MONTECASSINO AND BENEVENTO IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Essays in South Italian Church History

G.A. Loud

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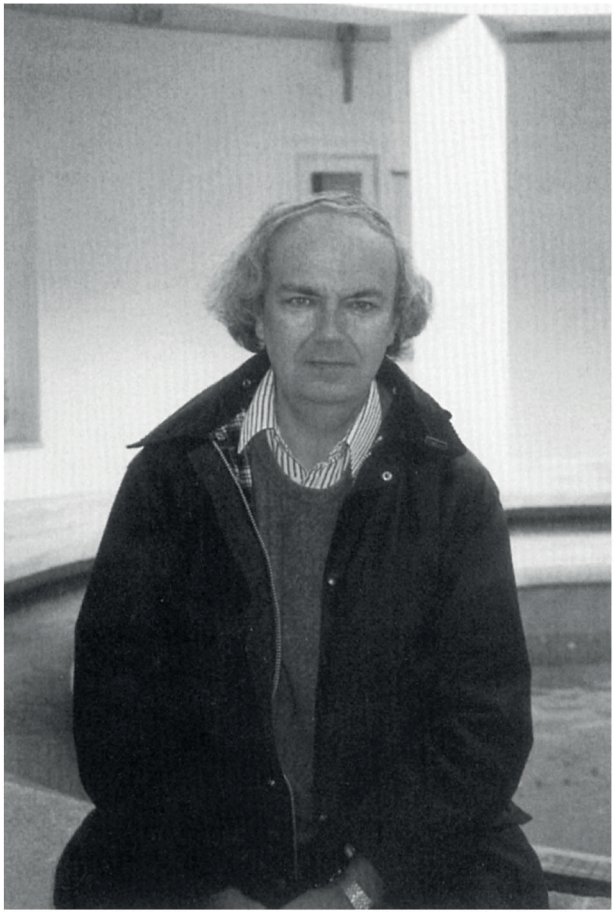

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Essays in South Italian Church History

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PREFACE

This is the second of two volumes of essays on the history of southern Italy in the Central Middle Ages. The earlier book, *Conquerors and Churchmen in Norman Italy* was published in July 1999. While that collection included a number of essays on ecclesiastical history, the focus of this companion volume is much more directly on the Church in the medieval Mezzogiorno. The two great abbeys of St Benedict of Montecassino and St Sophia of Benevento were among the most important centres for the religious and cultural life of medieval south Italy, as well as important patrimonial landowners. The development and exploitation of their extensive property can also be studied as part of the wider social history of the region; the aspect which has increasingly moved to the forefront of my investigations into the history of the lands which became the medieval kingdom of Sicily. In addition Benevento, as an enclave of papal territory within the regno, is well worthy of study in its own right, and several of these essays (notably nos. V & IX and the one entirely new piece, no. X, which stemmed from the preparatory work for no. IX) look at wider aspects of the history of Benevento. The final essay (XII), while directly concerned neither with Montecassino nor Benevento, is essentially a companion piece for no. XI, looking as it does at another aspect of the relations between the Church and Frederick II. The attentive reader will also notice that while the core of this volume concentrates upon the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the overall chronological range is somewhat more extended than that of its companion, which was devoted almost exclusively to the Norman period.

Readers should in addition note that the essays reprinted here were written at two very different stages in the development of my career. Three of the four studies of Montecassino date from my early days as a professional historian, for although the extended essay (I) on the settlement of the Liri Valley was only eventually published in 1994, it was based almost exclusively on research carried out while I was a consultant to the McMaster University survey project in the valley during 1978 to 1980, and the first draft was written in the early 1980s. The long delay before this project was brought to fruition was caused by the tragic death of the project's director, Edith Wightman. I am pleased that Edith did at least have the chance to

read and comment upon that first draft of my chapter. The one more recent essay on Montecassino was the result of an invitation to give a paper at one of the excellent and stimulating Byzantine conferences organised periodically by the department of Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies at the Queen's University of Belfast. I am very grateful to Prof. Margaret Mullett, both for her kind invitation and for the tolerance extended to a western barbaros among the cultivated Byzantinists. I would hope in the future to return to matters Cassinese, to look once more at the society of the Terra Sancti Benedicti, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and at monastery's infamous forger, Peter the Deacon, who has had a walk-on part in a number of my studies, notably essay III here and in my 1985 book on the Principality of Capua. But the essays published here reflect work done some considerable time ago. I have, however, added only two appendices, one making a minor correction to, and updating, essay II, and the other, to essay III, providing an English translation of a key passage from the Montecassino chronicle.

