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THE ARISTOCRACY IN  

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ENGLAND  

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TUSCANY  

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1000–1250



PETER COSS

The Aristocracy in England and Tuscany,  
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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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*To my niece, Béatrice Ware*



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# List of Abbreviations

ANS	<i>Anglo-Norman Studies</i>
ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASF	Archivio di Stato di Firenze
ASI	<i>Archivio storico italiano</i>
ASP	Archivio di Stato di Pisa
ASSi	Archivio di Stato di Siena
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BSP	<i>Bollettino Storico Pisano</i>
CDA	<i>Codex Diplomaticus Amiatinus</i>
CISAM	Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto)
DB	Domesday Book
DBI	<i>Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani</i>
EcHR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
JMH	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
Rot. Litt. Claus.	<i>Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum</i>
RRAN	<i>Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum</i>
S	Document number assigned in P. H. Sawyer (ed.), <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography</i>
TCE	<i>Thirteenth-Century England</i>
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
VCH	<i>Victoria History of the Counties of England</i>



# 1

## Introduction

The reader needs to know the genesis of this book. Having studied the English gentry from a variety of perspectives and completed a book examining its origins,<sup>1</sup> I felt that an important dimension was missing: a comparative one. I thus decided to compare the English gentry with the Tuscan nobility during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and was fortunate enough to receive a Leverhulme Study Abroad Fellowship and spend the better part of an academic year in Pisa gathering material. Other commitments and a five-year stint as head of school at Cardiff University prevented me from continuing the project. When I did so, after retirement in 2013, it soon became clear to me, as it will to the readers of this book, that it was not feasible to begin this study in the thirteenth century. On the contrary, it was imperative to begin with an understanding of social evolution in Italy during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a time of considerable change for the aristocracy. Hence the current work. This book is therefore a prequel to one which I still hope to write. In the meantime, it has an additional rationale of its own. It struck me forcibly that historians of medieval England, although aware of developments elsewhere, most particularly in France and to a lesser extent Germany, would benefit from bringing Mediterranean societies more into focus when studying England. The first part of this book is therefore devoted to an in-depth examination of the aristocracy in Tuscany as studied by Italian historians and others working within the Italian tradition. I decided to concentrate on a particular region to make the study more manageable, and Tuscany was chosen because of its accessibility. Its records, notwithstanding important gaps, are reasonably wide-ranging and its historiography rewarding, lively, and progressive. The second part of the book turns to England. My aim here is not a comparative study as such, despite my original intention, but rather to bring insights drawn from Tuscan history and Tuscan historiography into play in understanding the evolution of English society from around the year 1000 to around 1250. I will therefore conclude not with a comparison as such but with some general issues of interpretation.

In the last two decades some senior scholars in England have produced important works of synthesis devoted to the aristocracies of particular eras within our time-span, most notably those by Ann Williams on the late Anglo-Saxon period, by Judith A. Green on Anglo-Norman England, and by David Crouch on and around

<sup>1</sup> Peter Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry* (Cambridge, 2003).

twelfth-century England more generally.<sup>2</sup> They are supplemented by essays on individual aristocrats and aristocratic families and on specific aspects of aristocratic life by these and by many other scholars. In offering my own perspective across the period in question, my aim is in no way to substitute for this work but to supplement it with a study that is both synoptic and interpretative. It draws on the breadth of English historiography but is also guided by the Italian experience. In doing so I wish to challenge the interpretative framework within which much English history of this period tends to be written. I am referring to the grand narrative which revolves around Magna Carta and English exceptionalism, sometimes referred to as the ‘peculiarity of the English’, which represents the continuance of the Whig interpretation of history, albeit in somewhat diluted form.<sup>3</sup> According to this narrative, a period of governmental advance in the later twelfth century was followed by a tyranny in the form of King John. This led to a reaction within the baronage which gave rise to Magna Carta in 1215. Magna Carta with its subsequent reissues constituted a major constitutional advance, and became ingrained in English consciousness. Wedded to important principles of action, the higher aristocracy became in effect proto-constitutionalists. The restrictions placed upon the king, who was now brought under the law, led directly to the institution of parliament, to national assemblies with wide representation—knights from the counties and later burgesses from the towns—creating the germ of the institution we know today. Representation reflected a keen desire for participation in national politics among the knights in particular, the minor aristocracy of England. This interpretation, or rather this emphasis within English history, is projected backwards into Anglo-Saxon England, where a maximalist view of the Anglo-Saxon state and an emphasis on local institutions, most particularly the county court, gives a sense of singularity to English institutions. The advances in governance during the tenth and eleventh centuries were upheld by the Norman kings, providing the basis for the more sustained ‘take-off’ of the twelfth century. Such is the narrative in very bold form. Now, there is no denying notable events nor the development of key institutions and the excellent scholarship that has gone into their elucidation. However, there are obvious dangers here in terms of teleology, of idealism, and of essentialism: idealism in the sense of interpreting events as a reflection of altruistic and progressive motives; teleology in that an historical present is seen as a stage in the realization of an historical future; and essentialism in the evocation of something like the spirit of the nation. A national myth tends to ensue. Unless we are careful, we see past society and past events

<sup>2</sup> E.g. A. Williams, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900–1066* (London, 2008); J. A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge, 1997); D. Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000–1300* (London, 1992) and *The English Aristocracy, 1070–1272: A Social Transformation* (New Haven, Conn., 2011).

<sup>3</sup> I set out my position in greater detail in P. Coss, ‘Presentism and the “Myth” of Magna Carta’, *P&P* 234 (Feb. 2017), 227–35.

through a sort of prism, a danger accentuated when this perspective is not explicit but expressed through tone and emphasis. By offering a study of the aristocracy across a wide time-frame and with themes drawn from Italian historiography, I hope to obviate some of these tendencies and to appreciate the aristocracy firmly within its own contexts.

There is another current approach, however, which I also wish to bring into question. This one, Tory rather than Whig, instead of standing alongside society's social elites as a means of entry into their world, positively identifies with them and their interests. Sometimes this consciously runs counter to the tendency of neo-Marxists like Rodney Hilton, who identified with the peasantry as an expression of history from below. This *soi-disant* 'anti-Marxist' approach becomes, in some hands, a broader crusade against perspectives which centre on the analysis of social structure. Drawing on the deep strain of empiricism within English historiography, this approach, with its hypothesis- and concept-light empiricism, eschews the study of social stratification, social terminology, and the social interaction between power-rich elites and others, in favour of a mode of thinking that centres around aristocratic culture. The result, notwithstanding governmental advance and the exercise of high-level power, is a sort of social stasis that makes it difficult to comprehend social dynamics, let alone social change.<sup>4</sup> The understanding and explanation of these last phenomena is, in fact, a major part of my purpose here.

At this point it is necessary to defend the use of 'aristocracy' to define the object of this study. The word 'aristocracy' was invented of course in ancient Greece, and denotes a form of government: 'government by the best'. As used by historians, however, 'aristocracy' is a generic term denoting a broad social elite which they perceive through their sources. 'Aristocrats' are those who exercise power and who enjoy the prestige and the trappings which power brings.<sup>5</sup> There is no watertight definition of aristocracy, not least because its characteristics tend to shift across time and space.<sup>6</sup> This is perhaps part of the reason why historians of medieval England have preferred to delineate rather than define the aristocracy. Historians of medieval Italy have tended to be more forthcoming. Chris Wickham, for example, explores the meaning of aristocracy in *The Mountains and the City*, and I have drawn considerable inspiration from this study.<sup>7</sup> My working definition

<sup>4</sup> This view has been expressed forcefully by Nicholas Vincent in 'Sources and Methods: Some Anglo-German Comparisons', in T. Huthwelker, J. Pelzer, and M. Wemhöner (eds), *Princely Rank in Late Medieval Europe: Trodden Paths and Promising Avenues* (Oxford, 2013), 119–38, at 135–6. I have responded at greater length in P. Coss, 'Bastard Feudalism and the Framing of Thirteenth-Century England', in R. Balzaretto, J. Barrow, and P. Skinner (eds), *Italy and Medieval Europe: Papers for Chris Wickham on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (Oxford, 2018), 110–22.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of aristocracy, see J. Powis, *Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1984), ch. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Green, *Aristocracy of Anglo-Norman England*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> C. J. Wickham, *The Mountains and the City: The Tuscan Apennines in the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988), ch. 10. It was published in Italian as *La montagna e la città. L'Appennino toscano nell'Alto Medioevo* (Turin, 1997). I have cited the English edition.

is that the aristocracy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries constituted a sector, or sectors, of society that enjoyed self-esteem and exercised power (including local power) based on the possession of property and was strongly imbued with military values. Eleventh- and twelfth-century Italy, where our study begins, was a militarized society where the possession of land and other forms of property was accompanied by various manifestations of military power, by the progressive decline of public institutions, by the rise of seigniorial authority in its many guises, and by the prominence of vertical social relations and forms of personal dependence and subjection. Here, as elsewhere, aristocracy also denotes a way of life with concomitant behavioural traits and a general sense of superiority over other (and hence non-aristocratic) members of society. As we will see, much of this applied *mutatis mutandis* to the England of the same period.

Notwithstanding the detectable sense of social superiority projected by its members, on which historians rely, aristocracy is nonetheless an historian's construct, generally employed for ease of analysis. It is therefore necessary to justify its employment over, or at least alongside, the vocabulary employed within the societies we are studying. There are after all historians who prefer to restrict themselves to terms of contemporary usage. What terms were available to describe the elites of the eleventh and twelfth centuries? In England we identify principally ealdormen then earls, king's thegns and thegns in the pre-Conquest period, followed by earls, barons and knights in the post-Conquest world. In Tuscany, after the greatest lords—those with the title of marquis or count—we come across *capitanei*, especially in northern Italy, a term used to denote the 'middling aristocrats', as Chris Wickham has called them.<sup>8</sup> In Tuscany such men are often referred to as *langobardi* or *lambardi*, an allusion to the elite of landowners of Lombard origin conquered by the Franks. Another term found in the sources with similar meaning was *cattani*. Below these was a stratum called *valvassores* or *secondi milites*, a second rank of knights. The adoption of this terminology by historians carries the danger of developing an overly rigid or schematic picture, more especially as *capitaneus* and *valvassor* could be used to denote a first and second rank among holders of fiefs, *valvassor* being derived from 'the vassal of a vassal'. From the opposite perspective, the inconsistent usage of terminology in the sources makes some form of overarching terminology essential if we are to make sense of the world in general. *Miles* (knight), for example, was a term of wide contemporary usage, but deeply problematic. Whether and when knights should be considered part of the aristocracy is an issue which we will tackle in due course.<sup>9</sup>

What then of the nobility? After all, *nobilis* was indubitably a medieval term.<sup>10</sup> There are, however, two serious difficulties when it comes to its deployment by

<sup>8</sup> Wickham, *The Mountains and the City*, 269.

<sup>9</sup> See below, Chs 8 and 10.

