated clues point in that direction. He himself noted

¹⁷ Violante, 110-17, 133-4.

¹⁸ Bonnassie, *La Catalogne*.

¹⁹ Bonnassie, vol. 1, 391-5, 397-8, 409-14 and vol. 2, 911-26.

²⁰ Bonnassie, "Une famille," especially 270-7. I cannot expand further on the Iberian Peninsula here, but it should be stressed that Bonnassie relied on Sanchez Albornoz, "El precio" (on Castile; see, for instance, 390 about the effects of war) and Sáez, "Nuevos datos" (on Galicia).

²¹ Bonnassie, *La Catalogne*, vol. 1, 398.

that around the year 1050 the silver *denarius* appeared to have lost much of its purchasing power and that in 1056-7 one could obtain ten *mancosi* from a gold ounce, whereas the ratio had been 7:1 in previous decades.²² As I will argue in the concluding lines of this section, greater importance can be attributed to debasement than Bonnassie allowed for.

Let us next look at the Abruzzi region, as examined in a landmark monograph by Laurent Feller (1998).²³ From 925 to 1075, the evolution of land prices can be reconstructed on the basis of 327 documents. The analysis shows that nominal prices rose steadily from the second half of the 10th century to the first quarter of the 11th (+116%); they then fell sharply until 1075, where the study ends.²⁴ In Feller's view, this increase was driven by the economic dynamism of the upper strata of the peasantry, who became members of the clientele of the royal monastery of Casauria. They received substantial grants of land and in turn had dependent tenants of their own. They were able to accumulate savings and boost agricultural production. Seigneurial rents, which began to be levied as the process of castle-building expanded, did not hinder the accumulation of profits by these elite peasants. From the second quarter of the 11th century, however, this picture changed dramatically: land prices – especially those of low-quality lands – declined, while agrarian rents increased. According to Feller, these developments reflected a strong seigneurial reaction that progressively impoverished the peasantry. The dissolution of Carolingian public structures paved the way for a new economic system in which *castelli* represented the expression of lordly oppression. This, in turn, led to the contraction of the peasants' purchasing power and, ultimately, to deflation.²⁵

One may also add David Herlihy, Pierre Racine and Jörg Jarnut to the authors cited by Cammarosano. Herlihy identified an upward movement in average land prices in the countryside of Lucca beginning in the mid-970s (although he considered only seventeen land transactions up to 1000) and continuing uninterruptedly from 1000 to 1100 (as shown by 336 sales, about half of which, however, date to the final quarter of the 11th century). He attributed this growth to the restructuring of ecclesiastical estates and to the increasing mobility of the land market, but he also appeared to suggest a monetary explanation. He noted that the most pronounced rise occurred between 1050 and 1100, when the Lucchese coinage lost half its value – a development that, in his view, made Lucchese coins highly competitive and widely used in central Italy.²⁶ Racine examined land prices around Piacenza into the mid-13th century (and for this reason I will return to him in the next section). For the moment, it is enough to note that he observed a doubling of prices between

²² Bonnassie, vol. 1, 377, n. 30 and 388-9.

²³ Feller, *Les Abruzzes*.

²⁴ Feller, 394-6, 405.

²⁵ Feller, 416-8.

²⁶ Herlihy, "Leconomia."

975 and 1025 – although it must be stressed that Racine had only a handful of documents at his disposal – and that this increase continued throughout the 11th century, particularly in the immediate environs of the city. Racine acknowledged that the deterioration of the silver coinage used in Piacenza during this period was an issue worth considering, but, like Violante, he downplayed its significance. The currency had lost half of its value (–50%), whereas prices had increased tenfold; the main reason for inflation, in his view, was aggregate demand, which outstripped supply.²⁷ Jarnut studied land prices in the Bergamo countryside from the mid-10th century to the year 1100, drawing on roughly 100 documents.²⁸ He identified a small increase in nominal prices beginning at the end of the 10th century, a surge in the second quarter of the 11th, and then of stagflation from around 1050 onwards. The upward trend was especially pronounced in the immediate proximity of the city and within the city itself. Jarnut attributed this to the limited availability of cultivable land, although I would add urban demand – and thus proximity to the city market – to the range of explanatory factors. In Jarnut's view, changes in the intrinsic value of coins were less important than the broader socio-economic context of the period (on which point he cited Violante).²⁹ Finally, it is worth mentioning briefly Étienne Hubert's book on the city of Rome from the 10th century to the end of the 13th.³⁰ His work differs from the studies summarised so far, since he examined only the urban property market and building land, not the countryside. Moreover, he did not translate his data – based on about 500 documents for the entire period – into a proper series. Nevertheless, his findings are relevant here, as they further complicate the picture sketched so far. According to Hubert, prices were high in the early 11th century; they declined from 1050 to 1130, then rose continuously until the 14th century. He interpreted these shifts as direct reflections of fluctuations in the intensity of the urbanisation process – a process that, indeed, came to a halt in the second half of the 11th century.³¹

We need to ask whether, and to what extent, these accounts are comparable. The numbers of available documents fall broadly within the same order of magnitude, although it should be kept in mind that for the Abruzzi they are about three times more numerous than for Milan, Bergamo and Catalonia, and that for Lucca, Piacenza and Rome the evidence for the period in question is quite meagre. Even so, the data available for all these regions point to an increase in nominal prices during the second half of the 10th century and to some slowdown in the first quarter of the 11th – with the exceptions of

²⁷ Racine, *Plaisance*, vol. 1, 93-7.

²⁸ Jarnut, *Bergamo*.

²⁹ Jarnut, 256-9.

³⁰ Hubert, *Espace*.

³¹ Hubert, 333, 349-51. I set aside Bois, *La mutation*, 80-3, who gathered only a few – indeed, too few – prices for vineyards in the area of the Burgundian village of Lournand; but it is worth noting that he too observed a sudden price surge from the 970s onwards.

Lucca, Piacenza and, possibly, of the high urban prices identified by Hubert for Rome. The similarities, however, can hardly be pushed any further: the end points of the six regional analyses differ (Violante and Bonnassie stop at 1050, Feller at 1075, Jarnut at 1100, Herlihy, Racine and Hubert extend into the central and late Middle Ages), and so do the trends observed after 1050. Bonnassie suggested a sudden surge; Feller described a continuing downward trend; Jarnut and Hubert identified the *beginning* of a decline, whereas Herlihy and Racine observed an upward movement throughout the entire 11th century. More importantly, the interpretations diverge markedly. Feller attributed deflation to the seigneurial mutation; Bonnassie focused on hoardings and the problem of metal supply; Hubert emphasised the intensity of urbanisation; Violante and Jarnut did not offer specific hypotheses for the price slowdown; Herlihy explained continued inflation by pointing to both the restructuring of Church estates and the debasement of the coinage, while Racine stressed the expansion of demand.

If we regard inflation as a consequence of the growth of aggregate demand, we must conclude that such growth was fairly uniform between 960 and 1000, became less intense around the turn of the century, and then varied significantly from region to region. These variations probably depended on contingent factors; still, the causes of the partial setback between 1000 and 1025, and of the diverging economic trends from around 1050 onwards, remain rather unclear. In addition – and this is the main contention of this paper – greater consideration should be given to the effects of monetary variations on prices, and to debasement in particular. We are now slightly better informed about its pace than we used to be when the land-price analyses discussed above were produced. All the coinages of northern and central Italy experienced some instability in weight and fineness precisely during the period in which inflation occurred, albeit to different degrees – and even though one cannot speak, at present, of a consistent debasement. This was the case with the imperial *denarii* of Pavia under Otto III (983–1002) and possibly already under Otto II (973–83), which also circulated in the southern part of the Kingdom and remained fairly stable throughout the 11th century; and, more markedly, with the *denarii* of Milan, Venice and Verona from the end of the 10th century onwards.³² Concerns over the standard of gold dinars, and signs of a crisis of confidence in the currency, are documented in Catalonia during the 980s and were accompanied by reforms aimed at controlling, at least, the weight and fineness of silver coins through the issuing of better-quality specie.³³

³² Rovelli, “Il denaro,” 81–3; Day, Matzke, and Saccocci, *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 12, 42, 52; for some nuances, see Rovelli, “*De pondere*.”

³³ Jarrett, “Currency,” 235. For the decline in value of gold mancuses in the county of Barcelona over the 11th century, see also Crusafont, Balaguer, and Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 6, 79–80.

Interestingly, debasement occurred, broadly speaking, at a moment when silver mining appears to have intensified. For the Kingdom of Italy – whose monetary system was monometallic and based on silver – it is difficult to attribute debasement to a shortage of precious metals.³⁴ A further hypothesis can be set out. Recent research on the royal domain in northern and central Italy during the Ottonian period has shown substantial investment in fiscal estates, which served as centres for the production of niche goods and, possibly, some bulk goods that were later transported to – and perhaps marketed in – distant locations.³⁵ One may therefore suggest that the expansion of state demand was at least one of the reasons for the rise in nominal prices. This rise may in turn have been reinforced by growing distrust in the lower-quality coinage that began to be issued, and which may have been employed to facilitate long-distance exchange networks and to remunerate royal officials and soldiers in cash for their service.³⁶ Clearly, much work remains to be done: new coin series need to be analysed in order to flesh out the chronology and pace of debasements and recoinages, thereby allowing these monetary changes to be compared more precisely with inflationary trends. Tentatively, however, I would suggest that both demand-driven inflation (public demand, in this case) and distrust-driven inflation may have contributed to sustaining, and perhaps even initiating, the inflationary movements observed so far. I will discuss this issue further with regard to the late 12th century.

3. *Land prices (late 12th century)*

I would like to continue questioning Cammarosano's claim that state-driven debasement occurred only after 1300 by turning to the second half of the 12th century, generally regarded as one of sustained economic growth in northern and central Italy.³⁷ I shall focus primarily on Tuscany, for which we possess a considerable body of excellent research on both monetary dynamics and land prices (indeed, it is the only region to have been extensively studied in both respects). I shall then briefly turn to Piacenza.

Money first. The studies of the Lucchese and Pisan coins dating to 1150 onwards, based on both numismatic and written evidence, have shown a decrease in the silver content of these two coinages over the decades leading up to 1200.³⁸ This is all the more significant when one considers that the overall silver supply in western Europe expanded again in the 1160s, thanks to the

³⁴ Spufford, *Money*, ch. 4.

³⁵ Bianchi, "Rural Public Properties;" Bianchi, *Archeologia*.

³⁶ These forms of remuneration (which must not be confused with regular salaries) were indeed part of Carolingian warfare, as noted by Nelson, "The Church's Military Service."

³⁷ From 1150 onwards, northern Italian cities began to catch up with the most developed regions of the Mediterranean world: Wickham, *The Donkey*, ch. 6.