The historian of Montecassino is fortunate in that the work of a succession of scholarly archivists, especially Erasmo Gattula in the eighteenth century and Mauro Inguanez and Tommasso Leccisotti in the twentieth, has made substantial parts of that abbey's extensive documentation available in print. But I was fortunate to be able to explore much of the unpublished medieval documentary evidence from Montecassino, thanks to the unfailing helpfulness and kindness of don Faustino Avagliano during four visits to the abbey's archives between 1976 and 1980.

By contrast, my interests turned to Benevento, and in particular to the abbey of St Sophia, only in the late 1980s, and I was lucky enough to have the chance to develop them at length while I was in Italy for three months in 1990 as Balsdon Senior Research Fellow at the British School of Rome. I am very grateful to the School for granting me this award, and to its then director, Richard Hodges, the deputy director, Amanda Claridge, and the librarian, Valerie Scott, for their help and encouragement while I was there. As is explained in chapter VI, while a substantial medieval documentation survives from St Sophia, much of this remains unpublished. That I have been able to consult these records is due first of all to Prof. Elio Galasso, the director of the Museo del Sannio at Benevento, and his staff who have been unfailingly helpful since my first visit to their institution in 1986. I also benefited from the kindness of the late Mgr. Leonard Boyle at the Vatican Library, and from the excellent service of the staff of the manuscript reading room there. My use of the other important archive at Benevento, in the Biblioteca capitolare, has not been as extensive as I would have liked, but I am grateful to Mgr. Laureato Maio for allowing me access where that

was possible, on one occasion at considerable inconvenience to himself. I am also very grateful to Prof. Vittorio de Donato for permitting me to use his unpublished edition of the twelfth-century charters from Benevento cathedral, and to Prof. Armando Petrucci for arranging this, and for letting me use the library of the paleography department at La Sapienza in Rome.

Those who helped and advised me concerning individual essays are (I hope) adequately thanked in the appropriate places, as are the various editors, publishers and others who have given me permission to reprint these studies. However, John Cowdrey once again deserves a special mention, as he did for the essays published in Conquerors and Churchmen, both for guiding my footsteps as a research student and generously sharing his knowledge of Montecassino and the medieval Church, and also for encouraging me to submit essay II (my first publication on southern Italy) to a scholarly journal, even though he did not altogether agree with the conclusions. The other principal debt is, as ever, owed to Diane Milburn.

G.A. LOUD

Leeds, May 2000

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The articles in this volume, as in all others in the Collected Studies Series, have not been given a new, continuous pagination. In order to avoid confusion, and to facilitate their use where these same studies have been referred to elsewhere, the original pagination has been maintained wherever possible.

Each article has been given a Roman numeral in order of appearance, as listed in the Contents. This number is repeated on each page and quoted in the index entries.

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I

THE LIRI VALLEY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Early Middle Ages 700-950

The medieval history of the Liri Valley really begins with the resettlement of the monastery of Montecassino by a group of monks under Petronax of Brescia c.718, after the monastery had stood deserted for nearly a century and a half.[1] This is not to say that at this stage the monastic community played a central role in the life of the valley, as it was so signally to do later. But, compared with the real "Dark Age" of the seventh century, for which both archaeological and written evidence is conspicuous by its absence, the restoration of the abbey provides a focus of evidence for the subsequent history of the valley. The monastery's chroniclers, beginning with Paul the Deacon in the Carolingian period, and the charters it generated, which become abundant from the middle of the tenth century, provide most of the written evidence for the valley in the Middle Ages.

How disruptive the Lombard invasion had been is impossible to assess. Paul the Deacon's description is rhetorical in the extreme: "churches were despoiled, the priests killed, the cities overthrown, the people who had grown up like crops annihilated"[2] But the sacking of Montecassino and the collapse of the bishoprics of Aquino and Fondi in the late sixth century hardly suggests stability.[3] Our evidence is however so fragmentary as to be virtually impossible to interpret. Arce is recorded as being stormed by Duke Gisulf of Benevento in 702,[4] but

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whether this reference applies to Arce itself, thus suggesting that occupation had continued from the Roman period, or to the Rocca above, which would imply â retreat to the Iron Age promontory site, cannot be determined.