<sup>10</sup> The historiography of nobility is vast. For an excellent discussion of the debates on nobility in France, see J. Flori, *L'essor de la chevalerie, XI–XII siècles* (Geneva, 1986), ch. 1. Two important collections of essays in English are T. Reuter (ed.), *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the Ruling Classes of*

historians of this period. The first is that until the late twelfth century its usage tended to be restricted to the most highly placed in society, counts, earls, and the like, and to others whose functions, wealth and power tended to put them in the same bracket. These are the people referred to more often in Latin sources as *proceres*, *magnates*, *optimates*, *maiores*, and similar terms. This is a distinction of serious historical importance, but it is one that we cannot readily extend to the middle and lower levels of the social elite who are equally components of this enquiry. The second difficulty is that *nobilis* was deployed most often in the sources as an adjective rather than a substantive, nobility being one of the epithets used to describe the powerful. It could indicate that an individual came from elevated and/or ancient stock. It could indicate the possession of certain virtues or qualities, often elusive, which raised them above others.<sup>11</sup> In short, the word was polyvalent. Moreover, there is a tension between the terms ‘aristocracy’ and ‘nobility’—one being an historian’s tool, the other a term of medieval usage—which is compounded by a tendency among historians to use them as synonymous.<sup>12</sup> This makes it difficult to detect elements of social change, and in particular to deal with the crystallization of the broader nobility during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries as, paradoxically, a fairly wide but at the same time exclusive elite; only at this point, arguably, is the term usable to describe the socially elevated as a whole. The position taken up here will be that of the Italian historian Gabriella Rossetti, who wrote in her introduction to a collective study of 1981: ‘we will not use the term *nobili* indiscriminately to indicate the *ceti superiori* [the ruling strata] ... but will reserve it for the group conscious of its own distinction and known as *nobiles*.’<sup>13</sup> In this work I will therefore follow those historians who deploy ‘aristocracy’ widely to include all levels of the secular elite, and reserve the use of ‘nobility’ until its crystallization in the late twelfth century.

An additional advantage of deploying the word ‘aristocracy’ is that it can be modified to describe levels within the elite. Many Italian historians divide the aristocracy into the high aristocracy (*alta aristocrazia*) on the one hand and a median and minor aristocracy (*media e piccola aristocrazia*) on the other. For greater clarification one can also speak of an *aristocrazia intermedia* or intermediate

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*France and Germany from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century* (Amsterdam, 1979) and A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations* (Woodbridge, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> For some discussion of the problems involved in deploying the term ‘nobility’, see Crouch, *Image of Aristocracy*, 2–9.

<sup>12</sup> For the opposite view from the one being expressed here, see e.g. T. Reuter, ‘The Medieval Nobility in Twentieth-Century Historiography’, in M. Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), 177–202.

<sup>13</sup> G. Rossetti, ‘Definizione dei ceti dirigenti e metodo della ricerca di storia familiare’, in *I ceti dirigenti in Toscana nell’età precomunale* (Pisa, 1981), 60: ‘non useremo indiscriminatamente il termine “nobili” per indicare i ceti superiori, o soltanto quelli che un titolo o una qualifica d’ufficio pongono ai vertici della scala sociale, ma riserveremo alla presa di coscienza comune della distinzione di un gruppo, qualificato collettivamente come “nobiles”’. For a discussion of this volume, see below, Ch. 2.

aristocracy, as will be seen. Another advantage of aristocracy, and one which is capitalized upon by Italian historians, is that it can be qualified in a variety of ways: according to social level;<sup>14</sup> according to function or lifestyle;<sup>15</sup> according to time;<sup>16</sup> and according to place or origins.<sup>17</sup> One can speak, therefore, of an urban aristocracy (*aristocrazia cittadina*) as opposed to a rural one. Here one must acknowledge that the tendency of the Tuscan aristocracy to concentrate in cities (though variable across time and space) in contrast to the more consciously rural aristocracy of medieval England might be considered a constraint or limitation upon this study. The same may be said of the effects of the strong English state upon the characteristics and behavioural traits of its aristocracy. On the other hand, it can be argued that since this work is not a comparative study as such, the opportunity to observe the aristocracies in widely differing circumstances is in fact a strength. In any case the differences are not always as stark as they might appear, and require qualification. Here it is enough to say that the urban aristocracy of wealthy cities tended to share the characteristics of the contemporary aristocracy in general, including property and wealth, military proclivity, hierarchical relationships, collective elite values, impressive habitations, local power, and a sense of innate social superiority. The epithets qualifying 'aristocracy' have considerable utility if used judiciously and cautiously, and as long as one does not fall into the trap of investing them with particular and mutually exclusive interests, as in the foundations of political parties.

The *aristocrazia* was not of course static; on the contrary, it was continually expanding across the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One has only to think of the lands granted by bishops, for example, during the eleventh century or of the social rise of *milites*, sometimes from relatively humble origins, during the twelfth. Neither should we see elite behaviour as fixed and unchanging. The distinction between minor aristocrats and the free proprietors immediately below—sometimes called *boni homines* in Tuscany and *probi homines* and similar phrases in England (especially where judicial procedures are concerned)—was not always a clear one or one that could not be bridged. In what follows I will therefore take as inclusive an approach as possible, bearing in mind that when all nuances have been made, it is clear enough that throughout the period there was persistently such an elite whose members regarded themselves as separable from the remainder of the population.

Part I of the book will examine the characteristics of the Tuscan aristocracy across the first two and a half centuries of the second millennium. Their origins, interests, strategies for survival, and exercise of power will all receive attention.

<sup>14</sup> We also find e.g. *aristocrazia maggiore*, *aristocrazia magnatizia*, *aristocrazia minore*.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. *aristocrazia militare*, *aristocrazia placitale*, *aristocrazia signorile*, *aristocrazia mercantile e finanziaria*, *aristocrazia feudale*.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. *aristocrazia comunale* and *aristocrazia consolare*.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. *aristocrazia rurale*, *aristocrazia locale*, *aristocrazia diocesana* (i.e. of the diocese).

It will look at how the aristocracy was structured, at the several levels of aristocracy and at how these interrelated. What were the internal dynamics that governed aristocratic life? How did they perceive their world and what self-perceptions can be inferred? How did they function in relation to non-aristocratic sectors of society? It will look at how aristocratic society changed across this period, and at how far changes were internally generated as opposed to responses to external stimuli. What was the relationship between the aristocracy and public authority? How did aristocrats relate to higher powers: to kings and those who exercised delegated royal authority, and to the city communes? In essence this is a study of the nature of medieval society as seen from an aristocratic perspective.

It will proceed as follows. Chapter 2 will deal with the contextual framework under three headings: first, the Italian context, concentrating on the decline of the kingdom of Italy which provides a backdrop to this study; secondly, the Tuscan context, highlighting its geography and its particular history; and finally, the historiography of Tuscany up to the time when Italian scholars drew back from their own grand narrative centring on the binary distinction between the city as the site of progress and the backward-facing feudal countryside. Some key terminology is introduced during the course of this chapter. Chapter 3 examines the general characteristics of the Tuscan aristocracy across both town and city during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the important shifts which took place. It will centre on Florence and its *contado*, the Fiorentino. The reader will be introduced to the most recent Italian scholarship and its terminological underpinning. Chapter 4 concentrates on the urban aristocracy, the *aristocrazia consolare*, with an in-depth study of the aristocracy of Pisa, chosen for the richness of its sources and the power of its historiography. Chapter 5 complements the preceding chapter with a study of members of the aristocracy who chose to remain aloof from the cities. Primary attention will be focused on the Guidi, one of the most powerful comital families in Tuscany, in the context of private and privatized public rights and concentrating on their social relations and ambitions. Chapter 6 will move to the aristocracy of southern Tuscany. Here, in addition to the history of the Aldobrandeschi and their long process of transformation from imperial functionaries to a territorial dynasty, I will look at minor aristocratic families and members of *consorterie*, often called *lambardi*, who held considerable local power over the peasantry, operated from castles, and showed initiative, perhaps one should say enterprise, in the utilization of resources. Many were eventually drawn into the ambit of Siena. Chapter 7 will be devoted to the themes of social violence, insecurity, and instability within the Tuscan aristocracy and to the means by which social equilibrium was achieved and maintained. Chapter 8 deals with the significance of knighthood in the history of the Tuscan aristocracy, looking at the crystallization of the nobility in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and at the relationship between the two. These last two chapters will look

across both the urban and rural worlds, with Pisa chosen again as an especially rewarding focus.

Part II will be devoted to the aristocracy in England. Concepts and approaches introduced in Part I will be deployed here. Among the themes that will be carried over will be: the decline in the importance of the aristocracy of office; the importance of elite residences and of the control of space, both in town and country; the role of the aristocracy in the exercise of public justice and the significance of its privatization; the continuing significance of *Königsnähe*; the interaction between centre and periphery; and clientage and vertical association. I will also look closely at the expansive nature of lordship, flexibility apropos resource utilization, the role of violence and the threat of violence in aristocratic relations, and the role of arbitration and private conciliation. The structure of Part II is a fairly conventional one. Chapter 9 examines the structure and characteristics of the aristocracy in pre-Conquest England and its role in Anglo-Saxon society. Although the maximalist view is rejected, this part of the book concurs that Anglo-Saxon England was a state of the Carolingian type where public authority was much in evidence. Chapter 10 turns to an in-depth study of the structure and articulation of aristocratic society in Anglo-Norman England. The modified honorial perspective of Anglophone scholarship is complemented by Maria Elena Cortese's concepts of zonal and multi-zonal aristocracy, and by the distinction she makes between the *aristocrazia intermedia* and the minor aristocratic families whom she describes as 'punitiform'.<sup>18</sup> Warwickshire and surrounding counties are taken as a case study. Chapter 11 uses the relatively lax kingship of Stephen as an opportunity to observe the expansive nature of Anglo-Norman aristocratic lordship more closely. To get closer to an understanding, I have taken the earls of Chester, primarily Ranulf II, as a case study, mirroring the earlier studies of the Guidi and the Aldobrandeschi. I have re-examined Ranulf's lordship over Coventry in terms of an Italian *signoria*. This chapter also takes the history of the Chester earls through the various vicissitudes in their power through to the end of the dynasty in the 1230s. The reader will notice that I have endeavoured to take my examples as far as possible from central England, but without turning this part of the book into a regional study.<sup>19</sup> The final substantive chapter re-examines the role of the aristocracy in Angevin and post-Angevin England, re-situating Magna Carta within aristocratic history and drawing on both the English and

<sup>18</sup> See below, Ch. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Central England equates more or less with the kingdom of Mercia, from Offa's Dyke to the borders of East Anglia and from the Humber to the Thames. See J. Hunt, *Warriors, Warlords and Saints: The Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia* (Alcester, 2016). Most of my examples come from the counties included in Domesday circuits IV and V: Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Staffordshire in circuit IV and Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire in circuit V.

Italian experience. The crystallization of the nobility is also considered here, but from an English perspective to set against the Italian. Finally, the chapter looks again at the origins of bastard feudalism. The book concludes with a series of reflections on the nature of aristocratic society, drawing upon both parts of the book. I will look here at lordship, at historians and the 'dichotomies' of public and private, locality and centre, and vertical and horizontal. Finally, I consider the issue of how change was generated within aristocratic society.



PART I  
THE TUSCAN ARISTOCRACY



## 2

# The Contextual Framework

Before embarking on the study of the aristocracy in Tuscany during the time-span of roughly 1000 to 1250, it is necessary to examine the various contexts within which one must operate. I have identified three of these. The first is the Italian context, that is to say in effect the disintegration of the Italian kingdom during the course of what has been described as the iron century. This is the long tenth century, stretching from the deposition and death of the last Carolingian ruler in 887–8 to the earlier decades of the eleventh century when the full consequences of that disintegration were in play. Towards the end of this section I will introduce some of the basic terminology that will be encountered during the course of the book. The second context is that of Tuscany itself, its characteristics, history, and peculiarities which helped to condition the evolution of the aristocracy. The third context is the historiography of Tuscany, which unfolded to some degree within an overall Italian historiography but which also developed within its own confines and in fact exerted an influence upon the latter. These contexts are not exclusive; indeed, they overlap. Nonetheless it seems to be the most effective way to proceed. Some of the issues dealt with here in summary terms will be treated in a more detailed manner during the course of the book.

