BUILDING AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
IN SOUTHERN EUROPE (1050–1300)

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VOLUME 2

Building and Economic Growth in Southern Europe (1050–1300)

Edited by
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BREPOLS

Cover image: 'Stonemasons at work', Girona Cathedral, Romanesque cloister, west gallery. Twelfth century. Photo: Federico Del Tredici.

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Storing for the Economy?

Landed Estates and their Buildings in Northern and Central Italy, Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

This essay is a discussion of landed estates and rural buildings in northern and central Italy during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; its aim is to link estates and buildings with wider socio-economic transformations. Before I begin, I would like to make some preliminary remarks. The geographical scope of my analysis covers the *Regnum Italiae* and the papal territories, in other words what was originally the Carolingian political sphere. I decided against including southern Italy in the study as this would have required me to consider a partially different set of historical questions, and to harness all the relevant bibliography. The period I chose to analyse is instead easier to justify. I shall focus on the century between *c.* 1150 and *c.* 1250, which is generally recognized as having been marked by a process of substantial economic expansion throughout Western Europe. This consisted — in very broad terms — of demographic growth, increased agricultural production, urban development, and the expansion of commercial and financial activities; what amounts, in short, to an increase in aggregate demand (which, moreover, took place under generally favourable climatic conditions).[1]

This essay is based on a survey of the extant research, both historical and archaeological, although some local studies could be added. Many of the issues that I will discuss are familiar to Italian medievalists, but probably less so to an English-speaking public. In view of this, I shall attempt to provide a synthesis of the secondary literature by shaping my argument around four main themes, which may help to shed light on the relationship between landed estates and rural buildings on the one hand, and patterns of economic development on

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1 An overview in Masschaele, 'Economic Takeoff'. Economic transformations and climatic shifts during the Middle Ages are discussed by Campbell, *The Great Transition*. Syntheses written in Italian are Palermo, *Sviluppo* and Cammarosano, *Economia*; cf. also the essays collected in Franceschi, ed., *La crescita*.

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the other. First of all, I will give a brief description of the four types of estates which, for reasons that will be clarified as we proceed, appear to deserve the most careful scrutiny. I shall then discuss the infrastructure and buildings which characterized these estates, paying particular attention to the materials with which they were built. Thirdly, I will identify the sections of society who paid for the creation of these estates. Lastly, I shall make a number of observations on the reasons behind their creation. At least two caveats have to be borne in mind, however. First, the written and archaeological evidence is not equally distributed across northern and central Italy. It follows that not all the geographical areas that I wish to investigate have received the same amount of attention in the existing scholarship, which cannot be regarded as a coherent body of research, and consists chiefly of regional studies. Second, with regard to this particular field of inquiry, the late Middle Ages have been more closely studied than the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This fact can be explained by the remarkable wealth of information and internal coherence characterizing fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sources when compared to central medieval documents, which are plentiful but also somewhat erratic. I shall return to some of these points in due course; for now, it is sufficient for them to serve as part of the general background to the analysis that follows.

* * *

Let us begin with a brief description of the four types of landed estates I intend to focus on: *casali*, *cassine*, *grange*, and *poderi*. Other types of estate did exist, and I shall mention these later on; but *casali*, *cassine*, and *grange* are regarded as the most structured landed properties of northern and central Italy during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, along with *poderi* (whose early history, as I shall explain in the ensuing paragraphs, is however rather obscure). Their construction required substantial investments, which is a key element for the understanding of the overall economic change. Not only were they complex structures. Another characteristic they shared was relative isolation from other rural settlements; they did not form part of castles or villages, despite the fact that, owing to their size and the presence of fortifications, they did in some instances resemble castles or villages. They were also often built from scratch, although in some cases pre-existing settlements and their infrastructures were used as a basis for the creation of *casali*, *cassine*, *grange*, and *poderi*.[2] I have refrained from including those settlements variously labelled as *ville*, *villenove*, *terre nuove*, *borghi franchi*, or *borghi nuovi* in my analysis; these too became more widespread during the course of the thirteenth century and can certainly be regarded as part of a process of small-scale urbanization — and thus of economic expansion. I have not omitted these settlements for reasons of space alone: because of their