To begin with the refoundation of Montecassino can have made very little difference to the valley. For some time the community was very small. When the English missionary St. Willibald visited it c.729 he found only a handful of monks.[5] However a substantial donation of property followed from Duke Gisulf II of Benevento in the 740's. Quite what was comprised in this gift is a good question, for the only trustworthy account we have of it, that in the *Chronica S. Benedicti Casinensis* of the late-ninth century simply said that Gisulf gave *cuncta in circuitu montana et planiora.*[6] The monastery chronicle by Leo Marsicanus c.1100 expanded this description to provide detailed boundaries for the gift, but in fact Leo took these from a tenth-century confirmation of the abbey's property, and the alleged text of Gisulf's diploma in the abbey's cartulary of 1130-3 was a forgery written by the cartulary's compiler, the notorious Peter the Deacon. The genuine charter had clearly long since disappeared.[7] But it was undoubtedly from this donation that Montecassino's dominance of the valley of the lower Liri dated. That domination was never though absolute. The western part of the valley was outside the bounds of the monastic patrimony, the *Terra Sancti Benedicti*; usually subject, up to the twelfth century at any rate, to the rule of the gastalds later, from 981/4, Counts of Aquino.[8] The contrast between the two halves of the lower Liri Valley is not the least interesting part of its evolution, though inevitably we are better informed about the history of the *Terra Sancti Benedicti*, since the monks of Montecassino were both more active in generating records and, despite the ravages of warfare, not least in 1944, in their

preservation.

In retrospect the monastic memory saw the period of nearly a century after Gisulf II's donation as a golden era of peace and plenty. The twelfth century historian of the abbey of St Vincent on Volturno, the other great monastic house of Lombard south Italy, commented (in a passage of considerable significance in the light of later developments that "at this time *castella* were rare in these regions, but everywhere was filled with *villae* and churches; neither was there the threat or fear of wars since all rejoiced in long-established (*alta*) peace, until the era of the Saracens".[9] But in fact the period of large-scale Cassinese estate exploitation was relatively brief. Only in 787 did the abbey obtain a grant of immunity from temporal obligations from Charlemagne, and only under Abbot Gisulf c.800 was a proper estate organization developed.[10]

The centre of this administrative structure was the monastery of the Holy Saviour at the foot of Monte Cassino, the *curtis maior*. Around it was a group of at least nine monastic cells (Fig. 47), which were not merely centres of colonization but also of estate administration. In addition there was a nunnery subject to Montecassino at Piumarola in the middle of the valley, founded somewhat earlier than most of the cells[11].

The presumption must be that the cells of Montecassino functioned as the foci of a demesnal economy, worked largely by abbatial *servi*, who, if not quite slaves in the Roman sense, faced very severe restrictions on their liberty and mobility and could be transferred from one owner to another.[12] The Cassinese lands would thus have been organized very similarly to those of the abbey of Farfa in Sabina or the papal *domuscultae* north of Rome. But it is worth noting that the most recent study of these last has

been sceptical as to how far they represented a significant reorganisation of the existing rural economy. It is probable that in the Liri Valley fiscal land was simply transferred to new ownership with its existing servile population, and it may well be the case that freedmen with relatively light labour services and leaseholders also played a part in the cultivation of this land. The relatively late development of the cells would thus be explicable first of all through a need to cater for an increased number of monks, and secondly as collection points for renders in kind rather than as centres for the cultivation of blocks of abbatial demesne.[13] Needless to say, given the state of the evidence any interpretation is speculative.

In any case the Cassinese *curtis* had only little more than a generation of peaceful development before southern Italy was menaced by the attacks of Arab raiders, some of whom had originally been imported as mercenaries by the rivals in the civil war which led to the break-up of the Duchy of Benevento after 839. The short-term effects of these piratical raids on the Liri Valley are difficult to measure. Certainly south Italian monastic sources furnish a woeful picture of destruction, but the hard information they provide is sufficiently sparse to suggest that the early raids were sporadic. Historians are now far more cautious than once they were in accepting highly-coloured monastic estimates of Viking depredations in NW Europe, and perhaps we should be equally careful here. But undoubtedly the raids were a disruptive influence. Arce was sacked, and the west of the valley plundered in 844, and the Cassinese cells of S. Andrea, S. Giorgio and S. Stephano burnt not long afterwards. According to the *Chronica Sancti Benedicti Casinensis* the cell of S. Apollinare was only saved from destruction at the same time by a heavy overnight rainfall which left the invaders stranded on the other side of the river.[14] All these cells,