### The Italian Context

When Charlemagne conquered the Lombard kingdom in 774 he became the ruler of north and central Italy, including the duchy of Spoleto but minus the patrimony of St Peter, later known as the Papal States. This, then, was the kingdom of Italy. There is not the space here to look in detail at Carolingian Italy, although some of its characteristics will emerge in due course. A sense of how the kingdom dissolved is, however, essential if we are to gain an understanding of the evolution of the aristocracy.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the second millennium Italy barely existed

<sup>1</sup> There are two particularly useful précis of developments available in English: C. J. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society* (London, 1981) and G. Sergi, 'The Kingdom of Italy', in T. Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History vol. III: c.900–c.1024* (Cambridge, 1999), 346–71. The events are discussed in V. Fumagalli, *Il regno italico* (Turin, 1986) and O. Capitani, *Storia dell'Italia medievale, 410–1216* (Rome–Bari, 1986), and the operation of government by G. Tabacco, 'Il Regno italico nei secoli IX–XI', in *Ordinamenti militari in occidente nell'alto medioevo*, CISAM (Spoleto, 1968), 399–427; 'L'impero romano-germanico e la sua crisi (secoli X–XIV)', in N. Tranfaglia and M. Firpo (eds), *La Storia. I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea, II* (Turin, 1986), 307–38;

as a state. Whereas the Carolingian King Louis II (844–75) had still ruled by means of a state bureaucracy, his *missi* (literally, the king's 'messengers'), counts, and bishops in the cities, by the end of the tenth century the bureaucracy was dissolving, the counts were barely different from other major landowners, and the high aristocracy, lay and ecclesiastical, were orientated towards their own local interests rather than the state. Power had become localized. As Chris Wickham has put it, central government had been replaced by a 'pullulation of little powers'.<sup>2</sup> The end of Carolingian kingship in 887 had opened a period of civil war between rival claimants. From then until the German emperor Otto I took the Italian throne in 962 was the age of the so-called 'national kings'. They were descended from the Carolingians on the female side, enjoyed solid patrimonies and clienteles, and were drawn from the great officials of the realm. This meant that they belonged to the same social level as other high-ranking official families. The unopposed rule of Berengar I from 905 to 922 was pivotal in that it witnessed a crescendo in the alienation of land and rights to royal supporters. He gave away fiscal land, fortifications, juridical powers, tolls, and other items on an unprecedented scale. The immediate background to the granting of the right to build 'castles'<sup>3</sup> was the threat of Hungarian incursions, and indeed this was invoked in his charters. In reality he was systematically buying support from the great men of the realm. The granting of fortifications had a further significance, however, in that it underlined the king's military weakness. At the same time the privatization of military service around the clientele of office-holding aristocrats, already a feature of Carolingian society, was given a great boost by civil wars. The traditional collective public responsibility was rapidly giving way to private power. There had been no revolution in government as such, but rather an adaptation of Carolingian institutions in favour of magnate power.

Many royal grants or diplomas went to the church, most especially to bishops.<sup>4</sup> The Carolingian norm had been to balance the power of bishops and counts, with the latter being responsible for military forces. However, bishops were by now increasingly important political players with their own followings of tenants and vassals. They became the major power in many cities, confining the counts to the countryside. By the end of the tenth century the bishops were dominant in many areas. Even in the countryside, moreover, the power of the counts was increasingly compromised by the granting of immunities for church lands. Immunity had a

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and *Sperimentazioni del potere nell'alto medioevo* (Turin, 1993). See also P. Cammarosano, *Nobili e re. L'Italia politica dell'alto medioevo* (Rome, 1998), chs 10–12, and more recently M. Valenti and C. Wickham (eds), *Italy, 888–962: A Turning Point/Italia, 888–962. Una svolta* (Turnhout, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 68.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of the history of castles in Tuscany, see below, Chs 5 and 6.

<sup>4</sup> Grants to religious bodies are of course more likely to have been preserved. For the forms of surviving documentation, see P. Cammarosano, *Italia medievale. Struttura e geografia delle fonti scritte* (Rome, 1991).

long history. By the tenth century, however, it went beyond excluding the king's officials and the exemption from various dues to involve the exercise of *districtus*, that is to say the right to judge, to punish, and to raise troops. Moreover, immunity was increasingly extended to castles, so that they became locations for the exercise of concentrated lordship. Governance was becoming less integrated and coherent. The counts too gained in autonomy. By the end of the tenth century the office had become the private property of the families that held it. The hereditary nature of public office was increasingly accepted and a dynastic spirit came to the fore. At the same time the power of the counts was under challenge, not only from outside but also from below. Authority in the countryside was becoming increasingly fragmented and politics were becoming localized. A strong rural aristocracy exercising judicial rights emerged. In the cities matters were rather different. From the middle decades of the century the authority of the bishops was extending into the countryside. Where the bishop held power with judicial immunity, he now lacked any counterweight. Moreover, once this power had been alienated by kings it could not be recalled. In short, by the end of the tenth century both bishops and leading aristocratic families saw their interests in terms of strong local or regional power rather than in association with the royal court.

Later kings found the changes that had stemmed very largely from the time of Berengar I to be essentially irreversible. His successor, Hugh of Arles (926-47), although a powerful opponent when it came to dealing with rivals, had limited capacity to intervene in local matters, and faced a serious problem over loyalty.<sup>5</sup> He solved the latter to some degree by appointing relatives to office. Thus, for example, his brother Boso and then his illegitimate son Hubert were given rule over Tuscany, and in Hubert's case Spoleto as well. Other close relatives were given major offices in the church. Nonetheless his control over magnates was weak. Since for the most part they did not hold their land directly from him, loyalty was largely a matter of private negotiation. By the time Otto I took over the kingdom in 962, public authority was very weak. Although Otto was able to arrest the decline to some degree, his power was largely dependent upon his military strength. A particularly significant development that began in the 990s was the granting or selling off of fiscal rights, adding to the effects of the gradual breakdown of local government. The death of Otto III in 1002 was followed by a brief hiatus under Arduino of Ivrea, but the German monarchy was restored in 1004. The imperial connection became a long-standing feature of the monarchy, but it did not lead to an increase in royal power on the ground. A symbolic moment in the collapse of Italian kingship was the burning of the royal palace at Pavia by its inhabitants in

<sup>5</sup> For the politics of his reign and his relations with the aristocracy, see G. Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo. Il Perpendiculum di Attone di Vercelli e la storia politica del regno italico* (Spoleto, 2012). For Berengar, see B. H. Rosenwein, "The Family Politics of Berengar I, King of Italy, 888-924," *Speculum* 71 (1996), 247-89.

1024 at the end of the reign of Henry II (1004–24). ‘Rulers after 1024’, writes Wickham, ‘were left posturing in a vacuum; the history of Italy lay elsewhere.’<sup>6</sup> Italy was in fact a polycentric structure, and local hegemony was effectively sanctioned.

What did all of this mean for the aristocracy?<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the first thing to note is the rise of new aristocratic families at the top, whose members were once the vassals and tenants of Carolingian bishops and magnates. These families like the Supponidi, Unrochinghi, and Guidoni—had constituted what German scholars call a *Reichsadel*, with widespread interests and power revolving around the court. These families had largely died out by the end of the millennium, and those that survived, like the Obertenghi, developed interests more in keeping with the new age. They tended to have more concentrated interests now. Another good example of this is the Berardenghi, whose interests lay east of Siena.<sup>8</sup> The new magnates in particular tended to concentrate their power in single regions. Most of them were of Lombard origin. Although they still held offices and these offices involved land, they were no longer the basis of their power, and the titles of count and marquis were by the start of our period largely a matter of personal status. Those of Emilia studied by Vito Fumagalli are archetypal.<sup>9</sup> We do not need to look specifically at these here. There is one family, however, whose power did revolve somewhat around comital office and, since we will be dealing with it later on, something needs to be said of the house of Canossa.<sup>10</sup> Their founder was Adalberto-Atto, who belonged to a Lombard family which seems to have come from the Appenine borders of the territory of Lucca, where in fact Canossa itself is located. He was rewarded by Otto I for his support, receiving the counties of Reggio and Modena and later Mantua. He built up large landholdings in the Po marshes and later in the plains. Through land clearance and the creation of compact lordships, the family had developed considerable power by the first decade of the eleventh century. Boniface of Canossa, a marquis from c.1013 to 1052, was a powerful landowner whose interests extended into Tuscany. He was the recipient of royal patronage and was created marquis of Tuscia by Conrad II in 1027. He held a palace at Mantua but ruled largely from his rural castles. By this date few families operated from the countryside on the same scale as the Canossa; they show, however, that it could still be done in this period. Another example is the Aldobrandeschi of southern Tuscany, whom we shall meet later on. In some respects Tuscany has a rather different history from other regions, as will be

<sup>6</sup> Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 181.

<sup>7</sup> In what follows I have drawn on the splendid synthesis by Luigi Provero: L. Provero, *L'Italia dei poteri locali. Secoli X–XII* (Rome, 1998). See also his ‘Forty Years of Rural History for the Italian Middle Ages’, in I. Alfonso (ed.), *The Rural History of Medieval European Societies: Trends and Perspectives* (Turnhout, 2007), 141–72.

<sup>8</sup> P. Cammarosano, *La famiglia dei Berardenghi. Contributo alla storia della società senese nei secoli XI–XIII*, CISAM (Spoleto, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> V. Fumagalli, *Terra e società nell'Italia padana*, 2nd edn (Turin, 1976), 80–123.

<sup>10</sup> V. Fumagalli, *Le origini di una grande dinastia feudale. Adalberto-Atto di Canossa* (Tübingen, 1971).

discussed in due course. Such exceptions aside, comital power on the whole had become more restricted and the public authority exercised by the counts tended to revolve around areas under their specific control. This was primarily because they concentrated their authority where their own patrimony was strongest, pulling out of areas where it was not. As a result the old counties—the Carolingian circumscriptions—faded and new territorial configurations took their place. Italian historians recognize this development by substituting the traditional word for county, the *comitatus*, by a new one: the *contea*. Another major difference was that whereas the Carolingian system had depended upon royal delegation to the richest men in the counties, who were often also royal vassals, the element of delegation was now lost, with the result that the relationship between land and power became direct and unmediated by the king. Notwithstanding these developments, however, the exercise of public justice, even though privatized, remained an important ingredient in the legitimation of comital power.

The tenth century witnessed the further development of other phenomena that were already features of Carolingian society. One was the aristocratic clientele, the groups of men dependent upon their lord, much bolstered by the institution of vassalage and backed by oaths of fidelity. This had obvious military connotations. Kings came to rely on their own vassals and upon the vassals of their counts and bishops. It allowed for swift mobilization. The growth of clienteles had important ramifications. Men had to be rewarded. One consequence was the benefice, land held on conditional tenure, that is to say in return for service. Far commoner in Italy, as far as written records are concerned at least, was the land lease, often granted on a long-term basis. Leases tended to be granted for money rents, and these were often small in relation to the size of the property. The leases rarely mention military service or even political loyalty. Although they were public documents, they tended nonetheless to be the product of personal relationships. In the tenth century the lease became the predominant form of grant, with the benefice essentially just one version of it. The land or other interest involved soon turned into outright property. In this way much of the property that ecclesiastical landowners had accrued passed into the hands of minor aristocrats and others. We should not imagine, however, that these leases were always granted voluntarily; on the contrary, direct pressure was often brought to bear. By this means many families became part of the bishops' clienteles. By the eleventh century a powerful minor aristocracy had emerged whose wealth was based on leases. At the turn of the millennium many were holding lordships centred on a lease of the tithes of a baptismal church, known as a *pieve*. Moreover, royal vassals had also prospered in the tenth century, with offices and benefices becoming the property of the holder's family. The public lands which a count held turned into proprietary lands and subject to division among heirs. The title of count often came to be used by all the male members of the family. One should also note the functionaries of the counts, the viscounts and custodians of the castles. These positions offered obvious and

sometimes substantial opportunities for minor aristocrats. The downside for the greater lords in all of this was that such lesser offices could also become hereditary and constitute a patrimony in their own right.