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2 Accurate and complete accounts of this are to be found in Comba, 'La dispersione'; Comba, 'Le origini'; and, with a focus on south-western Piedmont, Comba, 'Rappresentazioni'. Cf. also Varanini, 'Insediamenti'. A more recent overview is Rapetti, 'Paesaggi'.

size, their appearance was more that of small towns than large farms, which would take us too far from the analysis of landed estates and their buildings. The same is true of *incastellamento*, and particularly of the so-called *secondo incastellamento*, the second wave of castle building, which can be identified in some Italian regions over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but whose links with estate-creation would require a separate study.[3]

I shall begin with *casali*. The term *casale* is already attested across northern and central Italy in the early Middle Ages, when it defined an open settlement comprising, or coinciding with, a relatively small estate-centre.[4] The *casali* I wish to focus on here are those that proliferated from the central decades of the twelfth century onwards around Rome, in the *Campagna Romana*, the area extending around the city for between 15 and 20 kilometres; this expansion is referred to as *incasalamento*. One can in fact distinguish two different phases of *incasalamento*, but here we are concerned with the first, which began in the 1150s, intensified in the 1190s, and continued for much of the thirteenth century.[5] Over the course of that century the first *incasalamento* became a phenomenon of substantial agricultural reorganization, with landowners creating large numbers of new isolated rural estates. The size of *casali* is also believed to have been considerable from the start; actual data can be drawn only from fourteenth-century and early modern sources, but already in the thirteenth century they might well have occupied between fifty-five and 555 hectares.[6] The second *incasalamento*, occurring between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, was by contrast a step backwards, the result of the typical late medieval abandonment of open villages and fortified settlements, not only around Rome but also in Italy and indeed in Europe as a whole.[7] It should be noted, as a final point, that the workforce of *casali* seems to have been constituted by salaried workers — even though, again, substantial information on this is available only from the fourteenth century.[8]

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3 Cf. Settia, *Castelli*, pp. 319–25; Comba, '"Ville" e borghi nuovi'; the collection of essays in Comba, Panero, and Pinto, eds, *Borghi*; and those in Friedman and Pirillo, eds, *Le terre nuove*. On the *secondo incastellamento* in Tuscany cf. Farinelli and Giorgi, 'Fenomeni'; on the construction of *castra* in the *Campagna Romana* from *c.* 1180 cf. Carocci and Vendittelli, *L'origine*, pp. 23–68; on the creation of new castles (and the abandonment of older ones) in western Liguria between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries cf. Murialdo, 'La riorganizzazione'; on the archaeology of *villenove* in Piedmont cf. Micheletto, 'L'insediamento'.

4 For the Pianura Padana see Fumagalli, *Terra*, pp. 25–60. Cf. Bacchi, 'Conquista', on the Ferrarese. Examples can be found in the documentation from the monastery of S. Salvatore al Monte Amiata, too: cf. Wickham, 'Paesaggi sepolti', esp. p. 113. On the *casali* in the *Campagna Romana* during the early Middle Ages, cf. Lenzi, 'Per una storia'.

5 The landmark monograph on the origins of Roman *casali* is Carocci and Vendittelli, *L'origine*. See also Maire Vigueur, *L'autre Rome*, pp. 86–93; and, with different nuances, Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 40, 59, 70, 80, 86, and 108.

6 Carocci and Vendittelli, *L'origine*, pp. 12–13.

7 Cf. Brezzi, 'Il sistema'; cf. the following footnotes for further references.

8 See note 5.

Let us now move on to the *cassine*, or (in Italian) *cascine*. As was the case with *casale*, the word *cassina* was employed in the early Middle Ages with its literal meaning of small house, *casa*. In this study, however, the term has a different meaning. These *cassine* extended over much of Lombardy between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, although the earliest evidence of them dates back to the tenth century; at that time, the term might signify a village or an isolated rural estate, but could also denote a simple storage facility. Around 1350 there were at least thirty-seven *cassine* on the outskirts of Milan, varying in size from three to thirteen hectares; they appear to have been smaller than *casali*, possibly because the immediate environs of Milan were heavily populated and the patterns of landowning and landholding were highly fragmented, with many potentially competing owners.[9] It is important to stress that it was only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that *cassine* came to be identified as the permanent place of residence of various groups of rural workers and their families — and this was a new development. Some *cassine*, moreover, were grouped together (in the Italian historiography they are called *cascine a grappolo*) and had a clearly defined collective identity; indeed, they were a kind of local institution, not unlike rural communes. This is the case with the Milanese *Cassine de' Biffi* in the late *Duecento*, which have been studied by Enrica Salvatori.[10] Around Cremona *cascine* appear to have been even larger, to the point that they resembled small towns.[11]