³⁸ The best synthesis is Day, "The Early Development," 174–6, 520–32.

discovery of new mines in the territories of modern Germany and Hungary.³⁹ Even if the use and the long-distance spread of this new silver have not been properly investigated yet, it seems difficult to explain debasement by invoking a shortage of precious metals; and it seems equally excessive to attribute debasement, exclusively or even mainly, to coin-clipping. I would turn, instead, to a political-economic explanation. Some urban governments in northern and central Italy were beginning to implement the earliest forms of temporary public deficit, and the state of large-scale warfare during Frederick Barbarossa's military campaigns (1154-83) is likely to have made the recruitment of mercenaries and the maintenance of armies a matter of public interest (if not of public expenditure). It is therefore conceivable that city authorities sought to make these outflows more manageable not only by levying taxes, but also by issuing progressively lighter and lower-quality coinage, whose nominal value nevertheless remained unchanged.⁴⁰

This context affected nominal prices, and therefore rents (and arguably salaries, although we know nothing about them). I can be briefer here than in the previous section, as the explanations offered in the studies summarised below are quite similar – at times, in fact, they coincide. I begin with two well-known documents from the archives of the cathedral chapter of Lucca. The first, dating to 1191, records that the canons promised not to increase their exactions on the people of the castle of Massarosa, which was under their lordship, “in view of the debasement (*deterioratione*) of the Lucchese coin.” The second, issued in 1195, demands a payment in the coinage struck thirty years earlier, which was considered to be worth twice as much as the currency then in circulation.⁴¹ Arnold Esch, in his *Habilitationsschrift* on the city of Lucca and its environs during the 12th century (building on Herlihy's analysis) showed that land prices rose by approximately 300% from 1165 to 1195 – particularly in the areas closest to the city – compared to the first half of the century. He attributed roughly half of this increase to heightened aggregate demand and the other half to the lower quality of the currency – that is, to debasement.⁴² Going south from Lucca, Monica Baldassarri has calculated that land prices in the Pisan Valdarno increased seven- to eightfold from around 1150 to the beginning of the 13th century. Not unlike Esch, Baldassarri argued that this growth depended both on debasement and on the investment in landed estates by Pisan citizens – that is, on the expansion of private demand, which seems to be demonstrated by the unusually high number of transactions involving relatively small landed properties throughout the

³⁹ The classic reference is Spufford, *Money*, ch. 5.

⁴⁰ See Matzke, “Vom Ottolinus,” 169-79; for Lucca and Florence, Tabarrini, *Estate*, 60 and *passim*. One must be cautious, however, and avoid projecting the characteristics of 14th-century public expenditure onto earlier periods, as acutely noted by Ginatempo, “Esisteva.”

⁴¹ The documents are summarised in Guidi, e Parenti, *Regesto del capitolo di Lucca*, vol. 3, 98-100, no. 1642 (1191 August 23) and 181-4, no. 1728 (1195 January 21). See Day, “The Early Development,” 523-4.

⁴² Esch, “Lucca,” ch. 1.

second half of the 12th century.⁴³ Further inland, the Florence area has been studied by Enrico Faini, who showed that land prices rose by 330% in the hinterland of the city and by 262% in the open countryside between 1176 and 1200 compared to the previous twenty-five years. In his view, this growth was caused by the increase in the overall monetary supply, the progressively lower quality of the coinage, and the intensification of commercial exchanges – all of these phenomena being closely interconnected.⁴⁴ Finally, Jean-Pierre Delumeau identified an increase in land prices across the countryside of Arezzo from the 1170s onwards, even though he did not construct a series and did not link debasement to inflation.⁴⁵ If we add to these accounts Cammarosano's above-mentioned research on the northern outskirts of Siena,⁴⁶ we may conclude that, from the standpoint of land-price fluctuations, much of Tuscany had become a fairly integrated economic area by around 1200. The inflationary trend followed an approximately similar curve in each of the cities considered, occurring at much the same time as the weight and fineness of Lucchese and Pisan money declined.

It is beyond doubt that the main reasons for this process lie in the expansion of both public demand (deficit and taxes) and private demand (purchases and investments). But the public reaction to the deteriorated state of the coinage should also be considered – and, in fact, it has been taken into account more consistently here than in the analyses of the turn of the 11th century summarised above. Moreover, the history of price changes and debasement over the 12th century may help shed light on the monetary policies adopted by urban governments around 1200. One may propose that the issuing of large-size, full-weight silver coins in the first decades of the 13th century by Tuscan mints – the *grossi*, whose earliest northern Italian examples come from Genoa and Venice⁴⁷ – played a role comparable to that of the royal recoinage in England. The prolonged circulation of excessively underweight coins may have created difficulties in monetary transactions and may well have produced pronounced inflationary effects in the long run, making it necessary to introduce a mitigating measure (specifically, issuing better-quality specie intended to restore trust in the currency).⁴⁸

Outside Tuscany, the only study on northern and central Italy that considers the evolution of land prices during the late 12th and early 13th centuries is the aforementioned book by Pierre Racine on Piacenza and its countryside. Racine showed that between 1190 and 1240 land prices – as well as the prices of certain staple and industrial commodities – doubled in comparison with the previous fifty years. This upward movement, however, which appears to

⁴³ Baldassarri, "La monetazione," Appendix 6; see also Tognetti, "Produzioni," 128.

⁴⁴ Faini, *Firenze*, 111–6.

⁴⁵ Delumeau, *Arezzo*, vol. 2, 865–9 on prices and 869–80 on currency.

⁴⁶ See above, n. 13.

⁴⁷ Day, Matzke, and Saccocci, *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 12, 259–68, 557–8, 637–40.

⁴⁸ On Tuscan *grossi*, see Day, "The Early Development," 528–9; Blomquist, "Alle origini."

have been less intense than around Florence and Lucca, was regarded by the author as partly deceptive, for in the first decades after 1200 the silver *denarius* minted in Piacenza was heavily debased.⁴⁹ Racine concluded that

in order to foster a constantly expanding market, the city authorities were pushed to produce petty money by adding a growing quantity of copper to silver. In a sense, inflation led to inflation, and this was part of a never-ending spiral which brought about the increase of prices.⁵⁰

Here, the intertwined relationship between demand-driven and distrust-driven inflation is fully acknowledged, even if the author could not specify the relative weight of the two. One may hope that future studies will adopt this analytical framework and flesh it out further, in order to better clarify the chronology and pace of demand and debasement, and their respective influence on prices. It is equally desirable to renew research into the history of land prices across northern and central Italy during the central Middle Ages, which – Tuscany aside – still requires more systematic investigation and tighter comparative analysis. Finally, fluctuations in land prices can serve as a benchmark for assessing the degree of market integration across different regions, something that has likewise been undertaken only rarely for the decades between roughly 1000 and 1250. The Tuscan data suggest a higher degree of interconnectedness among local economies around 1200; whether this applies to the rest of northern and central Italy remains a question worth exploring.

4. Conclusion: a note on exchange rates (12th century)

In conclusion, it is worth saying a few words about the problem of exchange rates, which may be regarded as a specific area of study within the broader history of prices; after all, exchange rates establish the market value of one coin (i.e., its price) in relation to the market values of other coins. Medieval exchange rates from 1250 onwards were the subject of a monumental study by Peter Spufford (1986).⁵¹ The fact that Spufford began his analysis in 1250 was no accident. With the introduction in 1252 of the Florentine gold coin (*fiorino d'oro*), whose weight and outward appearance remained largely

⁴⁹ Racine, *Plaisance*, vol. 2, 438–63. I set aside the article on food and clothing prices in Venice and Pisa by Buenger Robbert, “Twelfth-Century Italian Prices,” as it does not discuss land; however, the author does emphasise the considerable fluctuation of prices during the period she examined (food and clothing are indeed subject to more frequent variations than landed estates). It is also worth mentioning the appendix on the few prices of Roman *casali* from the final years of the 12th century to the first three decades of the 13th century – which, however, do not reveal any recognisable trends: see Carocci, e Vendittelli, *L'origine*, 187–92.

⁵⁰ Racine, 492 (translation mine).

⁵¹ Spufford, *Handbook*.

unchanged until the 15th century, the whole of Latin Europe acquired a stable standard of reference against which other circulating currencies could be measured. Variations in foreign rates were sometimes recorded on a daily basis.⁵²

Any analysis focused on earlier periods must rely on a far more meagre evidence base. For northern and central Italy, the only comprehensive study of exchange rates during the 12th century is Alfred Haverkamp's work of 1970-1.⁵³ It is noteworthy that Haverkamp compared the variations in the rates among coins minted in Italian cities solely on the basis of their weight. Although weight is indeed an essential component of the intrinsic value of a specie, one may observe that fineness, too, should be taken into account. Moreover, attempts to impose legal tender status on a particular coinage must likewise be considered.

Haverkamp himself showed an awareness of this problem when discussing the commune of Genoa in the mid-12th century. He focused on a document dating from 1146, which records that the inhabitants of *Gamundio* (modern Castellazzo, south of Alessandria) concluded a military treaty with Genoa and agreed to several provisions concerning monetary matters. In particular, the *Gamundienses* accepted the Genoese *denarius* as the "head of all coins" (*capud omnium monetarum*); other currencies were not admitted, "if not at the exchange rate of the above-mentioned coin". One hundred men from *Gamundio* swore to abide by the Genoese currency "whatever currency the Genoese chose" (*quacumque Ianuenses habeant*).⁵⁴ According to Haverkamp, this meant that while foreign coins were to be exchanged in *Gamundio* – and probably throughout the Genoese territory – on the basis of their weight, the Genoese *denarius* would retain its value regardless of its material characteristics. This would amount to a specific form of legal tender. Haverkamp may have over-interpreted the admittedly laconic Latin text, but nonetheless highlighted a problem that remains far from resolved today.

At present, it remains unclear whether exchange rates were determined – exclusively or primarily – by the intrinsic value of a currency, or by the capacity of rulers to impose legal tender, as the following example shows. Andrea Saccocci, in his study of the coinage produced by the mints of Ravenna, Rimini and Ancona towards the end of the 12th century, argued that the rate of exchange between them and the Lucchese coins (which served as a standard of reference) was 1:1 – even though the latter were probably superior in both weight and fineness. In his view, this is demonstrated by the simultaneous presence of these coins in hoards: their outward appearance was almost identical, whereas their silver content could vary by as much as 20%. Moreover, contemporary notarial deeds allowed payments to be made indiscriminately

⁵² Spufford; on the political context, see Sbarbaro, "Circolazione," and most recently Locatelli, *The Florentine Florin*.

⁵³ Haverkamp, *Herrschaftsformen*, vol. 2, chart no. 3.