Lords had a need for armed service, for knights or *milites*.<sup>11</sup> The spread of conditional tenures, benefices or fiefs, led to the appearance of military courts where military tenants gave judgement. An important milestone is taken to be the *Edictum de beneficiis* (also known as the *Constitutio de feudis*) of 1037.<sup>12</sup> This has both a wider and a specific context. Kings had traditionally called upon the military clientele of their own vassals and of the churches, and considered themselves to have a specific rapport with them. This was necessarily so, given their importance for the viability of the royal armies. Discontent among sub-vassals could seriously threaten the whole enterprise. The specific context for the edict was the siege of Milan, when the king, Conrad II, pronounced both security of tenure and hereditability to vassals holding in benefice. None should be deprived without the judgement of his equals, with the emperor being the ultimate arbiter in such matters. Moreover, it was to apply both to major and to minor vassals, that is to say both vassals and vassals of vassals. In one sense it could be said to have preserved the residual rights of the crown; in another sense it showed just how circumscribed these now were. At Milan, the wealthy and powerful bishops knew two levels of secular subordinates: the *capitanei*, whose power was often centred on *pievi*, and the *valvassores*, vassals of the *capitanei*. In the north the *valvassores* were also known as *secundi milites* and in Tuscany as *lambardi*. By the early eleventh century many of these minor aristocrats were already holding their own castles, small strongholds which served as centres of power. These tended to be different in scale from the castles established a century before. Castles were a means by which aristocrats exercised judicial control over the peasantry.

In the countryside the social world was changing. By the year 1000 the old manorial system was largely a thing of the past. Once lords had given up direct cultivation of their demesnes and the consequent need for labour services, pressure on their tenants eased. Tenants now paid predominantly money rents, with some rents in kind. Slavery too had gradually disappeared. Tenants were largely free, not servile. In many cases they were subject to the petty jurisdiction of their lords. On the other hand, there were many independent peasant proprietors, some of whom were to rise into the minor aristocracy. The future for domination lay in the acquisition of public rights as a consequence of the dissolution of the state. In the early eleventh century, rural society was complex. Wealth and power were not apportioned in accordance with neat categories. As Cinzio Violante emphasized, some of the great lords were losing control of lands to their vassals

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of *milites* in the Tuscan context, see below, Ch. 8.

<sup>12</sup> The context is described and thoroughly discussed in C. Violante, *La società milanese nell'età precomunale* (Bari, 1953), pt II, chs 1 and 2, 169–204.

whose power was stronger on the ground.<sup>13</sup> Many small proprietors sought the help of the strong, and exchanged their ownership of land in return for the right to work it and receive protection from their lords' private forces and fortifications. It is easy to appreciate that many had no choice in the matter. As increasing numbers of free proprietors were drawn into association with lords, fewer of them were available for the discharge of direct public obligations. These were the men referred to in the sources as *arimanni*, the descendants of the free men (*liberi homines* or *exercitales*) of Carolingian times.<sup>14</sup> Many such men continued to survive, but their military and other public functions were in serious decline. North and central Italy became a patchwork of patronage groups around counts, sub-comital families, and bishops, all acting as intermediaries between the state and the rest of society. By the eleventh century, castles were becoming increasingly the foci of aristocratic power. Here they joined the *pievi* and the proprietary monasteries as factors in the cohesion of aristocratic kin. Their significance on the ground, as it were, lay in the territorial jurisdiction that was based upon them. Since the ninth century, landlords had been acquiring private justice over minor crimes and the lawsuits of their tenants. Control of a castle, however, tended to involve authority over the territory surrounding it, whether or not it was owned by the holder of the castle. On this basis a lord, often a minor aristocrat, would attempt to create a lordship or *signoria*. It was a world in which partible inheritance was the norm, however, so that property—even a castle—was subject to partition. As a result, to avoid the threat to family cohesion, families often resorted to forming *consortia*, by which the nucleus of their property was put under collective control. This could be a castle in the countryside or a tower in the city.

We will examine this phenomenon in more detail shortly. In the meantime, we need to look at the exercise of power in the countryside more broadly. Between the mid-tenth century and the first decades of the twelfth there was a fundamental shift in the exercise of power. At the outset the actual apparatus of power lay in the hands of officials who considered their authority to be delegated by the king, even if in practice they had considerable room for manoeuvre. At the same time the lords who controlled great expanses of landed property not only were owed economic obligations in terms of rents and services but also exercised petty justice and offered personal protection. By the end of this period, however, what is seen is a veritable mosaic of lordships or *signorie*. These were extremely varied in terms of level and extent, from a coherent district at one end of the spectrum to a

<sup>13</sup> Violante, 'Signorie e feudi', in N. Valeri (ed.), *Storia d'Italia*, vol. I: *Il Medioevo* (2nd edn Turin, 1965), 80–86; Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 187.

<sup>14</sup> For the *arimanni*, see the important study by G. Tabacco, *I liberi del re nell'Italia carolingia e postcarolingia* (Spoleto, 1966) and more recently A. Castagnetti, 'Arimanni e signori dell'età post-carolingia alla prima età comunale', in G. Dilcher and C. Violante (eds), *Strutture e trasformazioni della signoria rurale nei secoli X–XIII* (Bologna, 1996), 169–285.

dispersed landed patrimony at the other.<sup>15</sup> The connection with royal power was seriously attenuated or nonexistent. This ‘dislocation’, as it has been called, had several aspects. Key figures were the counts, whose power rested on the ‘ban’ (*bannum*) by which they constrained the population to receive justice from them and to do armed service under their command. The areas under their control were now much smaller than the royal ‘circumscriptions’ over which previous counts had exercised authority. The numbers who held such power multiplied as time went on. The descendants of the old public officials were joined by a great number of ecclesiastical landowners and others known to Italian scholars as *possessori fondiari*.

*Signoria* is an Italian word meaning lordship; it is cognate with *signore*, that is to say *senior* and hence ‘lord’. The various forms of the rural *signoria* were forged during the iron century, i.e. during the tenth and into the early decades of the eleventh centuries, and have long been identified by historians. For the typology as far as Italy is concerned, we are indebted to Cinzio Violante and a famous essay of 1991.<sup>16</sup> The oldest form of *signoria* is the *signoria domestica*, where the lord exercised not only economic but also judicial control over those who belonged to his demesne (*dominicum*), which he managed directly. Carolingian officials had generally shown reluctance to exercise their powers or impose taxes within the nuclei of the great landed estates. The second form of *signoria* identified is the *signoria fondiaria*, where the lord exercised judicial power over all the peasants who lived and worked on his land. To the traditional economic control were added both imposts and a measure of justice. These on the one hand reflect comital powers and on the other involve an extension of the *signoria domestica*. The ultimate form of *signoria*, however, is the *signoria territoriale*. This extended over a specific territory rather than just the lord’s own land, over an entire district (in Latin *districtus* in Italian *distretto*), and encompassed free men holding allods (*liberi allodieri*) as well as the dependent tenants, later called *coloni*, of other lords. A lord exercising *signoria territoriale* would tend to concentrate on the central core of his property, extending his power over areas where other lords held *signoria fondiaria* whilst allowing a peripheral interest of his own to remain as *signoria fondiaria* within the *signoria territoriale* of another. These concepts are of course

<sup>15</sup> An excellent précis of these developments is given by Provero, *L'Italia dei poteri locali*.

<sup>16</sup> C. Violante, ‘La signoria rurale nel secolo X. Proposte tipologiche’, in *Il secolo di ferro. Mito e realtà del secolo X*, CISAM (Spoleto, 1991), vol. I, 329–85. Violante drew on French and German historiography as well as Italian, and Anglophone readers are likely to be acquainted with the basic terminology from French scholarship. However, although the historiographies tend to run parallel in this respect, there are differences in usage. See S. Carocci, *Signorie di Mezzogiorno. Società rurali, poteri aristocratici e monarchia (XI–XIII secolo)* (Rome, 2014), 57–8. See also C. Violante, ‘La signoria “territoriale” come quadro delle strutture organizzative del contado nella Lombardia del secolo XII’, in W. Paravicini and K. F. Werner (eds), *Histoire comparée de l’administration* (Munich, 1980), 333–44. and his ‘La signoria rurale nel contesto storico dei secoli X–XIII’, in Dilcher and Violante, *Strutture e trasformazioni della signoria rurale*.

the creation of historians. They are identifiable as ‘forms’ of power or, if we prefer, Weberian ideal types. The reality on the ground was much more complex and variable, with all sorts of possible permutations and with an interlocking of the powers of individual lords. For this reason, Sandro Carocci has advocated the use of *signoria locale* rather than *signoria territoriale* when contrasting the exercise of wider powers with those entirely derived from the estate.<sup>17</sup> This type of *signoria* involved a combination of private and public powers. There was of course an in-built tendency towards the development of territorial power, a fully-fledged and extensive *signoria territoriale* being arguably the ultimate manifestation.

*Signorie* did not of course arise overnight, but were the product of evolution within tenth and early-eleventh-century society and depended upon a complex balance of forces. There were some specific ingredients identifiable in the drift towards the *signoria territoriale*. An important role was played, as we have noted, by the imperial grants of immunity, especially to episcopal and other ecclesiastical estates. Violante identified the ‘*signoria fondiaria* with immunity’ as a specific category. Immunity basically involved prohibiting the king’s officials from entering the grantee’s estate, that is to say, ‘negative immunity’. But very often this came to include the ability to actually exercise royal rights, i.e. ‘positive immunity’. Once the grantee began to enjoy this outside of his own property, we are entering the realms of *signoria territoriale*. Historians have also identified the *signoria di banno*, employing the Germanic word *ban*, that is to say the power to command exercised by public officials on behalf of the sovereign. This involved the capacity to judge and to constrain to do military service. It also involved the right to raise imposts. Although strictly speaking the power of the ban empowered only royal officials, it could be usurped by others. Here was yet another route to the *signoria territoriale*. Although a great deal more could be said on this complex subject, this is as far as we need go at this point, given that we are not concerned here with tenth-century developments in their own right. These phenomena took time to come to fruition, and as we shall see there were regional variations. Nonetheless, by the early decades of the eleventh century we are into the world of the *signoria territoriale*.

What then constituted public as opposed to private rights? The *signoria* of the *ban* comprised a whole complex of rights, described variously in the documentation as *dominatus* or *dominium*, *iurisdictio*, and *districtus*. The more important rights of public origin included the *fodrum* and *albergaria*. The former derived from the obligation to support the royal army, and was transformed into an impost which became one of the chief seigniorial sources of income. *Albergaria*

<sup>17</sup> Carocci, *Signorie di Mezzogiorno*, 57–62. See also Carocci, ‘Signori e signorie’, in S. Carocci (ed.), *Storia d’Europa e del Mediterraneo, VIII. Il Medioevo (secoli V–XV). Popoli, poteri, dinamiche* (Rome, 2006), 409–48, and his ‘I signori. Il dibattito concettuale’, in J. A. García de Cortázar (ed.), *Señores, siervos, vasallos en la Alta Edad Media* (Pamplona, 2002), 147–81.

derived from the obligation to give hospitality to the king, his officials, and his army; it too was transformed into an impost, representing hospitality to the lord and a given number of followers. Then there was the privatization of rights of justice and associated penalties and fines, often called *banni* in the sources; *curadia*, a tax on commerce, initially for guaranteeing peace and security; rights of *passagium*, tolls for crossing bridges and the like; and services owed for the maintenance of the public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and fortifications.<sup>18</sup> There was also the imperial tax called the *datium*.