Of the different types of estate examined in this article, it is *grange* that have attracted the greatest amount of interest from researchers. The word *grangia* derives from the late Latin *granea*, *granica*, *grancia*, which means barn or storage facility for cereals.[12] During the twelfth century, the term began to be used to denote the estate-centres belonging to the monasteries of the Cistercian order, and as a result can be found wherever Cistercians became established.[13] In Piedmont, *grangia* had a broader meaning: it could simply define an isolated rural estate, together with the word *tectum*.[14] *Grange* could either be built on the sites of pre-existing settlements or on previously undeveloped land, and could reach a considerable size: in 1275 Villamaggiore, one of the *grange* of the monastery of S. Maria di Chiaravalle Milanese,

9   And this separates the Milanese hinterland from the *Campagna Romana*: cf. Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, p. 39. The standard account on the surroundings of Milan is De Angelis Cappabianca, 'Le "cassine" tra il XII e il XIV secolo'. On eastern Lombardy cf. Menant, *Campagnes*, pp. 124–27. In the fifteenth century, the term *cascina* in the outskirts of Milan denoted all rural settlements that did not develop into a commune: cf. Del Tredici, *Comunità*, p. 59.

10 Salvatori, 'Una comunità'.

11 Grillo, 'Grange e cascine', p. 114.

12 Chiappa Mauri, 'Le scelte', p. 37. Please note that in Italian, *grangia* is singular and *grange* is plural.

13 Comba, 'Aspects'.

14 Cf. as an overview Comba, *Metamorfosi*.

comprised 420 hectares of arable fields and grassland.[15] The workforce on this type of estate was initially composed for the most part of lay brothers, who were responsible for the cultivation of monastic demesnes. Lay brothers were aided by salaried workers and later on by *massarii*; these were tenants whose role became crucial towards the middle of the thirteenth century. At that time many Cistercian abbeys were burdened with debts and were therefore forced to lease out their demesnes, thus abandoning direct exploitation and replacing it with indirect management.[16]

Finally, I shall briefly outline the principal characteristics of the *poderi*. It is well known that the term *podere* refers to a very large, isolated and polyculture-oriented rural estate, usually with a tenant house at its centre, which was sometimes attached to the landowner's house. This type of estate has been the object of numerous studies, as the *poderi* constituted the farming unit to which the *mezzadria* contract was applied. The *mezzadria poderale* can be defined as a particular form of sharecropping tenure. It was characterized, among other things, by the equal division of the harvest between proprietor and tenant, by the joint provision of livestock and seed-corn, and by the short duration of contracts (which, however, were generally renewed). The *poderi mezzadrili* shaped the countryside in much of central Italy throughout the late Middle Ages and the early modern era, and their importance has long been acknowledged.[17] Paradoxically, we have relatively little information about the creation of *poderi*, a process generally referred to as *appoderamento*. Oretta Muzzi and Maria Daniela Nenci have argued that in late twelfth-century Tuscany the word *podere* began to replace the term *mansus*, which denoted the farming unit dating from Carolingian times; they have also maintained, however, that at that stage the *podere* was not the *podere mezzadrile* of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. In the central medieval period, using the term *podere* to describe a tenure was simply a way to emphasize proprietorial rights: the power (*potere* in Italian) that the landowner wielded over that land.[18] Moreover, it should be stressed that in past historiography the

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15 Comba, 'I Cistercensi', p. 249.

16 Cf. again Comba, 'Le origini', p. 373. On northern Europe see the classic essay by Higounet, 'Effets'. On Lombardy cf. Chiappa Mauri, *Terra*, esp. p. 30 on the leasing out of *grange* (see also Chiappa Mauri, 'Le scelte', p. 43 and following). Some local studies: Saracco Previdi, 'Habitat' (on the Marche region); Cortese, 'Gli opifici' (on S. Galgano in Val di Merse, in the Sienese); Grillo, 'Dal bosco' and Comba, '"In silva Stapharda"' (on S. Maria di Staffarda, close to Cuneo, and the *grangia* of Aimondino). More local studies will be cited in subsequent footnotes.

