

DUCKS AND DEER, PROFIT AND PLEASURE: HUNTERS, GAME AND THE NATURAL
LANDSCAPES OF MEDIEVAL ITALY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ample and thorough assessment of hunting in late medieval and Renaissance northern and central Italy. Hunting took place in a variety of landscapes and invested animal species. Both of these had been influenced by human activities for centuries. Hunting had deep cultural significance for a range of social groups, each of which had different expectations and limitations on their use of their local game animal-habitat complexes. Hunting in medieval Italy was business, as well as recreation. The motivations and hunting dynamics (techniques) of different groups of hunters were closely interconnected. This mutuality is central to understanding hunting. It also deeply affected consumption, the ultimate reason behind hunting. In all cases, although hunting was a marginal activity, it did not stand in isolation from other activities of resource extraction. Actual practice at all levels was framed by socio-economic and legal frameworks. While some hunters were bound by these frameworks, others attempted to operate as if they did not matter. This resulted in the co-existence and sometimes competition, between several different hunts and established different sets of knowledge and ways to think about game animals and the natural. The present work traces game animals from their habitats to the dinner table through the material practices and cultural interpretation of a variety of social actors to offer an original survey of the topic.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ACFu Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio
- ADFC Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio storico-diplomatico, Comuni
- ADFM Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio storico-diplomatico, Famiglie
- AOI Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti (Florence)
- ASFi Archivio di Stato di Firenze
- ASMi Archivio di Stato di Milano
- ASVe Archivio di Stato di Venezia
- CA Libreria Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze, Codice Ashburham
- CP1 Lanfranchi Strina, Bianca, ed. *Codex Publicorum*, vol. I, (1985)
- CP2 Lanfranchi Strina, Bianca, ed. *Codex Publicorum*, vol. II, (2006)
- CPv Archivio di Stato di Milano, Fondi Camerali, Comuni, Pavia
- CS Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Stroziane
- D Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio, Deliberazioni
- DV Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio, Dare e Avere
- E Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti, Estranei
- FC Archivio di Stato di Milano, Finanza, Parte Antica Caccia
- G Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Grida
- GP Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Gherardi Piccolomini di Aragona
- LC Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio, *Liber Causarum*
- P Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Pacta
- PRS Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Panigarola, Registri degli Statuti
- PT Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Podestà di Torcello e Contrade
- PS Archivio Ducale Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Sovrane
- RP Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio, Rendite e Proventi
- S Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio, Saldi
- ST Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio, Statuti e Riformagioni

SFPv Archivio Ducale Visconteo-Sforzesco, Carteggio Interno, città, Pavia

SFRM Archivio Ducale Visconteo-Sforzesco, Registri delle Missive

SGM Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Monasteri, San Giorgio Maggiore