In addition to the above, however, the lords who exercised the ban levied impositions and taxes that were specifically seigniorial in origin, as opposed to public. The main ones are tallage (*taglia*), *focaticum*, and the banalities. Tallage was an imposition in money charged to the community and associated with the military and protective function of the lord. *Focaticum* was a tax drawn from the nuclear family, that is to say a hearth tax. Banalities included imposts for the rights to use common property, including pasture, waters, and woods, and for the use of seigniorial machinery such as ovens, mills, and presses. Lords also imposed castle-building and castle-guard on their tenants. All of these exactions, however, were over and above the dues exacted by lords as landlords. Rents (*censi*) were due periodically from the land granted by the lord. Then there were the services or *corvées* (known in Italian as *prestazioni*) traditionally performed on the lord's own land. There were taxes on the transfer of land. There was also the tithes. This was a tenth of all produce due to the baptismal church or *pieve*. From the late Carolingian age onwards tithes had passed increasingly into the hands of laymen, although in relatively few cases the lords managed to exact them across the entire territory of a *pieve* rather than solely from their own lands.<sup>19</sup> The end result was that lords enjoyed a variable medley of rights and exactions.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the multiplication of exactions, there were other vital changes taking place in the tenth and eleventh centuries. One, as we have seen, was the decline of the traditional manor, the great Carolingian estate or *curtis*, where the land was divided into the lord's demesne (the *dominicum*) and the *massaricum*, the land granted out to tenants in units called *mansi*. The two were linked in that these tenants, together with the unfree (*servi*), provided the labour services on the demesne. In the post-Carolingian period these estates disintegrated in a

<sup>18</sup> The origins of some of the dues are controversial. I have drawn these lists from Provero, *L'Italia dei poveri locali*. But see also G. Sergi, 'Lo sviluppo signoriale e l'inquadramento feudale', in N. Tranfaglia and M. Firpo (eds), *La storia. I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea* (Turin, 1986), 369–94.

<sup>19</sup> There were also impositions associated in particular with those of servile condition: *testaticum* or head tax, *manomorta* (*mainmorte* or heriot), and formariage (*merchet*).

<sup>20</sup> See also G. Sergi, 'Storia agraria e storia delle istituzioni', in A. Cortonesi and M. Montanari (eds), *Medievistica italiana e storia agraria. Risultati e prospettive di una stagione storiografica* (Bologna, 2001), 155–64.

process which historians have described as ‘the crisis of the *curtis*’, involving the parcelling out of the demesne, the attenuation of labour services, the levelling out of the peasantry as largely undifferentiated *massari* or *manentes*, and an increasing dependence of the lords upon rents. These rents, however, were supplemented by income from seigniorial dues and from tithes and other revenues emanating from the church. In other words, the crisis of the *curtis* provided a major impulse towards the development of the *signoria*. However, although the Carolingian *curtis* disintegrated, the name itself survived, rather confusingly, to describe the successor estates.<sup>21</sup> From the eleventh century it was used to indicate the area within which a lord exercised his seigniorial authority:<sup>22</sup> his *districtus*. This meant the power to constrain by force and came from the verb *distringere*. It became almost synonymous with jurisdiction (*iurisdictio*). The terms *curtis* and *districtus* tended to be used together, with the dual significance indicating both seigniorial authority and the area over which it was exercised. In the twelfth century we find the word *curia* (court) used in the same dual sense. And indeed, the term castle (*castrum* or *castellum*) was also used to describe not only a fortification but also a complex of rights. As the demesnes were progressively dismantled, this land too was transferred to tenants as *massarii* or as *livellarii* and to erstwhile *servi*. In the course of time the *servi* tended to merge juridically with the free tenants (*liberi*), i.e. with those who were personally free but were bound to the soil. In northern Italy the generic term *rustici* was applied to the merged peasantry/tenantry. Tuscan sources tend to prefer *villani*. Another term, however, was widely diffused. This is the word *manentes*, derived from *manere* (to reside) and signifying their inability to leave the land without their lord’s permission.<sup>23</sup> The study of Roman law in the twelfth century led to the adoption in the sources of the classical word *coloni* to describe the generality of tenants.<sup>24</sup> We should perhaps add that juridical and economic condition have no necessary bearing on one another, and that in terms of the latter there were profound differences. From the beginning of the twelfth century, however, in parallel with the complete demise of the old Carolingian servitude, a new form of dependence—*servagium* (or *servaggio* in Italian)—was developing, based upon the obligation to remain on the land on the one hand and the public and private exactions due from the *manentes* on the other. It was not a survival from

<sup>21</sup> The features of the modified *curtis* are described in an admirable synthesis by Paolo Cammarosano which has become the *locus classicus*: P. Cammarosano, *Le campagne nell’età comunale (metà sec. XI–metà sec. XIV)* (Turin, 1974), sect. 1: ‘Il potere signorile nelle campagne’. Two useful studies are: B. Andreolli and M. Montanari, *Lazienda curtense in Italia* (Bologna, 1983) and R. Comba, ‘Crisi del sistema curtense e sperimentazioni aziendali (secoli XI–XIII)’, in Tranfaglia and Firpo, *La storia*, 169–82.

<sup>22</sup> I use the traditional ‘English’ form ‘seigniorial’ throughout rather than the French *seigneurial* or the Italianate *signorial*.

<sup>23</sup> See Cammarosano, *Le campagne nell’età comunale*, 58–9.

<sup>24</sup> Scholars tend to use the term *coloni* today in preference to the older and rather confusing term *servi della gleba*.

the past, but a new form of personal dependence derived from tenure: one was simply 'the man' of another.<sup>25</sup>

Another process contemporaneous with the rise of the *signoria* and the mutation of the *curtis* was the one Italians call *incastellamento* (incastellation or the implantation of castles), studied to great effect by the French scholar Pierre Toubert.<sup>26</sup> The process, which Violante described as 'almost frenetic',<sup>27</sup> was undertaken without any central planning or coordination, with the majority of castles built not by kings and their representatives (although some certainly were) but on their own lands by marquises and counts, bishops, abbots, and cathedral chapters.<sup>28</sup> The motives were various, including Saracen and Hungarian incursions, but high on the list of reasons was to support the lords' own *signorie* and other resources and to protect themselves from neighbouring powers. Needless to say, the castle was a key phenomenon in the process of localization. The construction of a castle invariably involved the imposition of castle-guard, defence, and repair work for those who lived there or who took refuge in it. A natural although not immediate consequence was the extension of these rights within the zone around it. Until at least the beginning of the eleventh century the *signoria* was based not upon the castle but upon the *curtis*. Indeed, we find the formula *curtis cum castro* or *curtis cum castris*. This was now increasingly reversed, with expressions like *castrum de x, cum terris, capellis* etc. It can be said that the castle came to legitimate the *signoria territoriale* in the 'protection' it afforded; it certainly advanced the local hegemony of the lord and was a significant factor in the process of territorialization.<sup>29</sup>

Changes in the countryside were interconnected and cumulative. A case has been made very recently, however, that during the period from around 1080 to around 1120 change was so strong as to alter the complexion of social life. This departs from the traditional emphasis on continuity in favour of rapid shift or transformation in seigniorial power in the countryside of northern and central Italy.<sup>30</sup> During the first half of the eleventh century the countryside was a complex

<sup>25</sup> On *servaggio*, see S. M. Collavini, 'Il "servaggio" in Toscana nel XII–XIII secolo. Alcuni sondaggi nella documentazione diplomatica', in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen Âge*, 112 (2000), 775–801 and 'La condizione giuridica dei rustici/villani nei secoli XI–XII', in A. Spiccianni and C. Violante (eds), *La signoria rurale in Italia nel medioevo*, vol. II (Pisa, 2006), 331–84. For *manentes*, see C. Wickham, 'Manentes e diritti signorili durante il XII secolo. Il caso della Lucchesia', in *Società, istituzioni, spiritualità. Studi in onore di Cinzio Violante*, II (Spoleto, 1994), 1067–80. See also F. Panero, *Servi e rustici. Ricerche per una storia della servitù, del servaggio e della libera dipendenza rurale nell'Italia medievale* (Vercelli, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> P. Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval. Le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IXe siècle a la fin du XIIIe siècle* (Rome, 1973).

<sup>27</sup> Violante, 'La signoria rurale', 361.

<sup>28</sup> The lack of planning was established by Aldo Settia: A. A. Settia, *Castelli e villaggi nell'Italia padana. Popolamento, potere e sicurezza fra IX e XIII secolo* (Naples, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> See the comments by Provero in *L'Italia dei poveri locali*, 67–8.

<sup>30</sup> A. Fiore, *Il mutamento signorile. Assetti di potere e comunicazione politica nelle campagne dell'Italia centro-settentrionale (1080–1130 c.)* (Florence, 2017).

mosaic of nuclei modelled on and around the exercise of public authority through its institutions. From the middle of the century and, then, spectacularly during the last two decades of the eleventh century and the first two or three decades of the twelfth, conditions changed; there was a collapse in traditional authority and a reconfiguration based on territorial power. Power now centred on the exercise of jurisdiction rather than the possession of estates. Although there were already tendencies in this direction, and of course preconditions, the transformation was largely engendered by the civil war between the empire and papacy, traditionally associated with the issue of investiture. This period of rupture or discontinuity, which was not surprisingly a time of increased instability and violence, was accompanied by increased seigniorial pressure on the peasantry as lords strove to take a greater share of the surplus from the primary producers who, paying relatively low rents and exactions, were the ones being advantaged by economic growth. The localization of power around centres of jurisdiction, moreover, allowed lords to take profit not only from their own tenants but from all of those who now came under their jurisdiction. There is a clear link between these developments and shifts in castle architecture. Whereas eleventh-century castles had tended to be located at centres of production, those of the twelfth century, more robust and with a stronger emphasis upon a seigniorial presence, were now to be found at jurisdictional centres, that is to say they were associated with territorial *signoria*. As far as castle structure is concerned, moreover, there appears to have been a period of transition, located once again during the decades around 1100.<sup>31</sup>

However this reinterpretation fares, what is particularly interesting in terms of the present study is that it constitutes in effect a generalization of the Tuscan case, hitherto regarded as atypical. We shall encounter this shortly. In the meantime, however, it is necessary to look briefly at another major focus in post-Carolingian society, that is the bishop. Bishops had long occupied a key role in the Carolingian world alongside the counts. In the tenth century, however, kings gave comital rights in the cities to the bishops, making them powerful local figures not least because they tended to be drawn from the leading families. Unlike the counts, however, theirs was not delegated power but power granted outright. The *signorie* held by bishops and based on the cities were very similar to the lay *signorie* based on castles. In fact, as Wickham points out, the royal diplomas granting them were almost identical. The bishops received strong support from the Ottonian monarchy and identified closely with it. Emperor Otto I and his successors tended to grant them judicial powers over a five-mile radius from the city walls.<sup>32</sup> They had the advantage of their priestly rank, which conferred a degree of moral authority or charisma. As comital justice became increasingly ruralized, so the authority of

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>32</sup> V. Fumagalli, 'Vescovi e conti nell'Emilia occidentale da Berengario I a Ottone I', *Studi medievali* 14 (1973), 137–204.

the bishops grew. One must be careful, however, not to envisage too much of a dichotomy between town and country. Bishops were also responsible for their diocese. Moreover, they enjoyed rural property and a clientele with interests in the county, not to mention the development of episcopal castles. Nor did the counts necessarily divorce themselves from urban property and interests, since cities were important centres from various perspectives. The relationship between the aristocracy and the city was actually variable. In Milan, for example, the aristocracy, episcopal clients, and the leading citizens were one and the same.<sup>33</sup> At Asti, by contrast, the city was dominated by merchants; although merchants and aristocrats were equally linked to the bishop.<sup>34</sup> At Lucca aristocratic citizens were rewarded by the bishops with extensive property in the countryside but preferred to dominate it through urban institutions rather than develop *signorie*.<sup>35</sup> During the eleventh century, however, cracks in episcopal power were to appear. The powerful families, whatever the range of their interests, could be fractious. The bishops were often drawn from their ranks, and factional fighting was inevitable. Moreover, the cities maintained some public institutions, with judges and notaries, and these could be the focus of insubordination. In some cases there were risings against the power of the bishops, and it would not be long before power passed from their hands into that of the urban aristocracy, acting collectively—that is to say, to the communes.