17 The bibliography on *mezzadria poderale* is vast. With regard to Tuscany, I have recently summarized it in Tabarrini, *Estate*, Introduction, note 11, but I will cite some of it in subsequent footnotes.

18 Muzzi and Nenci, eds, *Il contratto*, p. 55. There are various — and sometimes divergent — views on the development of *poderi* in medieval Tuscany. According to Enrico Fiumi, *poderi* can be identified around S. Gimignano in the fourteenth century: Fiumi, *Storia*, pp. 129–40. Elio Conti sees the creation of *poderi* as the late medieval re-composition of the fragmented

concept of *appoderamento* has not always been used to indicate the spread of the *mezzadria* contract. *Appoderamento* might simply designate the process by which landed estates were made larger and more uniform, mostly through the purchase of bordering land plots — a practice known as *ingrossatio* in Latin sources.[19] This distinction is relevant to this study: *ingrossatio* did take place over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and we shall see this again when discussing the landed patrimony of Cistercian *grange*. By contrast, the creation of *poderi mezzadrili*, as a late medieval and early modern phenomenon, falls outside the chronological scope of this essay.

There are some further structures that need at least to be mentioned, namely *bastite*, *casamenta*, *caseforti*, *motte*, *torri*, and *tumbe*. These were all fortified buildings (and were all to be found in a rural setting, except for the *casamenta*, which were located within the city of Vercelli)[20] usually situated at the centre of landed estates or areas in which land-clearing was required. In some instances, they fulfilled a mainly military function; in others, they developed into actual villages. For reasons of space, I cannot devote much time to them here; but it should be emphasized that these structures began to appear across many regions of northern and central Italy during the late twelfth and, above all, thirteenth centuries.[21] This is significant: they testify to a generalized endeavour aimed at investment in rural buildings, broadly speaking over the same period in which *casali*, *cassine*, *grange*, and (bearing in mind the caveats mentioned above) *poderi* started to take shape in the countryside. In this sense, they can be seen as further manifestations of the process of economic development outlined above.

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patterns of landowning and landholding that had characterized the countryside of Florence during the central Middle Ages: Conti, *La formazione*. Philip Jones acknowledges that the construction of isolated rural houses on the *poderi* was a remarkably obscure process: cf. Jones, 'From manor to mezzadria'. According to Giovanni Cherubini, the process of *appoderamento*, along with the dispersion of settlements, can be identified in some parts of Tuscany in the fourteenth century: Cherubini, 'Forme'. Giuliano Pinto has stressed that the contract of *mezzadria* began to be inextricably linked to *poderi* only during the sixteenth century: Pinto, 'Per una storia'. Franca Leverotti has hypothesized that the term *podere* may have been applied in the twelfth century to lands which formerly belonged to the fiscal domain: Leverotti, 'Scomposizione'.

19   This point was made by Klapisch-Zuber, 'Mezzadria' and reiterated by Comba, 'La dispersione'. Cf. also the contribution by Giuliano Pinto cited at note 18.

20   Cf. Gullino, *Forme*.

21   See as an overview Settia, *L'illusione*; Comba, *Metamorfosi*, pp. 77–78 on the *bastita* of Pogliola, close to Cuneo; Comba, 'Le origini', esp. pp. 377–81; Settia, 'Tra azienda agricola e fortezza'. Cf. also the essays in Comba, Panero, and Pinto, eds, *Motte*: namely, Grillo, 'Fra poteri pubblici e iniziative private', on the outskirts of Milan and Como; Mannoni and Sicios, 'Le torri', which argues that *torri* in Liguria emerge in our records between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries; Tiberini, 'Colombaie', esp. pp. 287–90 on the slow expansion of *torri* in Umbria from the first decade of the thirteenth century on. It should be noted that in some areas *motte*, *torri* and *caseforti* did not appear until the late Middle Ages: this is the case with Friuli (cf. Degrassi, 'Motte').