⁵⁴ Rovere, *I Libri Iurium*, doc. 46, 152-4.

in the money of Lucca, Ravenna or Ancona, which makes it difficult to believe that their nominal value differed; otherwise, they could not have functioned easily as means of payment, except through the mediation of money-changers.⁵⁵ Saccocci's view was explicitly challenged by another major specialist in medieval monetary history, William Day, who doubted that coins with such significantly different material characteristics could have possessed the same purchasing power. Day underlined that the Lucchese *denarius* lost half its value during the last quarter of the 12th century, whereas the *denarius* of Ancona remained fairly stable.⁵⁶

To my knowledge, there is no prevailing view on this problem; indeed, it may well be that different regions followed different rules. In north-eastern Italy, the exchange rates between Veronese and Venetian *denarii* appear to have depended, at least to some extent, on changes in weight and fineness towards the end of the 12th century. In 1170, the Venetian *denarius* was worth half the Veronese one. After the reform carried out under Doge Sebastiano Ziani (1172-8), parity was established until 1185. In that year, Verona introduced a slightly debased *denarius* bearing a cross on both sides (hence the name *crociato*). Later, during the dogeship of Enrico Dandolo (1192-1205), the silver *grosso* (see section 3 for a definition) was struck. Owing to its weight and purity, the *grosso* became a solid standard of reference: Venice probably needed a strong currency to support the stability of its Mediterranean commercial networks, whereas Verona seems to have preferred a debased coinage for its inland exports of cloth, leather and timber.⁵⁷ This, however, lies outside the central concerns of this paper. What I wish to stress is that the intrinsic value of the coins appears to have played a role in the formation of foreign exchange rates.

At any rate, just as I have advocated closer attention to the issue of debasement – and therefore, primarily, to archaeological data – in the study of price fluctuations, especially for the late 10th and early 11th centuries, it seems clear that the history of exchange rates would benefit from further research into the political and economic relations among the polities that issued currency. The material characteristics of the coins constitute only one part of the analytical framework that requires examination. Through closer collaboration between historians and archaeologists, Haverkamp's chart of exchange rates in northern and central Italy during the 12th century could be completed and refined. The same applies, I believe, to the broader problems of debasement and inflation throughout the central medieval period – or so I hope this paper has suggested.

⁵⁵ Saccocci, "Relazioni."

⁵⁶ Day, "Prima."

⁵⁷ Day, Matzke, and Saccocci, *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 12, 556-9 and 637-40; Rippe, *Padoue*, 704-7; on commercial networks, see Wickham, *The Donkey*, 502-34.

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Lorenzo Tabarrini
 Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna
 lorenzo.tabarrini3@unibo.it
 ORCID: 0000-0003-0331-0971

The dissolution of fiscal assets as a factor in structural economic change between the 11th and 12th centuries

by Simone M. Collavini

Recent studies have demonstrated the fundamental importance of fiscal assets in the functioning of Tuscan society from the mature Lombard period to the end of the 11th century. The wide distribution of these assets, their purposes – to supply the court and reward those loyal to it – and their modes of management – which are marked by the precariousness of concessions and the rapid circulation of property – had a profound impact on the regional economy. Drawing on archaeological evidence, recent studies have highlighted the role of fiscal *curtes* as centres of specialised production. Yet an even more significant function of theirs would appear to have been the rationalisation and coordination of existing production, as well as their role as hubs through which consumer goods and products were channelled towards the region's political centres – above all Lucca, with its palace and marquisal court. This movement of goods and the subsequent circulation of surpluses did not take commercial forms; it was governed instead by extra-economic mechanisms of control (as exercised by the royal fisc) and redistribution (in the form of gifts). Even at the local level, production in the fiscal *curtes* and in the 'private sector' showed little sign of integration. The collapse of the fiscal system at the turn of the 12th century brought about a fundamental transformation for several reasons. On the one hand, it ensured greater stability for the assets of churches and aristocrats, encouraging them to expand their investments – as is evident in the spread of fortifications and the growth of local lordship. On the other hand, it ended – at both the local and regional levels – the artificial division between the fiscal production circuit and the private economies. Finally, it compelled aristocrats and churches to seek on the market those products they had once received as gifts; among other consequences, this led to increasing pressure on the peasants to provide the resources which were by then indispensable for accessing the market. In this way, the structural change that marked

Simone M. Collavini, University of Pisa, Italy, simone.maria.collavini@unipi.it, 0000-0003-2819-0144

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the end of the fiscal system contributed directly to the expansion of the Tuscan economy, which became particularly visible from the second half of the 12th century onwards.

Studi recenti hanno dimostrato l'importanza fondamentale dei beni fiscali nel funzionamento della società toscana dalla piena età longobarda fino alla fine del secolo XI. L'ampia diffusione di tali beni, le loro finalità – il rifornimento della corte e la ricompensa dei soggetti a essa fedeli – e le modalità della loro gestione – caratterizzate dalla precarietà delle concessioni e dalla rapida circolazione della proprietà – esercitarono un'influenza profonda sull'economia regionale. Sulla base delle evidenze archeologiche, la storiografia più recente ha messo in luce il ruolo delle *curtes* fiscali come centri di produzione specializzata. Una funzione ancora più rilevante sembra tuttavia essere stata quella di razionalizzare e coordinare la produzione esistente, nonché di fungere da nodi attraverso i quali beni di consumo e prodotti venivano convogliati verso i centri politici della regione, primo fra tutti Lucca, con il suo palazzo e la corte marchionale. Questa circolazione delle merci e il successivo movimento dei surplus non assunsero forme commerciali, ma furono piuttosto regolati da meccanismi extra-economici di controllo – esercitati dal fisco regio – e di redistribuzione, sotto forma di doni. Anche a livello locale, la produzione delle *curtes* fiscali e quella del cosiddetto 'settore privato' mostrano scarsi segni di integrazione. Il collasso del sistema fiscale a cavallo del secolo XII determinò una trasformazione strutturale per più ragioni. Da un lato, esso garantì una maggiore stabilità nel controllo dei beni da parte delle chiese e delle aristocrazie, incoraggiandole ad ampliare i propri investimenti, come risulta evidente dalla diffusione dei castelli e dal rafforzamento delle signorie locali. Dall'altro, pose fine – tanto a livello locale quanto regionale – alla divisione artificiale tra il circuito produttivo fiscale e le economie private. Infine, costrinse aristocratici e istituzioni ecclesiastiche a reperire sul mercato quei prodotti che in precedenza avevano ricevuto sotto forma di doni; tra le altre conseguenze, ciò comportò una crescente pressione sui contadini, chiamati a fornire le risorse ormai indispensabili per l'accesso al mercato. In questo modo, il mutamento strutturale che segnò la fine del sistema fiscale contribuì direttamente alla crescita dell'economia toscana, divenuta particolarmente visibile a partire dalla seconda metà del secolo XII.

Middle Ages, 11th-12th centuries, Tuscany, fiscal assets, economic expansion.

Medioevo, secoli XI-XII, Toscana, beni fiscali, fisco regio, crescita economica.

1. Introduction

In the context of a multifaceted study of the structural transformations that marked the transition from the Early to the High Middle Ages, such as the one conducted in this volume, it is undoubtedly useful to reflect on the effects that the dismantling of the system for managing, circulating, and exploiting fiscal assets had on the society and economy of the Kingdom of Italy, and in particular of Tuscany. This topic also deserves attention due to the growing focus that fiscal assets (in their various forms) have received in recent historiography, especially in Italy.¹ On the other hand, in recent years,

ChLA² = Cavallo Guglielmo, e Giovanna Nicolaj, edited by. *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters prior to the Ninth Century*, 2nd Series: Ninth Century. Dietikon-Zürich: Urs Graf Verlag, 1954-2019.

¹ Bougard, et Loré, *Biens publics*, on which see Marazzi, "Beni pubblici," and the PRIN 2017 project *Fiscal Estate in Medieval Italy: Continuity and Change (9th-12th centuries)*, PI M. Vallearani, whose initial results have been published in two monographic volumes: Lazzari, e Tabarini, "Beni del fisco regio ed economia" and "Dalla *Res privata* ai patrimoni pubblici altomed-

partly in response to Chris Wickham's book *The Donkey and the Boat*, the debate on the timing of economic growth in the High Middle Ages has regained momentum in Italian historiography – an issue of central importance to the theme of our conference.²

This essay, which was conceived and written before the publication of that volume, does not aim to provide an account of this complex and ongoing debate, but rather to offer a further reflection on the economic transformations that took place between the 11th and 12th centuries. This analysis will therefore focus on describing some structural characteristics of the large fiscal properties that played a key role in Tuscan society from the late Lombard period to the 11th century. The rapid disintegration of the power of the king and marquises at the end of the 11th century not only transformed the region's political and social structure, with the emergence of seigneurial and communal powers, but also brought an end to an economic structure – the 'fiscal system' – that had long been central to the Tuscan economy. Outlining the characteristics of this system can help us understand, by contrast, the new economic structure that emerged at the end of the 11th century and allow us to question the effects of this structural change on the regional economy by asking whether the collapse of the 'fiscal system' may have contributed to the growth of the regional economy – and how.

The flourishing of studies on fiscal assets is in full swing, making it difficult to summarise the results. The decision to focus specifically on the economic aspect further complicates the task of providing a synthesis. I will therefore centre my subsequent reflections on Tuscany, the region I know best and one that benefits from a rich and varied body of studies, thanks in part to the integration of written and material sources – although this remains an area of study that is far from stable.

2. *The fisc in Tuscany. Basic structural characteristics*

What are the main findings emerging from research on fiscal assets regarding the functioning of Tuscan society in the 8th-11th centuries? The solid land-ownership base of the region's public authorities (kings, dukes, marquises, and counts) has been known to historians for decades, but it has been more widely discussed than studied in terms of its content and consequences. Thanks to individual studies and more extensive censuses that are still in progress, we now know that fiscal assets in the region were very extensive,

evali." For the archaeological aspect, see in particular Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*, Cantini, "La gestione della produzione," and Cantini, "Alla corte di re e marchesi."