it should be noted, were in the southern part of the valley, suggesting that they were the victims of a hit-and-run raid, or raids, from the coast. But by 867, when they sacked the cell of S. Elia, the invaders were penetrating up into the Rapido Valley.[15] These raids also led to an important development with the foundation of the *castellum* of Pontecorvo on a crossing point of the Liri to defend Aquino, which is described as a *villa* at this time, a term which implies that it was still without walls - and probably therefore the original undefended Roman town on the west bank of the Forme di Aquino.[16] Similarly Abbot Bertharius of Montecassino (856-883) fortified the monastery itself *in modum castelli* according to the later abbey chronicle. He also constructed a town (*civitas* is the word used in the Chronicle, not *castellum*, though it too may imply fortification) around the *Curtis Maior* of the Holy Saviour, which he called Eulogimenopolis or the city of Benedict.[17] The function of this *civitas* is difficult to determine at a time of disruption, but one might suggest that it was intended as a refuge for inhabitants of the abbey lands displaced by the raids. If so, it was not a very safe one. In October 883 an Arab force sacked first the monastery of Montecassino itself, and ten days later that of the Saviour, and during the second attack Abbot Bertharius himself was murdered.[18] The destruction of Montecassino was the immediate result of the establishment of a fixed base for the Arab raiders at the mouth of the Garigliano. This menace remained until 915, when a coalition of local rulers under papal auspices, which even included a contingent from Byzantine Langobardia (Apulia), extirpated the colony.[19] In these circumstances the monks of Montecassino remained in exile, first at Teano and then at Capua, and indeed the monastery was not rebuilt until the late 940's. But the valley was hardly left in a vacuum and the local nobility profited from the Cassinese exile. The gastalds of Aquino took over much of the abbey lands,

the gastalds of Teano those from M. Trocchio eastwards.[20] And indeed the beginnings of the *incastellamento* of the valley can be traced to the lords of Aquino as much as to the Cassinese monks. The foundation of Pontecorvo c.860 we have already seen. It was probably in this period too that the site of Aquino itself changed, from the old Roman one on the west bank of the Forme di Aquino to a more defensible (and fortified) site on the east bank. Certainly the change had taken place by 954 when a charter referred to the "old city", and the late ninth century is the obvious time for such a move.[21] But these two fortified centres, and perhaps the *civitas* established by Abbot Bertharius at the foot of Monte Cassino, which the abbey chronicle implies as still in existence in the 940's,[22] are the only fortified sites for which we have evidence before 950.

How far did the destruction of Montecassino and the sixty-seven year exile of its monks actually affect the settlement pattern? Ironically, although the fortified monastery on the mountain was sacked by the Arabs, the nunnery of St. Maria at Piumarola in the plain survived, to judge by a charter given to it by the Byzantine *strategos* (governor) of Langobardia in 892.[23] Similarly a charter of Prince Pandulf I of Capua of 961 refers to the churches of S. Ambrogio (the first mention which can be found of this dependency) and S. Andrea, S. Giorgio, S. Stephano and S. Apollinare, all of which had existed a century and a half before, and the first three of which had been sacked by the raiders.[24] But it is not clear whether these cells had a continuous existence since the 840's, whether they still played a part in Cassinese estate administration, or whether they were foci for settlement as they appear to have been in the early ninth century.

The Liri Valley in the tenth century was certainly a relatively undeveloped area, ripe for further settlement and

exploitation. Hence in 918 Landulf I of Capua gave eight inhabitants of Sora a substantial tract of land on the east bank of the Garigliano at Bantra to cultivate and develop, and exempted them from all burdens to the state except that of military service. But two important observations must be made at this point. The document makes no specific mention of the creation of a settlement, let alone the construction of a fortified *castellum*. And whatever the problems which the monks of St. Benedict faced in retaining their lands during their exile at Capua, this charter did expressly mention property at Bantra belonging to the abbey.[25] Hence we should be cautious in accepting at face value the account of this period in the Montecassino Chronicle of Leo Marsicamus, which, whatever its earlier sources, was written c.1100-1105, a hundred and fifty years after the events in question. The chronicle records that not only the monastery but nearly all the surrounding area was deserted as a result of the Saracen infestation, and almost nobody could be found there who owed obedience to the servants of God.[26] The scale of the desertion may well be exaggerated here, and the problem have been not that there was no one who *ought* to have owed obedience to the monastery, as much as that there were few who were willing to do so, or able to even if willing.

The Age of Incastellamento 950-1100

When the monks did eventually return to Montecassino there can be no doubt that Abbot Aligern (950-986) faced a formidable task in recovering the alienated property of the monastery, particularly from the gastalds of Aquino, and in recolonising and properly exploiting the reconstituted patrimony. The support of the Princes of Capua was crucial in forcing the local nobility to disgorge monastic property, both that of Montecassino itself and that