My second point concerns the infrastructure and materials that characterized these estates, once again looking first at the Roman *casali* during the first *incasalamento*. The *casali* were often grouped around a tower made of bricks (*turris*), which was sometimes more than twenty metres high — indeed, many of these towers have survived and are still visible in the *Campagna Romana*; they were enclosed by a *castellarium*, a word used to describe diverse types and sizes of walls. Since the *castellarium* encompassed the whole *casale*, the two terms sometimes became synonymous. Within the *castellarium/casale*, were various residential buildings: single- and two-storey houses (*solarate*), which were sometimes fitted with chimneys (and were therefore called *caminata*), as well as arguably imposing constructions named *palatia*. Importantly, the *casale* also comprised a substantial set of outbuildings, such as storage facilities for cereals, cisterns, and artificial caves, called *arnaria*, complete with niches and air-holes.[22]

The Milanese *cassine* appear to have been less complex, which can be explained, to an extent at least, by their smaller size in comparison to Roman *casali* (which, as we recall, measured a maximum of thirteen hectares as opposed to 555). The most significant source of information regarding these small estates are the *cascine a grappolo*, which were structured around common spaces: these areas usually contained a well, an oven, and a press. An important role was played by mills and, at a later date, around the middle of the fourteenth century, by fulling machines used for paper production.[23]

Significantly more information is available regarding Cistercian *grange*. As I mentioned earlier, *grangia* originally denoted a storage place for cereals — a form of infrastructure which indeed appears to have been central to Cistercian communities, to the extent that it came to define the entirety of their landed estates. Rinaldo Comba suggested in 1985 that the aisled warehouse may have been the sole unifying architectural element of Italian *grange*; however, this can only be proved by a comprehensive archaeological survey of all the surviving *grange* — and such a survey has yet to be carried out.[24] Let us now look more closely at two examples. The *grangia* of Valera must have been a particularly impressive structure: it was located near Lodi, which belonged to the abbey of Chiaravalle Milanese, and was the centre of a substantial land-purchasing operation, which led to the creation of a compact body of landed properties by the middle of the thirteenth century. By 1236 it was encircled by a ditch, and by 1255 an enclosure wall had been added, probably built of stone. It contained a brick kiln and it had a *lobia* (literally, an arcade) which might have been

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22 Carocci and Vendittelli, *L'origine*, pp. 69–78, 85–89; Carocci and Vendittelli, 'Casali', pp. 299–300.

23 This is the case with the *cassine* outside Porta Ticinese, in Milan: cf. De Angelis Cappabianca, 'Le "cassine" tra il XII e il XIV secolo', esp. pp. 379–84.

24 Comba, 'I Cistercensi', pp. 241–42. A recent overview of the Cistercian *grange* located, for the most part, in modern France (some of them, like Vaulerent and Foncalvy, are monumental buildings, which have survived up to the present day) is Blary, 'La question'.

a dormitory or, again, a storage facility.[25] The second example concerns the monastery of S. Croce al Chienti, which was a dependency of the Cistercian abbey of S. Maria di Chiaravalle di Fiastra, in the Marche region. It deserves some scrutiny, as an inventory drawn up in the thirteenth century provides many details of the infrastructure and outbuildings included in S. Croce and its neighbouring *grangia*. *Infra claustrum* (that is to say, within the monastery) S. Croce had one storage facility, one infirmary, two cellars, kitchens, two larders, and a number of rooms for working with fabrics. *Extra claustrum* (outside the monastery) one could find various rural buildings as well as the *grangia*, which was surrounded by two ditches and provided shelter for a large number of farm animals.[26]

We shall focus only briefly on *poderi* — since, as I remarked earlier, there is little information available about them during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. What we can however say is that, firstly, late medieval Tuscan *poderi* were often created by reusing pre-existing structures, thus pointing to a certain degree of continuity in the patterns of at least some rural settlements — even though it is difficult to gauge exactly how far back this practice goes. It was not infrequent for groups of five to ten peasant houses to be combined to create a single *podere*, possibly also as a result of the demographic crisis marking the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[27] This same kind of development can at least be hypothesized with regard to Umbria and Marche, for which however written evidence is less plentiful than is the case for Tuscany.[28] As to their infrastructure, it should be emphasized that the largest *poderi* were cultivated by more than one peasant family, and usually included underground arcades, *colombaie* (that is, towers for the breeding of doves), gardens enclosed by masonry walls, and buildings for the maintenance of canals. Finally, it is worth noting that the landowner's house was frequently used as a storage facility.[29]

The next point I wish to analyse is critical to the understanding of the relationship between landed estates and their buildings on the one hand, and overall economic change on the other. Who paid for these estates and buildings, and how? Here the emphasis is on the social position of the key figures involved, rather than on the types of estates. First and foremost, it was

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25 Chiappa Mauri, 'La costruzione'.