² *La crescita economica*, Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, and the numerous discussions in this volume – most notably including "Una discussione su 'Lasino e il battello' di Chris Wickham" and "About «The Donkey and the Boat» by Chris Wickham;" see also Del Tredici, "Castelli, chiese" as well as the recent update by Fiore, Poloni, *L'economia medievale*, 67-137.

and in some subregional (or local) areas, even dominant.³ This vast accumulation of assets circulated rapidly – not only outwards through diplomas and donations. Individual sources, such as the Marturi *proclamatio*, as well as an impressive series of specific – albeit fragmentary and occasional – findings show that individual fiscal units could be conferred on people of various ranks and later recovered, only to be granted again to others. There is still debate as to whether and in which cases the transfer of assets to ecclesiastical bodies through diplomas or acts of foundation and endowment marked an actual discontinuity. There are positive examples of the recovery of assets granted to churches by public authorities, however, at least for certain churches and at specific times.⁴

This process was favoured by the general rule (understood more as a shared principle rather than a legal norm) which held that the granting of fiscal assets to third parties could take place only through acts which were temporary and precarious by nature – except royal diplomas and perhaps the founding deeds of monasteries and rectories. It was therefore illegal to negotiate assets through the documents that normally served as *munimina* and which constitute the core of the archival records through which we study early medieval Tuscany. To use the words of a key text for understanding this phenomenon, it was not possible to *donare*, *venundare*, or *libellare* fiscal assets.⁵ Many transfers of ownership must have occurred through oral dispositions (which were then possibly recorded on parchment in *memorie*, lists, and *brevia*) or through acts of disposition (letters and mandates). This resulted, among other things, in these assets having very low visibility due both to the limited production of written texts concerning them, and above all, their limited probative value (which differentiated them from *munimina*), leading to their poor preservation and transmission given that they were seen as ‘useless’.

Some positive examples and a series of indirect clues also demonstrate the immune and exempt nature of fiscal *curtes*, particularly when they were, as was often the case, compact complexes. When directly under the control of the king and/or marquis, they were administered by officials autonomous from the normal official hierarchy. On an ecclesiastical level, they were ex-

³ Schneider, *Die Reichsverwaltung* is the traditional reference point on the subject. A fundamental turning point was Vignodelli's study, “Berta e Adelaide,” which is to be integrated with Collavini, Tomei, “Fra le città.” The database Tabarrini, et al., *Fiscus. Fiscal Estate in Medieval Italy* now offers an overview, albeit still partial.

⁴ The ‘Marturi *proclamatio*’ is published in Cambi Schmitter, *Carte della Badia di Marturi*, doc. 11; for a detailed discussion see Collavini, “Un'esegesi.” For the further description of fisc in Tuscany, I will refer to the following studies: Collavini, Tomei, “Beni fiscali e scritturazione,” Bianchi, Collavini, “Beni fiscali e strategie economiche nell'altomedioevo toscano,” Tomei, “The Power of the Gift,” Bianchi, Cantini, Collavini, “Beni pubblici di ambito toscano,” Tomei, “Una nuova categoria documentaria,” Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, Collavini, “Empoli,” Tomei, “Il sale e la seta,” Collavini, “L'origine,” Collavini, “Mutazione signorile’ e trasformazioni economiche,” Collavini, “La formazione,” Collavini, “Un'esegesi.”

⁵ See Cambi Schmitter, *Carte della Badia di Marturi*, doc. 11 and Collavini, “Un'esegesi.”

empt from paying tithes to the parish according to Carolingian legislation, with these tithes instead diverted to fiscal chapels (which were often later transformed into parishes when the fiscal complexes were privatised). The immune and exempt nature of fiscal assets was a decisive factor in activating the mechanisms of patronage that seem to have contributed powerfully to the growth of the larger fiscal complexes, through donations or other forms of transfers to the fisc by neighbouring actors.

Not all fiscal assets circulated in the same forms or at the same speed. Specifically, those assets that had been granted by political leaders to third parties in one circumstance or another were the first to be redistributed in the event of recovery. By contrast, some fiscal units may not have circulated at all and may have remained in the direct possession of the public authority until the collapse of the system. In short, amid the fundamental obscurity that fiscal assets represent in the landscape of our sources, there are even darker areas (almost like the centre of black holes) corresponding to the most significant and 'central' fiscal assets. We often know them only as places of rogation, primarily for royal diplomas or acts of senior officials, through exceptional individual documentary evidence, or even only from their sudden appearance in 12th-century documentation in the context of disputes between various claimants to the inheritance of the *publicum*. Where fiscal assets formed large, compact nuclei (and where sources allow for more solid arguments), it was typically the more peripheral parts of the patrimonial complex that circulated, while the more central parts remained static. As a rule, however, it is impossible to fully grasp the extent of fiscal presence, even in the most central areas, and it is imprudent to proceed *ex silentio*, especially when the information we have is fragmentary.

The different pace of the circulation of public goods is an important factor to consider, both in understanding how the system functioned as well as its impact on the economy. Indeed, it must have had a significant influence on management methods and investments: 'immovable' assets likely attracted greater investment from sovereigns and required more stable management practices; the others, although they could attract investment from beneficiaries, were still precariously-controlled assets, and the continuous (and sometimes rapid) change of ownership (which sometimes involved integration with assets held in other capacities, as in the case of the *livelli* granted by the bishop in Lucca) likely necessitated frequent reorganisations of management and forms of production. It is also possible that the continuity of managers (*gastaldi* and *actores*), which is well attested at the local level, helped mitigate discontinuities in value creation, despite changes in ownership. Pending further studies, however, we remain in the realm of pure speculation in this area.⁶

⁶ Tomei emphasises the attraction of fiscal assets to investments by beneficiaries (*Milites elegantes*, 82-4, 416-29). Frequent reorganisations of business complexes, sometimes in connection with the spin-off of part of the assets, are clearly attested: Collavini, "La formazione," Collavini, "Empoli," Collavini, "Un'esegesi." In the latter case, the most significant example, the

What is certain is that the rapid and continuous circulation of fiscal assets, a sort of gaseous rather than solid body, concerned not only the upper echelons – through the concessions of kings and marquises to counts, viscounts, gastalds, and major aristocrats – but also affected large sectors of society, including the middle and lower aristocracy, and probably even local notables. These dynamics cannot be fully unravelled even in the most fortunate cases, but can only be glimpsed.

What has been explained so far makes it difficult to answer unavoidable questions such as: ‘How vast were the fiscal assets?’ or ‘What were the revenues of Otto I or Adalbert II of Tuscany?’ It also complicates the use of individual documents that ‘capture’ more or less broad sectors of fiscal assets at a given moment and in a specific political context as indicators of long-term holdings or even as measures of the ‘wealth’ of particular entities or families.

Two other aspects should also be highlighted, both of which are equally decisive in challenging the paradigm of ‘seigneurial development’ that has thus far structured our understanding of the transition from the Early to the High Middle Ages in Tuscany on the political, social, and economic levels.⁷ The rapid circulation of fiscal assets continued to play a central role in the regional political system at least until the first half of the 11th century and remained strongly controlled (if not directed) by political leaders, including kings and marquises. It also remained decidedly oriented towards the cities as the places where those assets were negotiated – and therefore, the aristocrats’ residences. In particular, Lucca and its court were key locations for this process of continuous, negotiated distribution of both material and immaterial resources. This process continued to include – alongside land assets – movable assets, offices, and immaterial resources.⁸

In order to operate in this context, relational skills and networks of alliances were fundamental – more so than military strength and a solid allodial patrimonial base. This helps explain the enduring importance of family structures, that tended to be extensive, preferably in a horizontal sense; the role of women in the transmission of patrimony; and the integration of external and occasional elements into family groups. Lineage, estates localisation, military strength, local clientele, investment in castles, and the development of seigneurial powers – though all widely available options for aristocrats since the late 10th century – were not the paths that guaranteed the greatest success for individuals and families. These routes were therefore mostly taken by the ‘losers’ in the court game. What mattered most in political competition was

transfer of ownership of the *curtis* – and even its division into halves between the fisc and the monastery – did not affect the role of the gastald Bonizo, who remained in charge of managing the *curtis*. This continuity in the official responsible for management may have been matched by continuity in management practices.

⁷ Violante, “La signoria rurale;” Wickham, “La signoria rurale in Toscana.” See also Collavini, “I signori rurali in Italia centrale” and Cortese, *L’aristocrazia toscana*.

⁸ Cortese, *Signori, castelli, città* (on urban dwellings) and Cortese, *L’aristocrazia toscana*; for Lucca, see Tomei, *Milites elegantes*.

a broad network of friends and relatives who could exert pressure on peers and higher authorities, as well as reliable and skilled patrons who could plead their clients' cases, thanks to direct and effective access to those who redistributed wealth, whether it was the king, the marquis, an abbot, a count, or a wealthy aristocrat.

In such a context, alliances and bonds of solidarity were fluid and highly volatile. Even family ties – though they clearly represented a fundamental resource – had limited strength in the absence of well-defined family assets or shared interests. We find as many traces of solidarity as of intra-family tension. These tensions were qualitatively different from those later triggered within agnatic lineages by the division of inheritances, however. In short, what prevailed were individual careers and short-term success rather than the long-term consolidation of family power. In this sense, family ties were not much more significant than those forged through *amicitia* or *fidelitas* with individuals outside the family nucleus.

Finally, one last element of complexity in the system must be considered: not only did fiscal assets circulate rapidly and often benefit different individuals, but offices also remained unstable and negotiable for a long time, being more often personal than family possessions. We also have numerous examples – especially among the best-studied families and contexts – showing that, for many 'comital families', offices and the endowment of fiscal assets were only weakly connected, if not entirely independent. It has often been taken for granted that a count's (or viscount's) endowment of assets was primarily located in the territory he was appointed to govern, and that assets outside that territory, when attested as being in his or his family's possession, were allodial or otherwise unrelated to the office. When, in the second half of the 11th century, some families developed their first lordships precisely from these 'marginal' or 'extra-comital' assets, this was often interpreted as the 'application (or generalisation) of comital powers' over allodial lands, or explained through the notion of the 'imitation' of comital powers.⁹

Several specific contexts that have recently been investigated, along with a fresh reassessment of already-known cases, nevertheless suggest that many of the endowments of the counts (and subsequently of those 'comital families' who were in some way their heirs) remained outside the areas they governed with greater or lesser continuity. The gradual stabilisation of control over these fiscal complexes (or at least parts of them), and/or a reaction to attempts to put them back into circulation, may have formed the basis for the seigneurial turn attested for these patrimonial complexes in the second half of the 11th century. To explore such developments, it would be useful to recover

⁹ See, in general, Violante, "La signoria rurale" and Provero, *L'Italia dei poteri locali*; I have offered a similar perspective in relation to the Aldobrandeschi counts in Collavini, *Honorabilis domus*, 109-74.

and reinterpret the category of *signoria immunitaria* as outlined by Cinzio Violante in his syntheses on lordship in the 1990s.¹⁰

3. *Fisc and economics*

While significant progress has been made in understanding how the ‘fiscal system’ functioned at the political and social levels – despite the persistence of many uncertainties – the same cannot be said of its economic dimension, notwithstanding the insights offered by historiography, the existence of several relevant case studies (particularly archaeological ones), and more recently, the attempt at synthesis presented in Giovanna Bianchi’s latest book.¹¹

The extent of the fiscal patrimony and the characteristics of its management described above undoubtedly had an impact on the economy. Moreover, several case studies (particularly archaeological excavations) and numerous indications – derived from written sources and the distribution of fiscal assets – seem to suggest that fiscal properties were generally wealthier, more complex, and exhibited a higher degree of productive specialisation than private ones, including those belonging to major churches that fell outside the fisc.¹²

This impression rests on a few clear examples and on clues that are meaningful only in relation to them, however. The still considerable limitations of the available evidence render any interpretative proposal provisional. Indeed, the discovery of a new, readily-investigable context – or the reinterpretation of an existing one – could lead to a substantial rethinking of a model that has so far been sketched only in broad terms. These considerations explain why, in the remainder of this essay, I will refer only to a few economic effects of the ‘fiscal system’, starting from two concrete case studies, and then I will seek to understand how the crisis of the system influenced the transformation of Tuscan economic structures during the transition from the Early to the High Middle Ages.