of its dependencies.[27] The abbot attracted immigrants, especially from Marsia, to cultivate the valley, usually by a sharecropping arrangement by which they rendered 1/7 of grain and 1/3 of wine to the monastery.[28] It was as part of this process that the Cassinese *castella* originated. In 966 Aligern came to an agreement with a group of over thirty men to set up a *castellum* at the apparently already existing church of S. Angelo in Theodice on the west bank of the Gari, giving the settlers land in return for a money rent and 2/5 of the wine harvest.[29] The great contrast between this document and the princely charter granting land at Bantra in 918 (cited above) was that the construction of a fortified village was an integral part of the agreement. The abbot was to pay and feed the *magistri fabricatores* building the walls. A year later the monastery received a charter from the brothers Pandulf I and Landulf III, Princes of Capua and Benevento. This confirmed to the abbey "the *castella* and towers which have been built in the patrimony of the said monastery, or shall be constructed hereafter, namely the *castellum* of Rocca Janula, and that of S. Angelo in Theodice, and the tower of S. Giorgio, that the monastery and its abbots and rectors shall hold them firmly and securely in perpetuity."[30] These two charters are of cardinal importance for the history of the Liri Valley, marking as they do the beginnings of *the* major economic and social change of the Middle Ages, the effect of which was to last up to the twentieth century.

Incastellamento was not of course a phenomenon confined to the Liri Valley, indeed far from it. To a greater or lesser extent it affected much of Italy in the tenth or eleventh centuries, and in the last twenty years has become a major preoccupation of the historiography of the medieval peninsula.[31] The process saw the concentration of the rural population in fortified villages, around which

the tenurial structure, agriculture and local administration of the countryside was arranged. Such villages were described in the sources interchangeably as *castella* or *castra* (except perhaps in Calabria where the word *castellum* usually referred to an urban citadel).[32] Put crudely, the pattern of dispersed settlement which is seen as the norm in the early Middle Ages, with an economy based on large estates, *curtes*, worked by servile or semi-servile labour, was replaced by a more concentrated settlement structure. Political instability, but also a desire for the extension of cultivation, on the part of the landlord as much as on the part of the tenant, led to this change in settlement geography. New villages were planted, on easily defensible and walled sites, and became the basis for the economy. Demesne farming, already in decline, virtually collapsed and in its place arose a complicated structure of lease, rent and sharecropping.

Many questions however remain. Within the broad outlines of the economic and social evolution sketched above there were very significant local variations, both of chronology and of extent. Some areas were transformed by *incastellamento*, others hardly affected. In the Tuscan highlands, for example, it appears to have been of minimal significance. Even within a relatively restricted area there might be very real differences in the nature and completeness of the change. On the lands of S. Vincenzo al Volturno, to the east of the *Terra Sancti Benedicti*, there was a significant contrast between the central part of the complex, where *castella* played a crucial part in settlement, clearance and economic organization, as described above, and the north-eastern area where, on generally poorer land, dispersed settlement and undefended sites remained more usual.[33] Such micro-topographical differences applied also to the chronology of change. On the Farfa lands in Lazio *incastellamento* commenced in the

920's. But elsewhere in Lazio the process was later: in the Tiburtina commencing from the 970's and not complete until well into the eleventh century, although by 1050 the pattern of settlement was very concentrated. But on the Subiaco lands to the east of the Tiburtina *incastellamento* was late (after 1050), partial and largely defensive in purpose, not part of a process of concentrating the population. The causes too varied. Toubert's classic study of Lazio stressed the desire of the great landlords to recover, consolidate and exploit more efficiently their patrimonies, but Toubert himself has later admitted that perhaps he has underestimated the military function of the *castellum*.[34]

In short, the whole phenomenon was extremely complex, and only detailed local study to examine chronology, causation and extent can provide meaningful answers as to its nature. In the Liri Valley too our sources are once again inadequate. Despite the extensive general documentation which has survived the vicissitudes of time at Montecassino, and even the destruction of 1944, the charter of S. Angelo in Theodice is the only example from the valley of a charter formally creating a *castellum*. Admittedly such documents are not very common in other areas either. Toubert cites only ten from Lazio. But there are some seventeen *incastellamento* leases for the lands of St. Vincent in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the *Chronicon Vulternense*,[35] and compared with this apparent plethora of valuable material the Liri Valley is poor indeed. By contrast one has to rely on occasional isolated references in charters and on the terminology of the *Chronica .... Casinensis*, which although very detailed and of the utmost value as general source, based as it was one intensive study of the monastery's archives, is not without the danger of anachronism. Nor was its author interested specifically in the development of the abbey's *castella* -

references to them are purely incidental. Nonetheless answers are possible, and they *are* interesting.