26 Saracco Previdi, 'Grange'. An overview of the documentation of S. Croce al Chienti up to 1291 is Borri, 'Documenti'.

27 Mazzi and Raveggi, *Gli uomini*, pp. 130–31.

28 The classic reference work on the development of *mezzadria poderale* in Umbria is Desplanques, *Campagnes*, pp. 176–81. He argued that the *mezzadria* contract started to take its definitive form during the thirteenth century, whereas one needs to wait for the decades straddling the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to observe the process of *appoderamento*. For a different view, stressing the earlier spread, in the countryside of Perugia, of isolated rural houses (which would be typical of the *mezzadria poderale*) cf. Grohmann, *Città*, II, pp. 893–913. On the Marche region, and the countryside of Ancona in particular, cf. Villani, *I centri*, pp. 63–66.

29 Cf. again Mazzi and Raveggi, *Gli uomini*, esp. pp. 132–34.

the mercantile classes of urban society who were the principal force behind the development of *casali*, *cassine*, and *poderi*. From the 1190s onwards, Roman merchants were fully engaged in European-wide trade networks; the profits derived from this activity were then reinvested in the purchase of land, thus paving the way for the first *incasalamento* and its distinctively expansionist character.[30] Milanese *cassine*, too, particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were built on the initiative of the merchants and bankers who gradually began to replace the old consular aristocracy of the commune.[31] The same pattern applies to Tuscan *poderi*, although the relocation of city-based owners to the countryside becomes clearly visible only in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[32]

The Cistercians are the second group to be considered, in particular the ways they financed *grange*. Firstly, the monks could benefit from donations of landed goods from bishops and major lay aristocrats; moreover, the exemptions from many tributes conceded by popes and emperors further contributed to their wealth. Two examples will suffice. In an attempt to establish good relations with the abbey of S. Maria di Morimondo, which stood on the boundary between their two dioceses, the prelates of Pavia and Milan conceded numerous estates to the resident Cistercian community, thereby playing a pivotal role in the creation of the abbey's substantial landed patrimony over the course of the twelfth century.[33] My second example regards S. Maria di Lucedio in Piedmont, which in the late 1180s was granted by the papacy a series of exemptions from the payment of tithes and tolls (namely those regarding cattle transhumance) which would later be confirmed by Emperor Frederick II; furthermore, over the same period S. Maria received donations from the bishop of Vercelli and the marquis of Monferrato.[34] Nevertheless, the support from aristocrats and sovereigns can hardly account alone for the monumental land-purchasing operations undertaken by Cistercian communities; and it is worth emphasizing that, in some instances, we have no idea where the money came from. This is notably the case with the *grangia* of Valera, which, as I mentioned earlier, was quite possibly one of the grandest Italian *grange* in terms of fortifications and rural buildings, judging from written evidence. It is therefore striking that, as Luisa Chiappa Mauri has argued, it is not at all clear how the landed patrimony

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30 Cf. the list of families involved in the creation of *casali* provided by Maire Vigueur, *L'autre Rome*, p. 88.

31 Cf. De Angelis Cappabianca, 'Le "cassine" tra il XII e il XIV secolo', pp. 398–99; lists of families who took part in the creation of *cassine* can be found in De Angelis Cappabianca, 'Le cascine', p. 10, and in Salvatori, 'Una comunità', p. 204.

32 Classic references are Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans* on the Florentine *catasto* drawn up in 1427; Cherubini, 'La "Tavola delle possessioni"' and Cherubini, 'Proprietari', on the Sienese countryside in the fourteenth century.