Before we leave ecclesiastical landowners, a little more needs to be said of the lease or contract, often written down and known as the *libellus* (*livello* in Italian). A pioneering study of this phenomenon was undertaken many years ago by Philip Jones. Examining the lands of the cathedral chapter of Lucca between 900 and 1200, he pinpointed its basic characteristics.<sup>36</sup> In origin the *libellus* was a contract with a peasant cultivator who was obliged by the contract to live on the property received, to work the land to its betterment, to submit to the lord's exercise of justice, and to pay rent including labour services. This was the basic or primitive form of the *libellus*. It is found in the charters of the cathedral chapter up to 1100. In practice, however, the *libellus* changed so that the recipient held not just on a long lease but hereditarily, and paid only a fixed rent. Many of the more burdensome

<sup>33</sup> Two very important works deal with Milan: Violante, *La società milanese*, and H. Keller, *Signori e vassalli nell'Italia delle città, secoli IX–XII* (Turin, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> R. Bordone, *Città e territorio nell'alto medioevo. La società astigiana dal dominio dei Franchi all'affermazione comunale* (Turin, 1980).

<sup>35</sup> See here C. Wickham, *Comunità e clientele nella Toscana del XII secolo. Le origini del comune rurale nella Piana di Luca* (Rome, 1995), trans. as *Community and Clientele in Twelfth-Century Tuscany* (Oxford, 1998), and his 'Property, Ownership and Signorial Power in Twelfth-Century Tuscany', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), 221–44.

<sup>36</sup> P. Jones, 'Le terre del capitolo della cattedrale di Lucca', in his *Economia e società nell'Italia medievale* (Turin, 1980), 275–94; originally published as 'An Italian Estate, 900–1200', *ECHR* ser. 2, 7 (1954), 18–30. As Jones pointed out, the documentation surviving from the church of Lucca occupies a pre-eminent position in evidencing Italian rural society. For a subsequent discussion of *libelli* and *libellarii*, see Wickham, *The Mountains and the City*, esp. ch. 8.

aspects of the primitive *libellus* were abandoned. They were to return in the twelfth century, however, with the rise of a new form of grant: the *tenementum*. By 1200 almost all grants by the chapter were in this latter form.

However, peasants were not the only recipients of *libelli*. There was an important aristocratic dimension to this phenomenon. Gifts to the cathedral chapter of Lucca, that is to say the church of St Martin, began in the late ninth century and continued until the thirteenth. The first donor was Berta, mother of Adalberto II, marquis of Tuscany (898–925), who granted 22 *mansi* at Massa Macinaia. This was followed by royal gifts of 41 *manentes* living in and around the *curtis* of Massarosa. From then on grants of *mansi*, or of parts thereof, remained a feature up to the twelfth century. Usually they were not concentrated in one place but dispersed. It was not only land that was received, however. Churches were also given, together with their associated revenues, including tithes. By 1200 the chapter had around 30 churches. The donors belonged for the most part to families that were relatively high in the social scale. They cannot all be positively identified, but more than half were members of great families, lawyers, notaries, and clerics. In other words, we are talking about the aristocracy of Lucca. But this was not a one-way traffic. Here as elsewhere, donors often received more than they gave. Although property was granted ‘for the salvation of the grantor’s soul’, it was frequently leased back to him/her. The same person frequently received property in several localities, and from the bishop and monasteries as well as the chapter. We are dealing with great or *grandi libelli*. The holders of these great *libelli* paid only a limited fixed rent, in many cases only nominal. The leases were made to the beneficiary and heirs, and in practice they were perpetual. They were, in effect, alienations, and the property tended to be regarded by the recipient families as allodial. Consequently, they could be bought and sold. Like the *enfiteusis* in other parts of Italy, the *libelli* had the effect of creating a cadre of powerful intermediaries between the church and the peasant cultivators. In the twelfth century the number of grants drastically declined. Not surprisingly, as time went on the chapter attempted to recover lands alienated in this way, but their success was limited. This was a widespread phenomenon. It involved disputes and sometimes involved expensive outlays of cash. The bishops of Lucca, Volterra and Pistoia (and its cathedral chapter) were involved in the same activity. In terms of the rise of a minor aristocracy it was the bishops’ clientele that showed the *libelli* at their most effective.

Another term for which a study based on Tuscany allows a useful entrée is the *consorteria*. The pivotal scholar on this occasion is Cinzio Violante.<sup>37</sup> In situations where aristocratic lineages were in danger of serious dispersal through the custom of partible inheritance, a remedy, or at least a countermove, was found in the twelfth century in the deployment of a legal agreement of partnership known as a

<sup>37</sup> C. Violante, ‘Le strutture familiari, parentali e consortili delle aristocrazie in Toscana durante i secoli X–XII’, in *I ceti dirigenti in Toscana dell’età precomunale* (Pisa, 1982), 1–51, at pp. 2, 28–30.

*consortium* or *consortio* (in Italian *consorzio*). This was more or less a formal agreement and was often established with the oaths of the participants. It created a common patrimony of which some elements remained undivided and others were divided into 'ideal shares', that is to say the divisions were notional and not activated. The result was an institution modelled on the family and known as the *consorteria*. Members were not allowed to alienate the properties concerned outside of the *consorteria*. The items concerned were those which had both symbolic and concrete significance in economic, political, and military terms, such as a castle, a *signoria*, a tower and houses in a city, and a church. As the institution developed, communal organs evolved, with rectors exercising administrative and judicial roles and minor officials undertaking particular tasks. The members, the *consorti*, put themselves under the jurisdiction of the *consorteria* and undertook to defend both its property and its membership. Initially these organizations were of a basic type, where the *consorti* were the male members of a specific lineage or in some cases a proportion of them. More complex organizations developed, whereby some individuals outside of the family were allowed in or where two or more families combined to form a *consorteria*. Eventually it was possible to identify two extremes: one based entirely on kin and the other entirely on a pact between members.

Other terms and concepts can be safely left until they appear in the text. Let us turn now to Tuscany.

### The Tuscan Context<sup>38</sup>

For the purposes of this study Tuscany will be taken to comprise the region as understood today.<sup>39</sup> The Roman *Tuscia* was derived from Etruria, and *Tuscia* gives us Tuscany (*Toscana*). The *Tuscia* of the Lombards (569–774), however, was less extensive than its Roman counterpart had been; it included only a small part of Lazio (the western Viterbese) and in fact greatly resembled modern Tuscany.<sup>40</sup> As medieval Tuscany has been described as 'purely and simply a geographical expression', it will be as well to begin with its geography.

Tuscany extends from the Tyrrhenian Sea in the west to the ridge of the Appenines in the north-east. Elsewhere, towards Liguria, Lazio, and Umbria, Tuscany has nothing resembling natural frontiers but is essentially open. In terms of relief, the territory moves gradually from the coastline to the vast expanse of the hills which

<sup>38</sup> The following synthesis draws especially on a set of invaluable essays in E. Fasano Guarini, G. Petralia, and P. Pezzino (eds), *Storia della Toscana 1. Dalle origini al Settecento* (Rome, 2004).

<sup>39</sup> What follows is based on B. Corri, 'Geografia e ambiente', in Fasano Guarini et al., *Storia della Toscana 1*, 1–14.

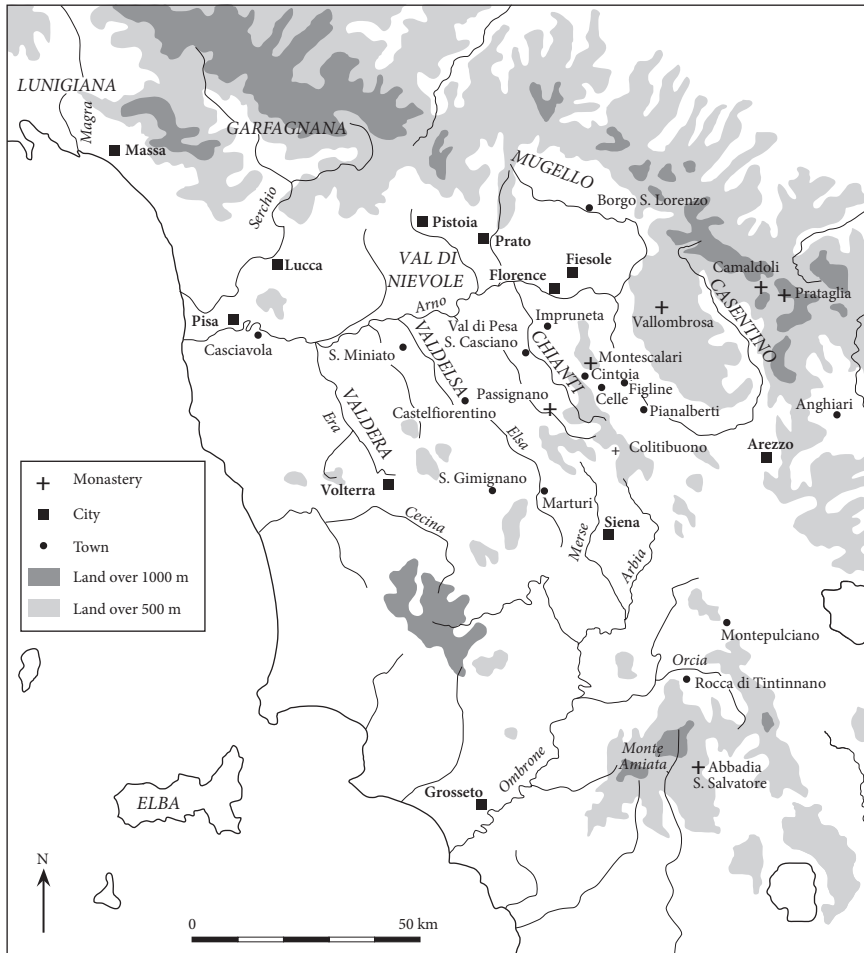
<sup>40</sup> It did not include the Lunigiana, which the Lombards had abandoned, while the archipelago off the Tuscan coast had been ceded to the Byzantines. Otherwise we are dealing with the same entity.

occupy two-thirds of the surface area. The plains, largely but not exclusively near the coast, represent only 10 per cent of the land. The mountains, by contrast, occupy about a quarter of the surface area. With a few exceptions (Monte Amiata, the Colline Metallifere) these mountains coincide with the Appennine chain.<sup>41</sup> Tuscany is structured internally by the two river basins of the Arno and the Ombrone. They effectively split the region in two latitudinally. The Arno, once a tributary of the Tiber, later cut through the soil around Arezzo and turned north, forming the Florentine valley and pushing west to the sea. Along the way it developed numerous tributaries, including the Sieve on the right and the Elsa and the Era on the left (see Map 1). The result was a great basin covering a third of the entire region and certainly most of Northern Tuscany.<sup>42</sup> In the south the Ombrone performs a similar function. Born in the mountains of Chianti, it gained tributaries in the form of the Arbia, the Merse, and the Orcia and forced its way between the Colline Metallifere and Monte Amiata. It later flows through a relatively wide alluvial plain to reach the sea beyond Grosseto. The two basins, although covering less than half of the surface area of the region, are virtually synonymous with the expressions 'North' and 'South' Tuscany. This differentiation is reinforced by other characteristics. Today the Arno basin is the most populous, urbanized, and industrialized part of Tuscany and produces the greater part of the region's income. All of this has deep historical roots. The basin of the Ombrone, by contrast, has a lower density of population, has fewer cities, and is less industrialized. A greater part of its income is derived from agriculture. This pattern too is deeply rooted.