To pursue this aim, I will begin with an element which has been repeatedly highlighted by those who have discussed the characteristics of the ‘fiscal economic system’: the presence of advanced productive specialisations within certain fiscal complexes, both rural and urban. This is evident in Paolo Tomei’s study of silk production and its exploitation within the orbit of the marquisal court; in some of my own observations on the control of raw mate-

¹⁰ Collavini, “Mutazione signorile’ e trasformazioni economiche” for this interpretative hypothesis; on the notion of *signoria immunitaria*, Violante, “La signoria rurale,” 13-7 and Provero, *L'Italia dei poteri locali*, 79-84.

¹¹ Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*; see also, among other products of the nEU-Med project, at least *Origins of a new economic union*, *The nEU-Med project* and Bianchi, “Comunità costiere tra forme di potere e ambienti ‘ostili’ nella Toscana altomedievale.”

¹² See Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici* for the concept of ‘off-scale sites’; on the logic of fisc’s distribution, partly linked to the control of important strategic natural resources, see Collavini, “L’origine” and Tomei, “Il sale e la seta.”

rials – suggested by the location of certain fiscal *curtes* – and on specialised production, such as the manufacture of *arche* (stone chests) that appears to derive from them; as well as in public actors' interventions in the production of iron artefacts, which are recognisable in the urban *curtes* of Pisa and Lucca (as shown by Cantini) and even more clearly in the rural *curtis* of Vetricella (Bianchi). The latter case has recently been extended by Bianchi to other contexts and forms of production.¹³

The first point I would like to address concerns production specialisation and the interventions in production that can be identified within the fiscal *curtes*, with particular attention to their significance and limitations. If a clear leading role of the fisc in this sphere – extending also to the agricultural sector – could be established, it would mark a distinct break from the seigneurial phase of the Tuscan rural economy. Indeed, Sandro Carocci has repeatedly emphasised the limited capacity of lords to influence production, except indirectly – either by encouraging extraction or by stimulating specific forms of demand. This assessment, albeit with some nuances regarding the seigneurial management of natural resources, can also be extended to Tuscany.¹⁴

Addressing this issue through two specific examples also enables me to clarify more precisely those cautions which were previously expressed only in general terms. In short, until recently I would have answered in the affirmative if asked about the role of the fisc (and his administrators) in the field of production; now, however, I am more cautious.¹⁵ This reconsideration stems, first and foremost, from the same 'erratic boulder': the Vetricella excavation. The updated interpretation of the excavation data offered by Giovanna Bianchi in her recent synthesis leads me to a different reading from the one I had developed on the basis of the first available evidence. This new interpretation also appears to be supported by the other case I will discuss, which is based on written sources. With this cornerstone (the 'erratic boulder') no longer secure, the traces that once seemed to confirm a model can now also – though not exclusively – be read in a different way, and no longer seem to me to constitute sufficient evidence, at least for the time being.

¹³ Silk: Tomei, "Il sale e la seta" and Tomei, "The Power of the Gift," stone chest: Bianchi, e Collavini, "Beni fiscali e strategie economiche nell'altomedioevo toscano," 224-5; iron: Cortese, "Beni fiscali e attività minerario-metallurgiche;" see also Bianchi, Tomei, "Risorse e contesti insediativi nelle Colline Metallifere" for the alum. In general, see Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*.

¹⁴ E.g. Carocci, "The Pervasiveness of Lordship." For Tuscany, some nuances are appropriate only for the 13th century and the management of certain natural resources such as pastures and transhumance (see Collavini, *Honorabilis Domus*, 531-3, 537-54) or mineral resources (Pagnelli, "Montieri, l'argento"). In these sectors, the lords' control over production appears to have been more incisive.

¹⁵ As is evident from a comparison between Bianchi, e Collavini, "Beni fiscali e strategie economiche," 223-7, 230-1 and what follows.

4. Two case studies. Vetricella: the production of metal objects

I will attempt to summarise – while hoping not to make too many mistakes – what we currently know about the production of the metal objects discovered in the Vetricella excavation, setting aside their chronological development, which is not essential to my argument.¹⁶

First, an exceptionally large number of iron objects were found at Vetricella – objects which were absent from the nearest sites that have been investigated archaeologically, but were comparable to more distant sites that share with Vetricella (the centre or an annex of the *curtis* of Valli, which was included in Adelaide's dowry in 937) their belonging to the fisc.

The production of these objects was made possible by the arrival at Vetricella – an isolated tower overlooking the lagoon – of iron ore and semi-finished products brought from the Island of Elba, and probably from the Metalliferous Hills, to which may have been added discarded or damaged objects that were intended for remelting. Most of the metal artefacts were found in the area surrounding the tower, which was enclosed by two concentric ditches; only a few were discovered in more distant locations or in the agricultural settlements connected with Vetricella. However, the processes of metal purification, smelting of semi-finished products, and manufacture of the objects did not take place near the tower (the hypothetical *caput curtis* of Valli), in a building similar to the *gynaecaea* attested in the polyptychs. This is suggested by the absence of smelting slag and furnaces on the site and confirmed by the lack of any building in which prebendaries could have lived and worked.

As Giovanna Bianchi suggests, ironworking activities must have been carried out by the men residing in the *massaricium* (listed in the 937 dowry as comprising 30 *mansi*), who were probably *manentes* – to use the term found in Tuscan sources between the 9th and 10th centuries to denote those *massarii* employed by the fiscal *curtes*, but who resided outside their central nucleus.¹⁷ Archaeological evidence indicates that these men lived in more or less clustered settlements surrounding Vetricella, as revealed by surface surveys and the discovery of burials. The presence of iron slag at these sites supports this interpretation, even in the absence of stratigraphic excavations.

What, then, was Vetricella's function within this productive context? The large number of metal objects found at the site, in the absence of local production, suggests that Vetricella primarily served as a place for storing the finished products, which must have arrived there as rents paid by the *manentes* of those surrounding villages where production is attested. It is also possible that metal goods produced by *massari* and *livellari* (leaseholders) – who were not *manentes* and were therefore not included in the dowry because they were

¹⁶ Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*, 15-40, which summarises the data presented in *The nEU-Med project*. The reflections developed by Cortese, "Beni fiscali e attività minerario-metallurgiche" are likewise fundamental.

¹⁷ Tomei, "Sulle tracce dei *manentes* altomedievali."

located on the margins of the *curtis* of Valli – were brought there as well. This, of course, assumes that we can apply to this *curtis* what is known from the cases of the *curtis* of the nearby *Cornino* (for the *livellari*) and from S. Salvatore al Monte Amiata and the bishop of Lucca (for rents in metal objects).¹⁸

The tendency towards standardisation in production (knives, nails, and so on), accompanied by variations in the quality of the finished goods, reveals another one of Vettricella's functions within the production process, while at the same time highlighting its limitations. Production was subject to control – probably of a non-economic nature – which required that certain objects be produced and others not (for instance, swords or other weapons). This policy did not amount to control over the production process itself, however, which was managed at the individual or village level, where uniform standards could not be imposed. The absence of evidence for the local circulation of iron artefacts indicates that the authority based at Vettricella (probably a *gastald*) controlled the distribution of the products, over which the *manentes* had no power.

We can only speculate, I think, about the supply of metal. The presence of semi-finished products and scrap metal at Vettricella strongly supports the hypothesis that the metal was supplied to the blacksmiths by the public authorities. The same may be said of the raw materials from Elba – certainly a major fiscal district – and from the Metalliferous Hills, which were likewise dotted with fiscal assets. I nevertheless do not believe there is conclusive evidence to exclude other possible forms in which the blacksmiths were supplied with ferrous material (which would be difficult to imagine had they lived and worked in the *caput curtis*), such as the independent purchase of ore or, more plausibly, the recycling of metal objects.

In short, Vettricella coordinated and stimulated the production of iron objects by the populations of the surrounding villages, perhaps by relying on, reorganising, and strictly controlling those economic activities and skills that already existed in the area. In doing so, it encouraged and rationalised these activities and improved their efficiency, as suggested by Giovanna Bianchi's hypothesis of a production boom in the second half of the 10th and the early 11th centuries.

Rather than a production centre, Vettricella thus appears to have been a site whose economic character was defined by the organisation, control, and (non-commercial) movement of iron products.

¹⁸ The presence of *livellari* in the *curtis* of *Cornino* is indirectly attested by the place name *Livellaria* (Collavini, "S. Quirico di Populonia," 65); on rents in metal objects, see Cortese, "Beni fiscali e attività minerario-metallurgiche," 259-60.

5. Two case studies. Vetricella: the production of agricultural goods

As for the production of agricultural goods – which are attested primarily and indirectly by the numerous storage containers¹⁹ – we have no certainty that there was a large estate at Vetricella whose output was managed, controlled, and planned by the centre. As mentioned earlier, the archaeological evidence suggests the absence of *prebendari*, and the mere 30 *mansi* recorded in the dowry (although this represents only a snapshot) make the existence of a large cereal-producing estate unlikely. The *manentes*, moreover, must have been primarily engaged in metalworking and the transport of manufactured goods. It is therefore difficult to imagine that they could also have been subjected to the heavy agricultural corvées required to cultivate the estate in the absence of *prebendari*.²⁰

The storage of agricultural products at Vetricella can therefore also be interpreted as evidence of the activities of management, organisation, and the indirect promotion of planned production carried out by producers (in this case, farmers). Peasant production thus remained autonomous, except where it was subject to external, non-economic constraints – obligations and prohibitions – or to the choices of rent forms which were determined by large landowners, in this case the fisc.