The scale of the *incastellamento* in the valley was considerable (Fig. 48). A papal bull confirming the possessions of Montecassino in 1059 listed no less than twenty *castella* on the abbey's lands.[36] As one would expect from the nature of the evidence not all these foundations, or in some cases fortifications of existing settlements, can be closely dated. But the process was certainly a relatively slow one; and though by 993 a princely charter could confirm all the lands and *castella* (in the plural) belonging to the monastery,[37] there was no flood of castral foundations under Abbot Aligern. The 967 charter of Pandulf I and Landulf III cited above listed only S. Angelo in Theodice, the tower of S. Giorgio (implying that the settlement was not yet fully fortified) and Rocca Janula. And the last was, as its name (*rocca*) implies, a fortress pure and simple, guarding the road up to the abbey itself, and never a village settlement. The next *castellum* to be attested on the abbey lands is that of Bantra (just east of the Gari/Liri confluence, sometimes later called Bantra Monastica to distinguish it from Bantra Comitalis or Rocca d'Evandro) in 996. But a few years earlier (c.989) the second redaction of the chronicle described Abbot Manso restoring the church of S. Elia "destroyed by the barbarians" and settling men around it, but made no mention of the creation of a *castellum*.[38] Otherwise the evidence round about the year 1000 is scanty in the extreme. The *civitas* at the foot of Monte Cassino may perhaps have had a continuous existence since the ninth century, but under its new name of S. Germano is definitively attested once again, as a *civitas*, at the turn of the millennium. The chronicle also refers to a church being dedicated at the *castrum* of S. Pietro in Monasterio at this period. The mention may possibly be anachronistic:

there is no other mention of a *castrum* here until the bull of 1059, though according to that document S. Pietro had of old been called the *Castrum Casinum*.[39] Quite how one should interpret this cryptic description is a good question. Problems of interpretation are also raised by the Chronicle's brief discussion of a revolt by the inhabitants of Pignetaro in 997. Here Pignetaro is called a *municipium* (fortress), but the context makes clear that it was a centre of habitation as well, and the passage goes on to describe how a church "next to the *municipium*" was burned down during the uprising.[40] Are we dealing here with a defended village, or some sort of fortification (like the tower of S. Giorgio in the 967 princely charter) around which inhabitants had congregated? Certainly c.1018 Abbot Atenulf established a garrison of mercenaries at Pignetaro, but the Chronicle confuses matters still further by calling it then an *oppidum*. Does this imply an open settlement, perhaps with a citadel or tower, or one protected by walls? Similarly Cervaro and S. Pietro in Fine were described in the early 1040's as *oppida*. What does this mean? The Chronicle described Piedemonte twenty years later as an *oppidum* when charter evidence makes clear that it was a *castellum*, and it seems probable, if not entirely certain, that the two words were interchangeable.[41]

Cervaro and S. Pietro in Fine were thus likely to have been fortified in the early 1040's. But S. Andrea was at the same time described as a *villa*,[42] and was hence still an open settlement, as were a number of other later *castella* of the abbey. Furthermore *castella* were not merely fortified villages but, and this is a point which Toubert and others have been at pains to stress, legal and economic units with their own territorial jurisdictions. In the 1040's Piedemonte was still part of the territory of Aquino (and still under the rule of its counts). And in 1048 Abbot

Richer of Montecassino leased some property, including a church, to someone described simply as living "in the place called Vallefrigida" (modern Vallemaio), another site not yet a *castellum*, though it was to be listed as such in a papal bull only nine years later.[43]

It therefore seems probable that most of the newly-settled or resettled sites in the late tenth century were as yet unfortified. The abbey lands were protected more by the close relations of the abbots with the Princes of Capua - Abbot Manso (986-996) was a kinsman - than by the fortification of all the main centres of habitation. There was little trouble with the lords of Aquino, the other main power in the valley, for a generation after a punitive expedition by Prince Landulf II in the 950's.[44] When fresh dispute flared in the 990's, at a time when the protective power of the Princes of Capua was at least temporarily in eclipse, Abbot Manso built a fortress at Roccasecca on the slopes of M. Cairo, but this was a castle pure and simple and not intended as a centre of settlement. The original site was surely the *rocca* (now ruined) on the hill overlooking the later, and still-existing, village. Two other *castella* are known at this period: Castrocielo, another site over the 200 metre line on the slopes of M. Cairo, and Interamna on the plain, both apparently built by the Counts of Aquino in the 990's (the dating is less secure for Interamna), and both very near the boundary between the county and the lands of St. Benedict. Castrocielo may have begun primarily as a fortress, intended as a counterweight to Roccasecca, though the latter was itself soon to fall into the hands of the Counts of Aquino.[45]