This picture is of course a simplification. Tuscany has a variety of sub-regions, even micro-regions, some of them with such a marked individuality that they have specific regional names, historical survivals that remain rooted in the minds of the population irrespective of administrative boundaries. These, too, have geological origins, representing dried-up lakes or created from river valleys: Lunigiana (Val di Magra), Garfagnana (the upper Val di Serchio), Mugello (Val di Sieve), Casentino (a valley arising from the source of the Arno). Other examples of this type of local and indeed widespread usage, called in Italian *coronimo*, are the Val di Chiana, the Maremma, and most famously Chianti. Another geographical distinction used by the inhabitants of Tuscany is between coastal and inland, despite the fact that nowhere in Italy is more than 100km from the sea. It makes perfect sense, however, when one considers that the sea played a daily part in people's lives at Pisa, for example, or Grosseto. Hence the adjective *marittimo* that is often added to place names and the regional name Maremma (*regio maritima*).

<sup>41</sup> While temperatures vary little from north to south, there is a perceptible fall as one moves inland from the sea, varying with altitude. While rainfall also increases as one moves inland, the beaches of the Maremma are particularly dry.

<sup>42</sup> The Magra and the Serchio reach the sea independently, but the latter was itself once a tributary of the Arno.



**Map 1.** Tuscany. (Kirsty Harding, with details drawn from maps in E. Fasano Guarini, G. Petralia, and P. Pezzino (eds), *Storia della Toscana 1. Dalle origini al Settecento* (Rome, 2004).)

To others the sea was foreign to their daily lives, occupied as they were with pursuits located in the interior.<sup>43</sup>

From here we can turn to the political history of Tuscany. The story up to the mid-twelfth century is easily told.<sup>44</sup> During the Lombard era a duke (*dux*), a military and civilian figure of high rank, resided at Lucca and another at Chiusi. They

<sup>43</sup> E.g. miners, shepherds, and so on, who have themselves strongly influenced the culture of their respective zones.

<sup>44</sup> I have drawn here on M. Ronzani, 'Dalla regione romana alla Marca di Tuscia', in Fasano Guarini et al., *Storia della Toscana 1*, 72–90.

were under the control of the Lombard monarchy at Pavia. Elsewhere the monarchy was represented by figures called *gastaldi*; both *duces* and *gastaldi* were also known as *iudices*. The other major public figure was of course the bishop. Here there were sometimes complications, most particularly at Siena, where the ecclesiastical and civilian organizations did not match. This was because the area under Siena's control had grown since Roman times. The population of a wide territory extending from the Val d'Orcia to the valley of the Ombrone was politically dependent upon the *gastaldus* at Siena but belonged to the diocese of Arezzo.

After the Carolingian conquest of 774 Charlemagne worked initially through *duces* of Lombard origin, but these were soon replaced by counts (*comites*) from across the Alps. Under Charlemagne's grandson Bernard, subordinate king of Italy, a new count appeared in the form of Bonifacio (or Boniface), whose power centred on Lucca and Pisa and probably extended to Pistoia, Luna, and Volterra. Of Bavarian stock, he became so strongly rooted in the area that he was able to pass on his office to his son, Bonifacio II, in 823.<sup>45</sup> A personage of high authority, Bonifacio II was pre-eminent *vis-à-vis* the other contemporary counts. The title of marquis was used for the first time for his son Adalberto, although in official documents *dux* was used to indicate that, in terms of public authority, he was heir to the Lombard figure based at Lucca. By the end of the ninth century Adalberto I was being known in imperial diplomas as 'the illustrious marquis of Tuscia'.

When in the second quarter of the tenth century Hugh de Provence became king, the march passed to members of his family. This dynasty survived until the death of Ugo, marquis of Tuscia in 1001. Ugo was a significant figure of the Ottonian age. We know little of his relationship with the counts, the imperial officials whose area of competence was limited to a single city. The surviving documentation, however, shows these *comites* working to broaden their family patrimony and to limit the title to themselves, despite the existence of other powerful lineages. The archives of the bishop of Lucca, the pre-eminent source for this period, show the prelate transferring to eminent laymen the tithes belonging to numerous *pievi*, together with the usufruct of their land. Having received these grants as *libelli* for an indeterminate time, and often possessing their own property in the zone, they became powerful and influential local personages. As a result, they were able to increase their patrimonies and proceed to erect castles. The documentary evidence for the castles begins in the second half of the tenth century and grows exponentially in the eleventh. However, the process of *incastellamento* was clearly well under way in the time of Marquis Ugo.

The same marquis and his mother, Willa, played a significant role in the religious life of the march through the founding (and refounding) of monasteries. These institutions, in addition to being the focus for prayer and asceticism, also

<sup>45</sup> Long before Charles the Bald's Capitulary of Querzy in 877 made this accepted practice.

functioned as centres of defence and administration. They were endowed with public property either of the march or of the empire, and became the visible expression of political authority. In this sense these were rather different from the monasteries that would later be founded by counts to endow their lineages with centres of cohesion that were at once spiritual and patrimonial.

In 1001 Hugh died without heir, and his death was followed soon after by that of the emperor, Otto III. The march of Tuscia became embroiled in the struggle to succeed the latter. Eventually the victor, the German king Henry II, appointed his own marquis. Towards 1015 the march passed to Ranieri, a member of a family with roots between Arezzo and Città di Castello. When, however, King Conrad II descended on Italy in 1027 to receive the imperial crown from the pope, the city of Lucca and Ranieri failed to welcome him and Conrad put the city under siege.<sup>46</sup> What is most significant about this episode, however, is that it appears to have been the citizens who were the prime movers rather than Ranieri, signifying the entry of the city into the political arena. It was in the same period that Pisa launched its first expedition against the Saracens, attacking first their bases at Reggio Calabria and Messina and then in 1015 attempting the permanent occupation of Sardinia.<sup>47</sup> The cities were beginning to exert themselves

With the victory of Conrad II, the march passed to his powerful supporter Boniface of Canossa, and to the third and final dynasty to hold power in that capacity. After Boniface's death in 1052, power was soon in the hands of his widow, Beatrice, and her second husband, and afterwards of Beatrice herself as marquise and duchess (*marchionissa et ducatrix*). She died at Pisa in 1076 and was succeeded by her daughter by Boniface, Matilda. She in turn died in 1115, bringing the dynasty to an end. That this family ruled effectively from 1027 to 1115 is shown not only by narrative sources but also by documents emanating from the judicial assemblies (*placita*) that they held in various cities and localities. These also give us the names of their principal supporters: minor officials such as viscounts and *gastaldi*, the latter being the administrators of single *curtes* around which the landed patrimony of the march was organized; judges and experts in jurisprudence; the greater men of the cities that hosted them; and the heads (in Italian *capostipiti*) of families whose descendants in the next century would become consuls and other magistrates of the communes. The Canossan age saw the incubation of self-government of the cities. Almost imperceptible in the time of Boniface, it developed after his death when King Henry III dealt directly with the various bodies of citizens and accelerated the situation created by the rupture between Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII, of whom Matilda was the principal ally.

<sup>46</sup> Ronzani, 'Della regione romana alla Marca di Tuscia', 83.

<sup>47</sup> These facts are celebrated on the *facciata* of the Pisan duomo. See below, Ch. 4.

The key to the conflict was in many ways the bishops. The Carolingians from Charlemagne onwards had encouraged the bishops to draw the urban clergy close to them, getting them to live a communal life according to the canonical rule. The same was to be achieved around the baptismal churches within their territories, the *pievi*. In Tuscany nearly all of the sees had a college of canons lodged in a building close to the central church. However, in the course of the tenth century the organization of the urban clergy went through a period of crisis during which they abandoned the observance of the communal life. Around 1000 and the decades following, Tuscan bishops tended to work hard to bring the canons back to the original model. In addition to reconstituting the canonical colleges, they also founded new Benedictine monasteries both urban and suburban under their own authority. In 1018, for example, the bishop of Florence founded a monastery at San Miniato. This, however, was part of a wider phenomenon. From the beginning of the eleventh century, monasteries of private foundation arose throughout Tuscany linked to eminent families, some of them comital, others the owners of lands and castles. They ranged from major lineages, like the Gherardeschi counts of Volterra and the Cadolingi of Pistoia, to others whose importance was purely local. A well-studied example is that of St Salvatore, known as *Abbadia a Isola*.<sup>48</sup> This phenomenon gives us an insight into the various levels of social power that existed in this period. It also gives us a sense of the spiritual aspirations that were current, including those of persons who sought an elevated monastic experience. One thinks primarily of the hermitage of Camaldoli, created by Romualdo di Ravenna and supported by Tedaldo, bishop of Arezzo, brother of Boniface of Canossa, or of Vallombrosa, founded a little later by Giovanni Gualberto, monk of San Miniato. These would become the centres of two very significant monastic communities.

One of the strongest criticisms launched by the papacy against the emperor Henry IV was the giving of bishoprics to men whom the pope considered unworthy. This age-old system, strongly tainted with simony, was symbolized by investiture from the monarch with ring and staff. With the death of Bishop Guido in 1076, Pisa became a test case. The pontiff was determined to choose his successor without any involvement of the king. To succeed in this, he needed the support of the citizens. The role of the Marquise Matilda of Canossa was crucial. As we shall see, in order to secure Pisa for the pope she gave them a form of autonomy under the guidance of the Gregorian bishop and the viscount, who now became the link between the citizens and the march. This new autonomy was reinforced when the king arrived in Tuscany and made concessions in return for support, and again when the city turned to the new pope, Urban II. The government of the city was

<sup>48</sup> P. Cammarosano, *Abbadia a Isola. Un monastero toscano nell'età romanica. Con una edizione dei documenti, 953-1215* (Castelfiorentino, 1993).

now officially exercised by an assembly of citizens, who at the beginning of the twelfth century would assume the name of consuls.

Under varying conditions, in various modes, and at varying tempos similar developments occurred in the other principal urban centres: Lucca, Florence, Pistoia, Arezzo, Siena. Meanwhile at Volterra, by way of contrast, the power of the bishop was reaffirmed. A local patriotism now developed alongside the traditional one of belonging to an ancient province: the cities vied with one another as to which was the most illustrious or the most beautiful in Tuscany.