According to Bianchi's estimates, Vetricella was thus used to store not only food for local consumption, but also the agricultural rents paid by the *massari*, *manentes*, and *livellari* employed by the *curtis*. Vetricella must nevertheless primarily have served as a site for the temporary storage of agricultural products from other fiscal *curtes* located along the *Teupascio* – the king's river – from Massa Vecchia downwards. It is likely that the surplus production of these *curtes* (about whose organisational structures we know nothing) was moved downstream for transport to the main centres of consumption, perhaps Lucca and Pisa. Vetricella's key role within this system can be explained by its easy access to the lagoon and to *Portus Scabris*, situated on the coastal shipping routes of the upper Tyrrhenian Sea. The use of ceramic containers, rather than silos or granaries, as a form of storage suggests the short-term preservation of agricultural products, with a view to their relatively rapid transfer outside the area.

This interpretation of the data from the Vetricella excavation suggests a possible alternative model to that of centralised production in fiscal workshops for other contexts in which our knowledge is more limited. It now seems plausible – though not certain – to me that the production of *arche*, which

¹⁹ Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*, 30-1.

²⁰ Other scenarios are nevertheless also possible, confirming the caution with which fragmentary and partial data must be interpreted. The 30 *mansi* mentioned in the dowry may have been those specifically associated with ironworking, while the remaining *manentes* (who were engaged in agriculture) could have been assigned to other beneficiaries at the time the dowry was established. This would point to a different model of the *curtis*' operation prior to the dowry.

gave its name to Fibbialla di Versilia at the end of the 9th century, took place in similar ways: namely, that the *curtis* served as the place where the *arche* produced by the *manentes* were collected, rather than the place where they were manufactured by the *prebendari*.

At present, we do not know whether this form of organising production was dominant. It is quite possible that in other contexts – urban ones, for example – or for more valuable and strategic goods, such as weapons or silk, different approaches were adopted. For the moment, we must resign ourselves to acknowledging that we do not yet know how ironworking was organised around the Lombard *curtis* of S. Sisto in Pisa, the excavation of which is currently being published by Federico Cantini; nor do we have any certainty about how silk was produced in Lucca. Did this take place in fiscal workshops, or did the *actores* and *gastalds* merely coordinate and oversee existing, partially autonomous forms of local production?²¹

It is clear that these different forms of production – or combinations of the two models – complicate the interpretation of those contexts – indeed, the vast majority – in which the presence of fiscal assets is accompanied by more or less direct traces of specialised craft production. For this reason, I believe that at this stage the priority should be to increase the number of studies – preferably detailed case studies – before attempting any synthesis that seeks to propose a coherent model.

6. Two case studies. *The Inventarium of the bishop of Lucca: structure and stratification of the text*

We must now turn from the production of artefacts to agriculture in order to consider whether the model outlined for Vetricella – control and guidance, but limited intervention in production – can also be extended to this sector. In the absence of documents relating to the management and allocation of land by public authorities, and given the very poor preservation of written sources concerning fiscal assets, such an undertaking might appear hopeless. Yet here, too, recent studies open up new avenues for reflection.

The group of late 9th-century inventories from the bishopric of Lucca – the only surviving Tuscan polyptychs – has been extensively studied. However, Paolo Tomei's discovery of a third inventory, the *Breve de multis pensionibus*, together with the reissue of the three lists in the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* and a better understanding of the situation in Lucca at the end of the 9th cen-

²¹ Preliminary data on S. Sisto in Cantini, "S. Sisto Project 2020;" the production of silk goods (Tomei, "Il sale e la seta") and wool processing in the monastery of S. Michele in Florence, which was dependent on S. Silvestro di Nonantola (Fiore, "The Knots and the Nets," 200), would appear to have been centralised. On the contrary, the production of tiles at Carignano, on the *Teupascio* river west of Lucca and beyond the bridge of the marquis, was decentralised and entrusted to *manentes*: see Tomei, "Sulle tracce dei *manentes* altomedievali," 8.

ture, now allow for new studies. We know the commissioner, the reference models, the context, and the overall purpose of the political and patrimonial initiative that led to their drafting. Bishop Peter, in view of asserting his political and judicial claim to the patrimony of his church and of renegotiating the assignments to his dependants and clients, had three different lists prepared and/or recovered. These correspond to the three fundamental categories into which the patrimony of the bishopric of Lucca was divided: the assets directly under episcopal control, which were included in the *Inventarium* (perhaps already compiled under Bishop Gerard, 869-95); the assets granted as benefices – whether the property itself or its income – and thus transferred through an oral provision, as included in the *Breve de feora*; and the assets granted by written deed (*libella*) by Bishop Gerard, which were included in the *Breve de multis pensionibus*.²²

The most useful text for our purposes is the *Inventarium*, on which I will henceforth focus. Although it is a carefully planned and well-organised list written by a single author, it nevertheless has a composite appearance. This is clearly evident from the text's structure as well as from a series of paratextual features. As already noted by the editors, the *Inventarium* consists of three different parts. The text opens with a list – which is severely damaged at its beginning – of movable property (sacred furnishings and books) (*ChLA*², 117, no. 16, ll. 1-14). This is followed by a list of the Church of Lucca's assets, beginning with those closest to the city (*ChLA*², 117, no. 16, ll. 15-83). The third section comprises a list of *curtes*, which were located in different parts of Tuscany and are described in a standardised form (*ChLA*², 117, no. 16, ll. 84-150). The two lists of immovable property are clearly distinguished from each other by the presence of a summary of the bishop's income at the end of the second section (*ChLA*², 117, no. 16, ll. 82-83) and by at least two lines left blank by the scribe to separate the sections. The internal structure of each section also differs. The first is characterised by continuous writing, with limited use of distinguishing features (*litterae notabiliores*, paragraph breaks, internal spacing), whereas the second is divided into entries corresponding to each *curtis*, each separated by a line break.²³

The second and third sections of the *Inventarium* differ from each other not only in layout but also in the forms of management and levels of work organisation they reflect. In the first text, the assets are listed in no particular order and are not explicitly linked to manorial centres but are rather organised by geographical location. References to demesne lands are few, and in any case they appear to have been small in extent; nor are there any descriptions of their infrastructure. The customary dues and fixed rents are

²² See Luzzati, "Vescovato di Lucca," n° 1-2; Tomei, "Un nuovo 'politico' lucchese." New edition of the three inventories in *ChLA*², 117, nos. 16-18.

²³ See *ChLA*², 117, no. 16, p. 83 for a description. Note that the partial sums (relating to each *curtis*) have, in some cases, caused the blank line to disappear. These are additions which were made after the text's first draft, however.

highly varied, and the *corvées* are few and only occasionally connected to the *dominicum*.²⁴ This picture of an imperfect adaptation of episcopal properties to the ‘ideal forms’ of manorial management is echoed in the *Breve de feora*. Although in this case the nature of the list of benefices makes it harder to reconstruct patterns of land management, we can nevertheless recognise the presence of demesne estates (which were generally small in size) and a fairly significant use of *corvées* – yet only in a minority of cases are these two elements fully integrated with each other. Such integration occurs in farmsteads explicitly defined as *curtes*, albeit small ones, and in the estates of certain *plebes* (baptismal churches). In any case, there are no detailed descriptions of the infrastructure of these farming complexes.²⁵

The second list of assets in the *Inventarium* displays different characteristics in both origin and textual structure. The text is divided into a series of entries recording the assets of individual *curtes*, each beginning with the term *invenimus*. Each of these short sections is graphically distinguished from the preceding and following ones by a line break. It is therefore only this third section that can be regarded as the result of an *inquisitio* – and not the entire *Inventarium*, as its most recent editors have suggested. The *inquisitio* was a procedure through which the assets and rights of the fisc, and of those churches which were granted the privilege to make use of it, were certified and described.²⁶ It is the use of this kind of procedure that explains the standardisation in the descriptions of the *curtes* in this part of the *Inventarium*. All the *curtes* are shown as possessing extensive demesne lands (also, but not exclusively, for cereal cultivation), and as having been accompanied by substantial infrastructure: manorial houses, *kaneve* (cellars), granaries, barns, vegetable gardens, and sometimes churches and *kaminate* (heated rooms). They depended on *manentes* whose principal and uniform obligation consisted of heavy labour, generally amounting to three days’ work per week. In all cases there is no mention of *prebendari*, but as Gianfranco Pasquali has observed, the *corvées* would have been sufficient for the cultivation of the estates described without the need to resort to *prebendari*. Pasquali also noted that

²⁴ The only partial exception is *ChLA*², 117, no. 16, l. 15: *Item de territoriis in circuitu ipsius civitatis terra indominicata ad seminandum modiorum XXXII et in Lunata tefrra...*, followed by a list of nine *angariales* which were required to perform *corvée* labour three days a week and three others who had to work 12 weeks a year (ll. 16–21). The link between demesne and *corvées* is weaker in all other cases: a *dominicum* capable of producing 12 *staia* of grain in Segromigno (with four *angariales* with unspecified duties), and a vineyard yielding two *amphorae* of wine in Saltocchio, a *silva castaniensis dominicata* in Molazzana, one *angarialis* in Controne and another in Celle, and four *angariales* that were required to perform *operae* for seven weeks a year, in *Carfaniana* (ll. 37, 40–1; 56; 67–8; 60 and 69; 73–6).

²⁵ *ChLA*², 117, no. 17, ll. 11–6 (*plebs* of Corazzano), ll. 28–32 (*plebs* of S. Frediano di Lunata), ll. 48–50 (property of S. Michele in Foro in Benabbio), ll. 60–2 (property in Castelfranco di Sotto), ll. 68–70 (church of S. Agata di Tempagnano), ll. 108–11 (*corticella de Caterana*, in the Coreglia area), ll. 145–7 (*corte de Cammiana*), ll. 168–71 (*curte de Sancto Vito*, in Cornino), ll. 196–9 (*plebs* of Vaiano).