The extension of settlement in the county of Aquino is much more difficult to follow than in the *Terra Sancti Benedicti*. Pontecorvo would seem to have developed considerably in the tenth century. By 994 it was the seat

of a separate county, ruled by a son of Atenulf *Megalu*, the first Count of Aquino. By 1004 it was being referred to as a *civitas*.[46] At this time the area south of the Quesa was described still as "deserted and waste", despite the excellent water supply with the river fed by three *sorgenti*. The first settlement in this area was by a small group of refugee Greek monks, who in 998 were given a substantial block of land and permission to build a monastery there by Count Guido of Pontecorvo. This church, S. Pietro di Foresta (the suffix is indicative) was given to Montecassino in 1075.[47] Another monastery, dedicated to St. Paul, was built a little way to the west on a hill site in the early eleventh century.[48] The area along the Liri north-west of Pontecorvo was opened up in the 1030's, or perhaps more correctly *by* the 1030's. A *castellum* was attested at Rio Matrice in a charter of 1030, though in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this site, though inhabited, was not considered to be of castral status. A monastery was founded at Bagnerolo, on a hill overlooking the river, in 1030. The same charter first mentioning Rio Matrice also refers to the *castellum* of S. Giovanni Incarico, and another document mentions a mill in this area in 1039.[49] The monastery of S. Nicola in Pico, near M. Leucio, is attested in 1050 when it was given to Montecassino by the Count of Pontecorvo, and the first reference to the *castellum* of Pico (some 5 km. to the west of the monastery, and south of the Quesa) comes in 1051.[50] Further to the north, but still in this western part of the valley, there was cultivation near the *Via Latina* bridge over the Melfa, perhaps encouraged by the foundation of the monastery of S. Vito nearby, though some of this area was still, at this date, wooded.[51]

Thus the valley in the early eleventh century saw the development of new settlements (Fig. 48) and the expansion of cultivation, almost certainly reflecting a rising

population. But the process of *incastellamento* was as yet slow and incomplete, and the majority of the valley's settlements probably still unfortified. What led to a dramatic change in this picture was the arrival of the Normans.

Coming to southern Italy first as pilgrims c.1000, from about 1017 they began to serve as mercenaries for the local rulers, and indeed for anyone else who would pay them. The soldiers with whom Abbot Atenulf garrisoned Pignetaro c.1018 were Normans, but as yet the mercenaries were few in number, and it was not until the 1030's that their activities began seriously to impinge on the security of the Liri Valley. But from the early years of that decade their plundering became such a menace to the lands of Montecassino that c.1045 Abbot Richer ordered that all the main settlements on the abbey lands be fortified and that the peasants who lived in outlying *villae* should reside in them.[52] We have thus an unequivocal statement that up to these dramatic events the settlement pattern was relatively open. But we are not dependent on this one statement alone. Prior to 1040 the only sites within the *Terre Sancti Benedicti* for which there is definite evidence of castral status are S. Angelo in Theodice, S. Giorgio, Bantra, S. Elia (and that for the first time in 1039), plus the possibly doubtful case of S. Pietro in Monasterio and probably Pignetaro (to which should be added the *civitas* of S. Germano and the fortress of Rocca d'Evandro, the latter built before 1022).[53] Yet by 1059 there were twenty *castella* on the abbey lands. S. Andrea and S. Vittore were seized and fortified by the Normans themselves, though later recovered.[54] Cervaro was described as an *oppidum* in the early 1040's, whatever that implies, but as a *castellum* a few years later. The walls of existing *castella* were repaired, especially at S. Angelo in Theodice where they were largely ruined.[55] Outside the

Cassinese lands Mortola is found as a *castrum* c.1045, though the site may have been inhabited for some time since by this period there was already a road leading from Mortola to Cervaro, and Piedemonte was named as such in a charter of 1052.[56]

The 1040's were thus the crucial period in the *incastellamento* of the Liri Valley, and it was the destabilisation of the area by the Normans which caused this. In contrast to Lazio, where for the most part (Sabina excepted) the *castellum* served a primarily economic function, in the Liri Valley defensive considerations were uppermost. Although there was a determined effort to further the economic development of the Cassinese lands after 950, many of the centres of habitation remained for a long time unfortified, and the population was at least partly dispersed. It was only in the 1040's under the stress of Norman aggression that the situation changed.

In this decade the Normans were a real threat to the safety and stability of the valley, and of the Cassinese lands in particular. Pandulf IV of Capua was also hostile to the monastery; indeed the earliest depredations of the Normans had been by those employed as Pandulf's mercenaries, who had for example garrisoned S. Germano c.1034.[57] Abbot Richer however took effective defensive measures. In addition to initiating the programme of fortification, he developed the *milites abbatiae* to provide an effective force of troops. Some idea of the size of this can be seen from the fact that in the mid-twelfth century the abbey was expected to provide 60 knights and 200 sergeants for the army of the King of Sicily.[58] But the alliance between Abbot Desiderius (1058-87) and the first Norman Prince of Capua, Richard (1058-1078), was to bring about a major change, and to benefit the abbey greatly. Not only was princely protection restored once again to the abbey, but in

the years 1065-6 a series of gifts at the expense of the local Lombard nobility who had opposed Richard extended the bounds of the *Terra Sancti Benedicti*, giving Montecassino the *castella* of Mortola and Interamna in the valley, that of Fratte (modern Ausonia) further south, and the monastery of the Holy Saviour on M. Cocuruzzu. Perhaps most significantly, in March 1066 Prince Richard gave Montecassino land at the mouth of the Garigliano, and hence a corridor to the sea.[59] And in 1067 the abbey acquired Piedemonte from the Counts of Aquino.[60]