Looking back from this point, however, it is necessary to remind ourselves that the disintegration of the Roman world had badly affected the cities.<sup>49</sup> In this respect Tuscany divides into two zones. South of Volterra and Siena, the crisis had been more precocious and more profound. Here there was now an empty space deprived of true urban centres. Massa Marittima and Grosseto only partly filled this space for a limited period and rather late on. The difference between north and south conditioned the re-flowering of the cities when it occurred during the central centuries of the Middle Ages. In the north, Lucca, Pisa, Florence, Siena, and Arezzo would become centres of prime importance on a European scale. In the meantime, however, as happened elsewhere in Italy, the Tuscan cities had been reduced to isolated cores.<sup>50</sup> So they remained until late Lombard and Carolingian times, when the urban fabric began to be regenerated. Each of the cities has a different history within this broad pattern.<sup>51</sup>

In terms of settlement the countryside too went through a period of reorganization between the eighth and tenth centuries. A prominent role was taken by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. New centres were created around the *pievi* and the monasteries. The former often arose on or around the ruins of abandoned Roman villas—a feature which emerges clearly on the coastal belt between Pisa and Lucca and in the Sienese interior; for example that of Santa Cristina at Buonconvento. These created what Italian scholars are fond of calling ‘poles of aggregation’. Along the Via Francigena (the pilgrim route to Rome), the Lombard kings had founded a monastery about every 30km, evidently as a means of controlling not only the territory but also lines of communication. Each monastery was endowed with considerable property, often drawn from the old fisc. This was to lead to a phase of great splendour for the monasteries, especially during the course of the ninth century.

Archaeological research has shown that while the *pievi* were bringing the dispersed population together in the places where the villas and the late antique villages had operated, new villages were being born on the hilltops. Meanwhile,

<sup>49</sup> In what follows I am indebted to R. Francovich, ‘Dalle ville ai castelli: un nuovo paesaggio umano’, in Fasano Guarini et al., *Storia della Toscana 1*, 55–71.

<sup>50</sup> They are described in the historiography as *città a isole*.

<sup>51</sup> Francovich outlines the broad histories of Luni, Lucca, Pisa, Pistoia, Florence, and Volterra: ‘Dalle ville ai castelli’, 60–62.

as we have seen, new forms of the *curtis* developed. In topographical terms they were varied, as they were in other respects. Archaeology demonstrates that the progressive absorption of the dispersed population was more complex and tortured than had previously been thought. Scattered population along the hill slopes and the plains around the *pievi* was not in fact eliminated. On the other hand, Ricardo Francovitch argued that around 50 per cent of the castles excavated in Tuscany up to the point of his writing had furnished clear evidence of pre-existing medieval villages before the development of a castle, suggesting that in general the formation of the hilltop villages was primary not secondary and may therefore have preceded seigniorial action. This is not to deny that seigniorial pressure played a major part in the subsequent development of these sites. There are of course variations. In the Lucchese, for example, where there seems always to have been relatively dense settlement, the castles had less impact on the population. Here we find fortifications in older centres with foundations of hilltop sites rare.

Another change of major significance was of course the diffusion of castles. Considerable work, both archaeological and historical, has been undertaken over recent decades on castles in Tuscany. Maria Elena Cortese has recently summarized and interpreted its findings.<sup>52</sup> The beginnings of the process of *incastellamento* antedate our period.<sup>53</sup> The first notices belong to the ninth century, but they are rare. The most significant is of Aulla, a fortified centre of the March in Lunigiana, evidenced in 884. Between the late ninth century and the mid-tenth, however, there is increasing archaeological evidence of castles. Some are newly constructed around old villages, while others are foundations on new sites. New techniques were being employed, specifically the use of mortar to strengthen circuit walls in stone. These structures involved a conspicuous level of investment and everything points to the higher levels of the aristocracy as the directing force, that is to say the marquises, bishops, and counts. Among them were the episcopal foundations of S. Maria a Monte and Moriano. The former, the first castle in the Lucchesia, was constructed on the border with the diocese of Pisa, close to the Via Francigena and the river Arno. It is evidenced in 906. It is followed a few years later (915) by Moriano, near the river Serchio and again close to the Via Francigena.<sup>54</sup> As one would expect, both possessed churches, and both rapidly became centres of population. The diffusion of castles in the late ninth to mid-tenth century, the first major phase in their development, constitutes an important change in the countryside. How is it to be explained? What were the benefits? It was of course a period of turbulence and institutional instability. Landowners needed to protect

<sup>52</sup> M. E. Cortese, *L'aristocrazia toscana: sette secoli (VI–XII)*, (Spoleto, 2017), 145–54, 261–7, 275–6.

<sup>53</sup> For the chronology, see also M. E. Cortese, 'Appunti per una storia delle campagne italiane nei secoli centrali del Medioevo alla luce di un dialogo tra fonti scritte e fonti materiali', in A. Molinari (ed.), *Mondi rurali d'Italia. Insediamenti, struttura sociale, economie. Secoli X–XIII*, sezione monografica, *Archeologia medievale* 37 (2010), 267–76.

<sup>54</sup> For Moriano, see esp. Wickham, *Comunità e clientele*, 73.

their property and their power. There were other advantages too. Castles allowed their holders to widen and consolidate power. Thirdly they were an opportunity to cash in on the demographic and economic expansion that was taking place.

There was also a downward diffusion as members of the *aristocrazia intermedia* began to follow suit. They, too, needed some protection for themselves and their tenants. Castles were constructed on allodial land but also on land held in benefice or on lease. They were also built on land connected with public office. Often they were connected with estate centres (*curtes*). They marked a stage in the formation or growth of patrimonies and functioned as collecting centres. Some were fortifications encompassing villages; others were simply enclosures. Although they were not for the most part the product of royal delegation, they had something of a public quality about them.<sup>55</sup> They were also an important means by which a lord could expand his control to encompass peasants who were not his own dependants. Castles needed to be built, maintained, and guarded. There was a degree of coercion here over those who lived at the site or who found protection there. Even though the aristocracy still preferred to live for the most part (it seems) in the cities, castles advertised physically the presence of power within the countryside. Nevertheless, the burdens associated with castles were distinct from those flowing from grants of political and jurisdictional rights. Castles became centre points in the organization of landed property from which lords could direct their growing investment in the countryside, including the cultivation of new lands, the exploitation of natural resources, the control of space, profit from local traffic, and even industrial activities.

It was during the late tenth and increasingly across the eleventh century, however, that the countryside became truly studded with castles.<sup>56</sup> Although the comital families remained in the van, the *aristocrazia intermedia* was responsible for the greater number. This new wave of castles has high significance with regard to the nature and characteristics of the aristocracy, both in terms of patrimonial foci and in terms of the militarization of society. With regard to the actual impact on the landscape, though, we need to be a little cautious. Although there can be no doubt that the type of structure introduced by the high aristocracy proved the model for the others, eleventh-century castles were not for the most part

<sup>55</sup> They were 'luoghi di qualità pubblica': Cortese, *L'aristocrazia toscana*, 151, citing R. Bordone and G. Sergi, *Dieci secoli di Medioevo* (Turin, 2009), 115.

<sup>56</sup> See the contributions to *Castelli. Storia e archeologia*, ed. R. Comba et al. (Turin, 1984) and *Castelli. Storia e archeologia del potere nella Toscana medievale*, vol. 1, ed. R. Francovich and M. Ginatempo (Florence, 2000). For particular areas, see J. A. Quiròs Castillo, *El incastellamento en le territorio de la ciudad de Luca (Toscana). Poder e territorio entre la Alta Edad Media y el siglo XII* (Oxford, 1999); M. E. Cortese, *Signori, castelli, città. L'aristocrazia del fiorentino tra X e XII secolo* (Florence, 2007), 158–76; M. L. Ceccarelli Lemut, 'Terre pubbliche e giurisdizione signorile nel Comitatus di Pisa (secoli X–XIII)', in *Medioevo pisano. Chiesa, famiglia, territorio* (Pisa, 2005), 453–503; G. Francesconi, 'Castelli e dinamiche politico-territoriali. Il contado pistoiese tra concorrenza signorile e pianificazione comunale', in P. Foschi and R. Zagnoni (eds), *I castelli dell'Appennino nel Medioevo* (Pistoia, 2000), 51–74; R. Farinelli, *I castelli nella Toscana delle 'città deboli'. Dinamiche del popolamento e del potere rurale nella Toscana meridionale (secoli VII–XIV)* (Florence, 2007).

particularly imposing, many of them involving pre-existing settlements and incorporating small communities living on the tops of hills. Only in a few cases does the material evidence suggest the actual presence of lords or their agents.<sup>57</sup> It has to be acknowledged that the majority of excavated sites are in south Tuscany. For the north, scholars have to rely on documentary evidence. Nonetheless, the accumulated evidence indicates that in the great majority of cases the fortifications involved existing *curtes*, were physically small, and had simple defensive systems: an embankment with a ditch, sometimes a circuit wall in stone, rarely a tower. Some of the castles were in fact ephemeral, and we see them appearing and disappearing.<sup>58</sup> The fundamental difference between this and the preceding age, as Maria Elena Cortese tells us, is that all who aspired to be members of the ‘socially eminent group’ wanted to possess something which they could call a castle, even if simple and modest, signifying—on a symbolic as well as a practical level—that they belonged to the military class. In her view, having one or two castles in the eleventh century marked the distinction between the aristocracy and other possessors of land.<sup>59</sup> In examining the development of *incastellamento* and its motivation, we need to add this aspirational one to those already noted. It takes us to the fundamentally competitive nature of aristocratic society.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless they were centres for the administration of landed possessions, the heirs in this respect of pre-existing *curtes*, and they gave a degree of security to the property, to the peasants, and to the few *milites* who resided there.<sup>61</sup> The peasants paid of course for their protection. The castle was at one and the same time a symbolic representation of a power that was basically military and the basis from which seigniorial lordship could develop. It also suggested a new way of perceiving territory.<sup>62</sup>

In the even more militarized world of the twelfth century and the increase in the use of force in terms of regional politics and of competition for resources, the importance of castles naturally grew. The use of stone now became general. Seigniorial zones appear within them, endowed with towers and palaces. Churches were rebuilt and new circuits of walls constructed, closing off the summit and very often a *borgo* lying below.<sup>63</sup> New work has established this not only for the very south but also for the dioceses of Siena and Volterra, for the Lucchesia, and for the Fiorentino.<sup>64</sup> The growing importance of the castles is reflected in the level

<sup>57</sup> See also G. Bianchi, ‘Curtes, castelli e comunità rurali di un territorio minerario toscano. Nuove domande per consolidati modelli’, in M. C. Somma (ed.), *Villaggi, comunità, paesaggi medievali* (Spoleto, 2010), 449–79, and the same author’s ‘Dominare e gestire un territorio. Ascesa e sviluppo delle “signorie forti” nella Maremma toscana centro settentrionale tra X e metà XI secolo’, in Molinari, *Mondi rurali d’Italia*, 93–104.

<sup>58</sup> Cortese, *Signori, castelli, città*, 321–2.

<sup>59</sup> Cortese, *L’aristocrazia toscana*, 264–5.

<sup>60</sup> See also Carocci, ‘Signori e signorie’, 409–48.

<sup>61</sup> For the *milites*, see below, Ch. 8.

<sup>62</sup> See below, Chs 5 and 6.

<sup>63</sup> See Cortese, ‘Appunti sulla storia’ and the contributions to *Mondi rurali*.

<sup>64</sup> For the area of Siena and Volterra, see Bianchi, ‘Curtes, castelli’ and ‘Dominare e gestire’, and G. Bianchi and S. Collavini, ‘Risorse e competizione per le risorse nella Toscana dell’XI secolo’, in *La compétition dans les sociétés du Haut Moyen Âge. IV: Acquérir, prélever, contrôler. Les ressources en*