²⁶ Bougard, *La justice dans le royaume d’Italie*, 194–203 and Esders, “Die römischen wurzeln der fiskalischen *inquisitio*.”

these estates were much smaller than those attested in the polyptychs of the Po Valley.²⁷

The *curtes* of the third section are not connected by geographical proximity, as they are distributed across the Val di Serchio, the Valdarno, and the Maremma. What links them is their recent separation from the fisc. A study by Paolo Tomei on the two ‘fiscal’ churches of S. Silvestro and S. Frediano in Lucca, and their transfer to the bishopric following the diploma of Carloman in 877, allows us to state this with certainty.²⁸ The *curtes* of the *Inventarium*’s third part had, in fact, until then formed part of the patrimony of these two churches, which Tomei describes as genuine ‘safes’ in which the political authorities concentrated numerous fiscal assets for distribution among their clientele. Only after the imperial diploma of 877 were S. Frediano and S. Silvestro (together with their dependencies) partially ‘privatised’ and incorporated into the bishop’s patrimony. It is possible that the *inquisitio* on which the text of the *Inventarium*’s third section was based was conducted at the time of the transfer of the churches to the bishop, in order to define their assets precisely. It seems to me more likely that the *inquisitio* was drawn up earlier, however, and that its results were transmitted to the bishop along with the *curtes* when these were donated by the king.²⁹ Moreover, the right of *inquisitio* does not appear to have been granted to the church of Lucca by the Carolingians.³⁰

7. Two case studies. The fiscal *curtes* in the *Inventarium* of the bishop of Lucca

Whatever the intermediate stages may have been (which are still to be clarified), we can assume that the *Inventarium*’s third section provides a snapshot of the functioning of certain fiscal *curtes* before their transfer to the Bishop of Lucca. We can therefore use it as a guide to the forms of the economic organisation of fiscal property in Tuscany – although not necessarily the only model that existed, given the lack of similar case studies – a conclusion supported by our text’s structural proximity to the *Capitulare de villis* and the *Brevium exempla*. It is not possible to dwell on the description here, so I will limit myself to highlighting those elements which are most useful for further reflection. The fiscal *curtes* described were organised in a homogeneous and standardised way; they were well equipped with infrastructure and all operated according to the same production and management model, in which agricultural labour was provided through the *corvées* of the *manen-*

²⁷ Pasquali, “L’azienda curtense,” 27–9.

²⁸ Tomei, “Chiese, vassalli, concubine.”

²⁹ To clarify these passages, it is useful to draw a parallel with the *Churrätische Urbar*, which, after the transfer of a fiscal complex to the Church of Chur, reused its previous census, which had been carried out through *inquisitio*: see Esders, “The Church as a Governance Actor,” 22, 24–5, 28 as well as the detailed analysis by Cortese, “Beni fiscali e attività minerario-metallurgiche,” 256–8. See also Esders, “The ‘Staffelsee Inventory’.”

³⁰ See MGH DD Lu II., n° 6 (852); n° 55 (*ante* 871); and MGH DD Km, n° 10 (877).

tes, in the absence of *prebendari*.³¹ Production was partly adapted to specific ecological conditions. Everywhere, the demesne land was cultivated primarily with cereals, most likely wheat. With the sole exception of the *curtis* of *Quaratiana*, hay cultivation was ubiquitous, perhaps to support cattle (not mentioned, but which was certainly present) and the horses required by the marquis and his retinue. Vineyards are also widespread – they are absent only in the *curtis* of *Accesa* – with production appearing stable at around 10 *amphorae* per *curtis*. Additional production (always listed after the three just mentioned) occur more sporadically: olive groves are recorded in four cases (*Filettole*, *Vecchiano*, *Capannoli*, and *S. Giorgio di Ravi*), forests for pig breeding in another four (*Quaratiana*, *Cornino*, *S. Giorgio di Ravi*, and *Accesa*), while salt pans are mentioned only for *Asilatto*. The quantities of produce vary considerably, indicating the specialisation of certain *curtes*: for oil, the quantities range from 100 pounds in *S. Giorgio di Ravi* to 20 in *Vecchiano*; for pigs, from 200 in *Cornino* to just three in *Quaratiana*. The customary dues and fixed rents imposed on the *manentes* were more varied, being differentiated on a sub-regional basis and likely connected to their specific production practices. They nevertheless almost never included rents in cereals (which are also rare in the *Breve de feora*). This suggests that, with regard to cereals, there were two entirely distinct production circuits: one fiscal and probably focused on high-quality grains, being closely controlled by the centre and reflected in the *Inventarium*; the other, which is entirely invisible in this text, managed autonomously by the farmers themselves.

We might be tempted to conclude that the fisc exercised considerable influence in the agricultural sector. It was able to manage and plan production and labour from the centre, controlling both the rationale and execution of these activities through corvée labour. In this sense, cereal production would appear to display a greater degree of lordly involvement than that observed in the craft sector at *Vetricella*. This image must be tempered, however, by the fact that the absence of cereal rents – and thus the existence of two distinct production circuits, a lordly one based on demesne lands and the other managed by the peasants themselves – is also a characteristic feature (though less systematic) of the *Inventarium*'s first part, which provides for fewer corvées and a greater number of rents in wine, other produce, or cash, as well as of

³¹ There are several possible explanations for the absence of *prebendari* from the list. It is conceivable, though unlikely, that they were not recorded even though they were present (it should be noted that *prebendari* are also missing from the *Bobbio* polyptych – a possible model for the *Lucca* one; see Pasquali, “L'azienda curtense,” 27). Alternatively, they may already have been absent when the *curtes* formed part of the fisc, or it may be that, when these estates were granted to the Bishop of *Lucca*, only the lands and *manentes* were transferred, while the *prebendari* were assigned to other fiscal *curtes*. Pasquali's observations on the correspondence between the amount of labour and the extent of the demesne lands may suggest that the inventory reflects the *curtes*' traditional management. Moreover, even in the *Breve de feora* there is no mention of *prebendari*.

the *livelli* and other management contracts concerning peasants.³² This dual circuit may therefore have been not so much the result of direct intervention by the fiscal authorities as a peculiarity of the production system in the Lucca area, one common to both fiscal and episcopal properties. The latter, it should be noted, were not established through the donation of fiscal complexes, but rather through a multitude of private gifts. In this case as well, then, the action of the fiscal authorities, operating through the *curtis* model, did not impose a new productive structure, but instead directed, reorganised, and made more efficient existing forms of specialisation and production that had already developed – albeit less effectively – within private estates. What stands out once again is the system’s managerial dimension, which was aimed at rationalising forms of extraction and ensuring the uniform distribution of infrastructure – *case dominice*, *kanave*, granaries, barns, and so on – that maximised production and above all made the management, collection, and transport of surplus produce more effective. The appearance of *corvées* connected with the transport of foodstuffs also points in this direction.

8. *Fisc and economics. A provisory conclusion*

Although it likely varied over time and is therefore difficult to quantify – especially with regard to its actual managers and beneficiaries – the fiscal patrimony constituted a very extensive and important component of the early medieval Tuscan economy. Understanding its functioning – which thus far has only been briefly outlined – is crucial to gaining insight into the region’s production system.

The fiscal authorities’ main role seems to have been to ensure more structured forms of economic activity, primarily through the use of extra-economic instruments which were guaranteed by the public and judicial authority of those who controlled and managed these assets. The Tuscan *corvées* – which are attested even before the Carolingian conquest – originated within this sphere, and as we have seen they were quite decisive for cereal production. Control over the production and circulation of manufactured goods that we have identified at Vetricella likewise derived from this same sphere. These instruments were used to stimulate production – which was made possible by the existing infrastructure – and to direct it towards goods and objects that were considered desirable by the fiscal authorities. For the moment we must remain at this general level of analysis, since current research does not yet allow us to identify the (undoubtedly real) differences between the assets which were directly managed by kings and marquises, the endowments of counts, and the goods granted to aristocrats and churches. Although it is clear that the surpluses produced in the fiscal *curtes* were largely transported – often

³² See Collavini, “Luoghi e contenitori di stoccaggio” and Bianchi, e Collavini, “Lieux de stockage.”

over long distances – for the benefit of the holders of those assets, there is no evidence that their movement had any commercial implications. In fact, the coins found at Vettricella appear to constitute a hoard and therefore do not point to active trade at the tower.³³ Cereals, wine, oil, metal objects, and silk products were primarily intended to meet the needs of the Lucca court – the marquises and their entourage – as well as those who depended on it, both in the city and elsewhere. They were then likely used to reward political followers and clients through gifts and other forms of remuneration.³⁴ Although it is possible that some of these goods and products were sold in the city, I do not believe there is – as yet – any positive evidence for such activity.

We have seen that in both the agricultural and craft sectors, the fiscal production circuit operated separately from the rest of the local and regional economy – what we might call the ‘private sector’. There is no evidence of trade between the dependants and administrators of the fiscal estates on the one hand, and the surrounding population on the other. Nor is there evidence for the presence of markets open to external actors within these estates, as hypothesised by Violante and Toubert, who viewed the *curtes* as the origin of rural markets.³⁵ Let me be clear once again: I consider this hypothesis plausible, but I do not think there is sufficient evidence to support it, particularly in the archaeological record. Regulated from above, carried out primarily by specific categories of dependent farmers – particularly the *manentes* – and not commercialised but redistributed along the network of *curtes* to sustain the court and its structures, the fiscal economy did not interact with the rest of the regional economy, except perhaps in urban contexts (or in large *curtes* located along major road routes), either through limited forms of commercialisation or, more likely, through the high purchasing power enjoyed by the holders of fiscal assets who benefited from the political elite’s generosity.

Oriented towards the urban world – and towards Lucca in particular – for political and structural reasons, the system ensured the economic centrality of urban centres not on productive or commercial grounds, but on the presence of the ducal court in the city. This residency, together with the consequent presence of prominent political groups which were both secular and ecclesiastical, not to mention their spending power, drew to the city those who supplied them with various goods and services. The spending of prominent

³³ This is in line with the claims made in Rovelli, “The Medieval Coins from Vettricella,” 99, and more explicitly in Rovelli, “Archeologia mineraria, archeometria ed emissioni monetarie,” 135–40. More inclined to consider the coins an indicator of active trade at the *curtis* are Fiore, “The Knots and the Nets,” 202, and Bianchi, *Archeologia dei beni pubblici*, 33, 39, 197.

³⁴ Tomei, “The Power of the Gift.”

³⁵ Violante, *La società milanese* and Toubert, “Il sistema curtense.” The first markets attested in Lucca’s sources are located within the city – at the royal court, the *Teudici solarium*, and the church of S. Matteo, an urban dependency of the great royal monastery of S. Pietro di Monteverdi (a very similar situation is found in Florence). Outside the city, markets are recorded at Istia d’Ombrone (1032) and at *Lucutuoro* (1056), near Passignano (see Tomei, *Milites Elegantes*, 106–7, and Collavini, e Tomei, “Fuori dalle città,” 231–2).

groups concentrated in the city, which was made possible by the generosity of political leaders, was to be reproduced in a cascade effect, involving increasingly modest entities and individuals in the system and its basic logic: this was how the system became pervasive, first in the city, and then in other places where the aristocrats and ecclesiastics resided. Spending had to focus on those forms of ostentation that contributed to the creation of consensus among peers as well as competition to assert one's status and get as close as possible to the source that dispensed wealth. We can therefore assume that conspicuous consumption played a particularly significant role – essential in a courtly social milieu – and that this investment was directed not only towards building projects, but even more towards personal adornment and display. It is in this context that specialised luxury goods, such as the silk *guindangasie* (silk bands to be twisted around the legs) studied by Paolo Tomei,³⁶ come into play. Other, more or less exotic, objects – occasionally attested in written sources as well as in the archaeological record of Lucca – may likewise have carried considerable weight in this milieu.