33 Occhipinti, 'Il monastero' and Occhipinti, 'Fortuna'.

34 Cf. Panero, 'Forme'. An overview of the privileges granted by popes to Cistercian communities in northern Italy is Cariboni, 'Esenzione'.

of Valera was financed.[35] I would hypothesize that the Cistercians took out loans in order to purchase new lands, probably with the aim of making a profit by selling the agricultural surplus subsequently obtained. This is difficult to prove: credit transactions were seldom written down, and, when they were, in most cases interest rates were not stated explicitly.[36] What we do know, however, is that many Cistercian abbeys were burdened with debts around the middle of the thirteenth century. The accumulation of these debts can be explained by local dynamics, as was the case at Morimondo, which was destroyed by Pavese soldiers in 1237 and plunged into poverty as a result;[37] but I would not exclude the possibility that other religious foundations fell into debt as a consequence of spiralling interest rates.[38]

With the exception of the Cistercians, religious institutions appear to have played a less prominent role than the urban bourgeoisie in the creation of isolated rural estates. There were, it is true, partial exceptions. Some of the thirteenth-century Milanese *cassine* were built by the chapter house of S. Giovanni di Monza and the hospital of S. Simpliciano in Milan. The landed properties of the Church dominated the *Campagna Romana* at least up until 1150, and continued to play an important role after that date; and in the second *incasalamento* it was the clerics who were the protagonists. J.-C. Maire Vigueur has calculated that over half of the Roman *casali* attested between 1348 and 1428 were owned by clerics. But churches and monasteries ceased to be promoters of *cassine* after 1300, and the second *incasalamento* was a retrograde step, resulting from the abandonment of castles and open settlements (named *ville*), which were turned into *casali*; this would appear to confirm the relatively marginal role played by clerics other than Cistercians.[39] The same can be said for rural lay aristocracies, who acted as patrons or benefactors of new Cistercian foundations by granting them lands, but who were in general less proactive than urban owners.[40] Finally, a brief mention should be made of the peasant class, as they too were behind a number of initiatives. The following are a handful of examples. From 1192 onwards notarial documents in Umbria begin to record the existence of *castellaria*, that is, small fortified

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35   Cf. again Chiappa Mauri, 'La costruzione', p. 287.

36   An overview, focused on credit granted to agriculturists in Italy from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, is Gaulin and Menant, 'Endettement'. A point of comparison is provided by the brilliant analysis conducted by Chris Briggs on fourteenth-century England: Briggs, *Credit*, esp. p. 30 on the problems posed by the sources on credit transactions.

37   Cf. the articles cited at note 33.

38   I myself have struggled to explain the widespread indebtedness of Florentine ecclesiastical institutions at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and have had to resort to hypotheses: Tabarrini, *Estate*, ch. 2.

39   De Angelis Cappabianca, 'Le "cassine" tra il XII e il XIV secolo'; Maire Vigueur, 'Les *casali*', pp. 66–67; Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, p. 59. On the second *incasalamento* cf. also Carocci and Vendittelli, 'Casali', pp. 297–98.

40   Examples are Chiaravalle Milanese (Radaelli, 'Archeologia', pp. 297–98), Lucedio (Panero, 'Forme'), Morimondo (Occhipinti, 'Fortuna', p. 316), and Staffarda (Panero, 'Formazione').

rural estates which were apparently constructed by local landowners.[41] Some of the *tecta* in Piedmont were named after the people who built them; these did not belong to any recognizable aristocratic family and are therefore likely to have been small-scale landowners.[42] The creation of rural estates known as *casarene*, in the Marche region, can also be ascribed to the peasant initiative, although these are attested only in the fourteenth century.[43] On a general level, these structures do not appear to have been particularly grand: the written evidence points in that direction, while archaeological remains are virtually non-existent. This is not difficult to comprehend, as small to medium owners were unlikely to have had the wherewithal to make substantial investments in rural buildings and fortifications.