The sites of the Cassinese *castella* in the Liri Valley give eloquent testimony to their function. A few can be found on the plain in relatively open positions. The central part of the valley north of the Liri was simply too flat for there to be obvious natural defensive sites. But the presence of *castella* in the particular places where they are can usually be attributed to special factors. Piumarola was built around the already existing nunnery there, although at some stage before the thirteenth century this monastic house had fallen into abeyance.[61] The presence of substantial Roman spoils may well have facilitated the building of Interamna. Just south of the river the abundant water supply from the springs of S. Giorgio was probably the spur to development there. But the majority of *castellum* sites were chosen for their defensive possibilities.

The bull of Pope Victor II confirming Cassinese property in 1057, which gives the first full list of the abbatial *castella*, recorded that many of these were in the localities of former cells destroyed by the Saracens (though as we have seen earlier some of these churches may still have existed in the tenth century).[62] But, though the locality was the same, the actual site had often moved. The *castella* of S. Andrea and S. Apollinare were both about 1 km. from

the sites of the former churches of those names. The cell of S. Ambrogio was closer to the river than was the later *castellum*. The site of S. Andrea moved with the foundation of the *castellum* and not before. It was described as a *villa* in the early 1040's, and the site which local tradition assigns to the old church, which is, as said, about 1 km. away from the *castellum* (and modern village), is known as Villa di S. Andrea. Furthermore the Montecassino chronicle mentions the *arx* (citadel?) of S. Andrea at this same period. It was probably the site of this *arx* which was used when the *castellum* was built in the mid-1040's.[63]

A characteristic example of a *castellum* site is that of the now abandoned Mortola (Site 565). This was set on an oval headland to the east of the Garigliano, roughly 150 metres by 50 metres, with a narrow neck across which the remains of a wall are still visible. Otherwise the site is surrounded by small but steep valleys. Similarly Bantra (Site 564), one of the earliest *castella*, established before 996 and abandoned by the mid sixteenth century, lay on a high terrace, 180 by 150 metres, overlooking the Garigliano near its junction with the Liri, with a sheer drop to the east and steep valleys to north and south. The remains of a curtain wall and towers stand at the east, reinforcing the deterrent effects of the bluff. Both sites are ideally suited for defence. S. Stephano (Site 77), first listed as a *castellum* in 1057, occupied the south part of a saddle-shaped ridge (c. 90 by 50 metres), with a bluff on the north side facing the Liri, and steep slopes to the east and south-west. Among the *castella* which continued to be inhabited after the medieval period is Piedemonte, on a promontory with a narrow neck some 100 metres above the level of the surrounding plain.

The papal bull confirming the abbey property in 1057 lists

eighteen *castella*. That of 1059 adds two more, one of which (S. Andrea) had been in existence for some years. In 1061 Abbot Desiderius built Castronuovo to guard the *Terra Sancti Benedicti* against the attacks of the inhabitants of Fratte (which was itself given to the monastery four years later).[64] The only new *castellum* found after that date (and not very long after) was outside the Cassinese lands: Roccaguglielmo, the first reference to which occurs in 1067. Two other settlements developed in the shadow of existing fortresses, Roccasecca and Rocca d'Evandro (Rocca Bantra). Both were inhabited by the early thirteenth century, but in neither case is it known when settlement started.[65] Nevertheless, despite these slight reservations, it is clear that the age of castral foundation was effectively over c.1060. Henceforth the expansion of settlement in the Liri Valley was to be away from the fortified centres.

The Valley in the Central Middle Ages 1100-1300.

The Montecassino Chronicle suggests that there were already smaller settlements in the 1040's, when Abbot Richer ordered their at least temporary abandonment as a defensive measure. Similarly, in 1106, when relations between the abbey and the Counts of Aquino were at another low ebb, Abbot Otto once again ordered the peasants of the *Terra Sancti Benedicti* to abandon their *villae* and congregate in the *castella*.[66] Throughout the Middle Ages there was a tension between the needs of cultivation and a growing population, which necessitated or at least encouraged a spread of settlement, and the needs of security, which encouraged the concentration of settlement in defensible sites - the *castella*. However the development of more effective and stable government allowed the demographic increase and the demand for more cultivation priority. The decline in the authority of