Within this same framework we may also place those specialised craft activities which are attested in urban contexts, particularly in Lucca. These were sustained by courtly commissions, but they were also financed by those who, benefiting from the flow of resources filtering down from the marquis, possessed both the means and the ambition to compete with the court itself in the sphere of self-representation. It is in this context that, from the late Lombard period onwards, we can envisage the careers of those artisans who are known from the documentary record: always active in 'high' productive sectors, always connected with public authority, often foreigners, sometimes founders of distinguished family lineages. From the *pictor* Auripert – who worked first for the Bishop of Lucca and later for King Liutprand – to the *magister casarius* Natalis; from the swordsmiths to Peter the *smerator* (precious metal refiner), who came to Lucca from Milan in the 10th century and was endowed with property adjacent to fiscal complexes. The latter was probably the father (or grandfather) of judge Flaipertus Amicus, marquisal advocate, *visdominus* of the bishop, and perpetual imperial *missus* in Lucca, who was a central figure in the city's political life throughout the first three quarters of the 11th century.³⁷

³⁶ Tomei, "The Power of the Gift."

³⁷ Auripert (Collavini, "Le origini," 15-6); Natalis *magister casarius* (Violante, "I Transpadani in Tuscia", 408-13); *Gottifredi forbitore* (weapons' polisher or sharpener) (Tomei, "Un nuovo 'polittico' lucchese," 576); Peter the *smerator* (Tomei, *Milites Elegantes*, 381 and Giacomelli, *L'honor» e il suo «effectum»*, 12-5). To this gallery of portraits of 'professionals' linked to the court of Lucca, we can add doctors such as Gaidoald in Pistoia (Stoffella, "Crisi e trasformazione," 9) or Auripert *medicus*, who is attested in Lucca in 854 as *iudex domni imperatoris* and who uses a style of writing with a marked chancellery influence (*ChLA*², 79, no. 25; *ChLA*², 80, no. 40).

9. *The effects of the crisis of the 'fiscal system' on the economy*

In the 50 years around the year 1100, the political, social, and economic system based on the fisc collapsed in Tuscany, bringing down with it what had been the region's most important political and institutional structure since the late Lombard period: the Duchy of Lucca, later the March of Tuscany.³⁸

This was primarily a political crisis linked to the 'Investiture Controversy' and the ensuing 'civil war' that swept through the Kingdom of Italy during those years, shaking the foundations of the Canossa family's power in the region. In a recent essay, I argued that the economic transformations of the 11th century were a fundamental precondition for the catastrophic effects of this crisis, since for the first time they made it both conceivable and advantageous to abandon the traditional political system based on the fisc. This shift opened the way to new forms of personal and familial affirmation as well as to the accumulation of both material and immaterial resources among those who had previously moved mainly within the orbit of the marquisal court. The outcome was a society that we can regard as fully post-Carolingian – i.e. as belonging to the High Middle Ages.³⁹

This structural political change – which I do not think it an exaggeration to describe as a 'revolution' – disrupted the fiscal assets' economic organisation. The impact of this transformation was intensified by the fact that the characteristics of the 'fiscal economy' described above were all essentially rooted in political and institutional control over economic life. The overall political framework ensured the breadth of the 'fiscal nebula': a vast patrimony continuously sustained by the possibility of reclaiming previously distributed assets and offices, by the guarantee of the 'inalienability' of fiscal property, and by the constant flow of transfers generated within the system of marquisal patronage. The rapid circulation of assets among different holders had a political foundation, with the consequences that have already been described. That same political foundation likewise underpinned the centrality of the cities – and of Lucca in particular – as places for the negotiation of resources, and consequently for the spending of the court, the aristocracy, and the clergy. Extra-economic factors supported both the capacity to coordinate and direct production and the maintenance of an artificial divide between the 'fiscal economy' and the 'private economy'.

For precisely this reason, the crisis of the traditional political order quickly undermined many of the pillars of the early medieval Tuscan economy.

It placed a large amount of resources – primarily land – at the disposal of churches and aristocrats in an increasingly stable and secure way, accompanying and encouraging the expansion of the aristocratic class, which was

³⁸ Wickham, "La signoria rurale in Toscana;" see also Collavini, "I signori rurali in Italia centrale" and Cortese, *L'aristocrazia toscana*.

³⁹ Collavini, "Mutazione signorile e trasformazioni economiche."

already underway as a result of population growth and the social advancement of the *milites*. Insofar as the political authorities continued to possess a landed base, it had now become indistinguishable in its formation, accumulation, and operation from that of other regional political actors: thoroughly seigneurial, connected to the market, and integrated into a single, unified system.

The crisis of the fiscal system drastically reduced the circulation of non-commercial goods. For aristocrats and churches, the loss of gifts from the court made it essential to turn to the market – both to purchase manufactured goods and prestige items, and to obtain the money needed for these purchases, whether by marketing their own products or by imposing increasingly heavy obligations on peasants as part of the consolidation of seigneurial power.

This new structure of demand, which emerged in a period of general demographic and productive growth, inevitably engaged, stimulated, and re-directed the activities of artisans and merchants who had previously been connected to the court, offering them the opportunity to operate in a freer and less regulated market.

The end of the precariousness of fiscal property ownership marked another decisive transformation, also in the economic sphere. For many families and certain churches, fiscal property had in fact constituted the most substantial part of their assets. The stabilisation of ownership – which was never a painless process given the conflicts among the various parties competing for the inheritance of the fisc – had important repercussions. It encouraged an increasing flow of investment by landholders. This is reflected in the emergence of ever more imposing military structures; in the appearance of new infrastructure – bridges, roads, rural markets, and the like – and of productive facilities within castles; and in the wager on lordship as an economic resource. It also prompted many aristocratic families to shift their focus towards the countryside, bringing with it a reorientation of spending patterns to the benefit of the rural world, and in particular its principal centres.⁴⁰

This led to a temporary decline in the centrality of cities within the region's economic structures – and not merely from a political standpoint. Yet, this decline was only a brief lull: demographic pressure, productive expansion, the rush to seize the substantial urban and peri-urban properties and fiscal rights, and above all the vast concentration of resources and expertise that the fiscal system had previously gathered in the cities enabled urban societies to recover successfully, ushering in the high medieval phase of Tuscan urbanism. Significantly, it was precisely in those cities where the fiscal authorities had most heavily concentrated their resources – by virtue of their political centrality – such as Lucca, and later, Pisa, that the departure of the aristocracy and the resulting disconnection between the urban world and its

⁴⁰ Cortese, *L'aristocrazia toscana*.

rural hinterland were least pronounced.⁴¹ Among other effects, this also contributed to the slower and more uneven development of rural lordship within their diocesan territories.

If I had to identify a single factor of change that most profoundly influenced the Tuscan economy's evolution in the High Middle Ages, I would have no hesitation in pointing to the disappearance of the dualism and separation between the 'fiscal economy' and the 'private economy'. This dualism concerned the very logic of production and exchange and rested on a political and institutional division between the two spheres. It extended across the entire region, both geographically and socially, manifesting at the local level as well as within the peasant world that was the regional economy's driving force – both before and after the seigneurial revolution. In other words, the concentration of high-grade cereals within demesne estates and the inflow of other goods and resources through the labour and transport *operae* of the *manentes* to urban and rural *curtes* controlled by the fisc cannot be explained by an economic logic linked to the market, but rather served the needs of higher political authorities, who then redistributed them according to political imperatives.

Of course, the cases of Vettricella and the Lucca *inquisitio* discussed above are not sufficient to make us certain that this separation always and everywhere functioned effectively; nonetheless, we must assume that the forms of the organisation and management of the fisc tended in this direction. The collapse of the political and institutional constraints that had characterised the 'fiscal system' must have created new opportunities for economic integration, commercial exchange, and the division of labour even at the local level and to the advantage of socially modest groups – possibilities that had previously been unthinkable, having been suppressed by the fiscal authorities' strict control over their dependants and their production.

Even those *manentes* who, directly or indirectly, passed from the fiscal to the seigneurial system – retaining many of their former burdens – now found themselves operating in a new world.⁴² Although still harshly exploited through the combination of older obligations and new seigneurial levies, they were now free to choose what to produce, to enter and leave the market at will, to interact with their neighbours, and to allocate their accumulated surpluses as they wished. They thus became part of a rapidly expanding economy that offered new opportunities, spurred both by the rapacity of the nobility in its various forms and by the growing pressure of a market that was becoming pervasive even in rural areas, especially those closest to the cities.⁴³

In short, we can assume that, alongside the 'natural' processes of economic growth in Tuscany that had been active since the Early Middle Ages – and

⁴¹ Cortese, 299-314.

⁴² Tomei, "Sulle tracce dei *manentes* altomedievali;" Wickham, "*Manentes* e diritti signorili," and Collavini, "Il servaggio in Toscana."

⁴³ Tabarrini, *Estate Management*.

whose cumulative effects made them increasingly rapid and dynamic – the crisis and ensuing privatisation of fiscal assets acted as an accelerant, amplifying both the pace and scale of development. This in turn was one of the key factors behind the leap forward in the Tuscan economy that becomes clearly visible only in the second half of the 12th century, when the effects of the structural transformations I have tried to outline had fully taken shape across the region.

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Simone Maria Collavini
Università di Pisa
simone.maria.collavini@unipi.it
ORCID: 0000-0003-2819-0144

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The transformations that shaped the transition to the “central” Middle Ages during the eleventh and twelfth centuries affected a wide range of structures across Italy and the post-Roman world. Historians are therefore called upon to explore the complex interplay of change and continuity, different rhythms of transformation, and diverse social contexts. This volume examines these dynamics focusing on political institutions and lordship, the Church and law, the economy, settlement patterns, and material culture. The essays were presented at a seminar held in Pisa from 5 to 7 December 2022, organized by Simone Collavini, Giuseppe Petralia, and Mauro Ronzani, with Alberto Cotza, bringing together scholars studying change and continuity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, especially in Italy.

Alberto Cotza (Oristano, 1990) studied at the University of Pisa and, since 2025, has been Associate Professor of Medieval History at Roma Tre University. His research focuses on the central centuries of the Italian Middle Ages from a cultural and political perspective, with particular attention to the construction of collective memories and their entanglements with societal and political change.

Giuseppe Petralia (Cosenza, 1954) was a researcher at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, Associate Professor at the University of Calabria and, from 2001 to 2025, Full Professor of Medieval History at the University of Pisa. His work has dealt with the history of Sicily and Southern Italy from the eleventh to the fifteenth century; with society, economy, and institutions in late-medieval Tuscany and Italy; and with long-term structures and dynamics in the history of the medieval Mediterranean.

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