    We shall now move on to the final point of my essay — that is, the purposes for which these estates were created. Again, this is to an extent implicit in previous comments, but some aspects require further development. First of all, one characteristic common to all the types of estates discussed so far was the proximity between cultivators and the land they worked. *Casali*, *cassine*, *grange*, and *poderi* were intended to be places of residence for agricultural labourers; it can be inferred that such a proximity derived from an attempt at enhancing productivity on the part of landowners. In relation to this, landowners were evidently endeavouring to improve agricultural production. This is best demonstrated by the Roman *casali*, where wheat-farming and animal husbandry were closely interconnected; large grain fields such as those found in *casali* required the use of draught animals, which could clear far larger areas of land than a human workforce.[44] For the same reason, the aforementioned *grangia* of S. Croce del Chienti employed a number of farmhands exclusively tasked with tending cattle.[45] Another example is the *grangia* of S. Maria di Campo Imperatore, in Abruzzo. The excavations carried out there from 1997 revealed the presence of small stone buildings called *condole*, and of arcades called *locce* which served as shelters for the monks when they moved the cattle from the mountains down to the plain — also known as vertical transhumance.[46] The exploitation of watercourses and the creation of canals was similarly geared towards the increase in overall agricultural output: this emerges clearly from the documentation concerning the Milanese *cassine*, namely those located right outside Porta Vercellina, and also from the excavation (started in 2013) of the *grangia* of Nosedo, which belonged to the abbey of Chiaravalle Milanese.[47] As a final point, it is worth noting that cereals appear to have been stored

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41 Tiberini, *Le signorie*, p. 191 and following.
42 Comba, *Metamorfosi*, pp. 78–79.
43 Cf. again Saracco Previdi, 'Habitat'; an overview of Marche, Umbria and Lazio in Ait and Lanconelli, 'Successi'.
44 Cf. again, for an overview, Carocci and Vendittelli, 'Casali'.
45 See again Saracco Previdi, 'Grange'.
46 Gabay, 'Grangia'.
47 Cf. note 9 on Milanese *cassine*; on Nosedo, see Radaelli, 'Archeologia'.

in one of the outbuildings which were a constant feature of *casali*, *cassine*, *grange*, and *poderi*. We may assume that a proportion of the stored cereals was not destined for home consumption, but was set aside in order to be sold at market — there was also possible speculation on the price of grain over bad years or bad seasons. This is consistent with evidence from England pointing to an increase in the number of barns and granaries after 1200.[48]

* * *

We can conclude that the creation of *casali*, *cassine*, *grange*, and *poderi* reflects the increase in aggregate demand that characterized the period between *c.* 1150 and *c.* 1250. I would like to briefly outline three possible research avenues which, I hope, may be opened up by this review of the literature on isolated rural estates. First, this literature ought to be re-read in the light of what is known about credit to agriculturists: it cannot be a coincidence that the proliferation of storage facilities coincides, by and large, with the earliest evidence of increasingly consistent loans to peasants, both in cash and kind (which could be added to their sometimes meagre income, and possibly used to pay rent). Second, it should be emphasized that, with the important exception of Cistercian monks (who however would find themselves beset by debts by the middle of the thirteenth century), the social class that on the whole was best placed to finance structured estates and costly rural buildings was that which derived its income from commerce and finance. One might infer that these were the main drivers of economic change over the central Middle Ages, since they delivered the highest profits and therefore facilitated substantial investments; and if the role played by the merchant class in determining and furthering medieval economic growth is beyond dispute, the debate regarding the fundamental causes of that growth, and the relationship between the two, is still an open one.[49] Finally, it should be stressed that only considerable investment could provide tenants and rural workers with costly infrastructures. As Maria Serena Mazzi and Susanna Raveggi have suggested, this helps explain why harsh agrarian regimes, such as the *mezzadria poderale*, might have appeared more convenient and attractive than independent ownership. Whatever their difficulties, *mezzadri* were better equipped and could therefore in some respects enjoy less severe conditions than free peasants.[50] The study of landed estates, their buildings and the way these were financed may therefore shed light on the long-term success of the *mezzadria poderale*.

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48 This topic has been studied with particular regard to the modern age: cf. the collection of essays in Ronsjin, Mignemi, and Herment, eds, *Stocks*. On England cf. Gardiner, 'Stacks', p. 34. The potentially speculative nature of stockpiling grain was already well known by the Carolingians: cf. Devroey, *La Nature*, esp. pp. 141–42.

49 See once again the essays in Franceschi, ed., *La crescita*.

50 Mazzi and Raveggi, *Gli uomini*, esp. pp. 132–34.

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