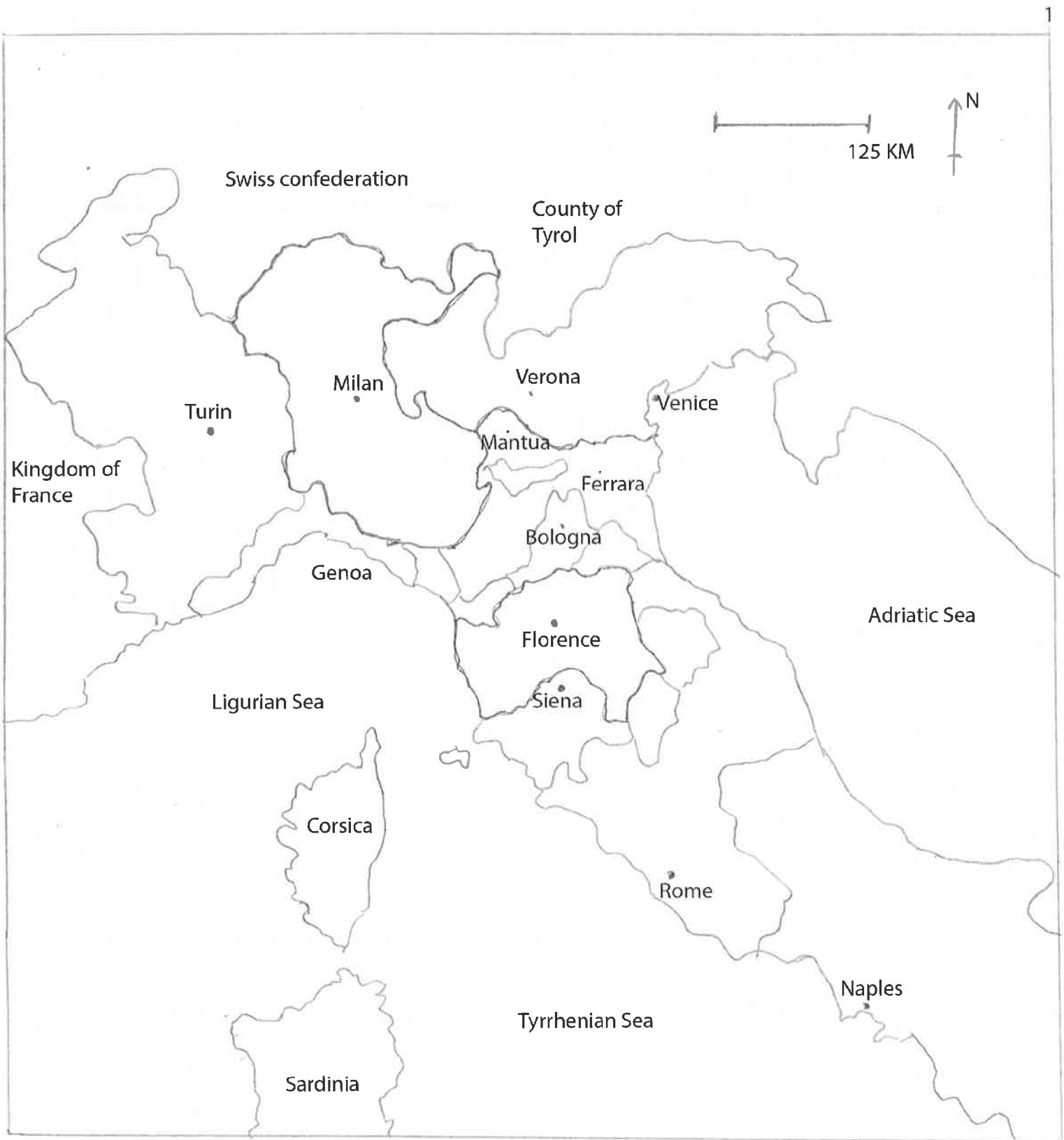


Figure 1.1: Map 1 North-central Italy, ca 1450

CHAPTER 1. HUNTING: PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEXT

In 1491, Beatrice d'Este, wife of Milanese duke Ludovico Sforza or, due to his dark complexion, il Moro, (r.1491-1494), went on a day-long hunting trip with some ladies, Dioda the court fool, and one Galeazzo Visconti, a nobleman and high ranking courtier who authored the description of the trip.¹ The brigade sang and made merry on their horseback ride to their destination of Cusago, a famously game-rich wooded hunting location with a castle and an enclosed park, located about ten kilometers south-west of the Lombard capital of Milan. They celebrated their arrival banqueting on fish, then went sightseeing inside the castle, and followed up with a fishing trip in the park's ponds. The resulting catch of crayfish and lampreys were later sent back to the duke in Milan. On that occasion, the group also caught over one thousand very large pikes, but kept only enough fish for a large meal releasing unwanted animals. The fishing done, the focus shifted to hunting. This first involved flying falcons from horseback next to the riverbank. Having killed "numerous birds" and apparently still on horseback, the group then hunted red deer and roe deer. This was a driven hunt in which the dynamic likely involved deer pushed by huntsmen toward Beatrice and her friends who waited at a fixed location for the animals to materialize in order to dispatch them with bows and arrows. Of the twenty-two deer sighted, one of each species was killed. At about one o'clock the next morning, they were back in Milan where the duke, himself an avid hunter, was "overjoyed" by how well the day had gone. Galeazzo Visconti, on the other hand, was "tired of serving women" and disgruntled. For him, the day's exertions had resulted in a broken boot and a stubbed toe.

Five years later, on August 3, 1496, a huntsman for duke Ludovico II Moro, by the name of Francesco da Cremona, wrote the duke from the town of Bellagio, in Valsassina, a valley in the northern Lombard pre-alpine hills.² Da Cremona was on location with three other huntsmen

¹The letter is published in, Mario Comincini, Ambrogio Palestra, and Germano Mulazzani, *Il palazzo la chiesa la villa. Storia e arte a Cusago* (Cusago: Diakronia, 1989), 100.

²Archivio di Stato di Milano, (ASMi), Potenze Sovrane, (PS) 1483, 3 August, 1496.

who had scent dogs and greyhounds, animals fit for finding and driving game. Their presence in Bellagio was occasioned by a request from the duke who apparently had a mind to hunt red deer in Valsassina. There are no details as to the duke's wishes pertaining to the dynamics of the hunt, but the project was turning into a headache for da Cremona. Upon arrival, the four men had met a fifth huntsman, Guadabasso, who had been busy collecting information on the whereabouts of red deer from the local men, apparently trustworthy in such matters. Guadabasso himself had been scouting the territory with them in order to locate the ungulates. For all their efforts, they had only found ten or twelve animals of both sexes, scattered over eight to ten miles (*milia*) of wooded mountains and valleys -- a very discouraging proposition. Da Cremona told his lord that he was unsure on how to proceed. He had to point out to the Sforza that, given the season, it would be extremely difficult to successfully drive so few animals. As he believed his lord well knew, he added, "these mountain hunts" were better carried out in October and November, when the leaves were off the trees. Were the drive to even be attempted then, da Cremona had to insist that the duke stay in the location of Asso, as this was the most convenient location to lead the deer. Regrettably, we know nothing more of the project.

About 150 years earlier, in the pre-dawn hours of November 22, 1321, two men, Antonio Taglapetra and the son of Maffeo Canne were out fowling in their boat in a stretch of Venetian lagoon then known as Parciporco.³ The two had quietly set their snares in the dark waters and moved to lie in wait for the first light of dawn. As the sun rose, the ducks would stir, and as they moved about to feed and take flight, the two men's traps would catch them. At this point, the men could extract the live birds from the trap and take them to market, as they had presumably done numerous times before in this location. But this morning things did not go as usual. Suddenly another individual, Petro de Creda appeared. Petro was not hunting. Instead, he started hitting the waters with one of his oars, thus frightening and rousing the sleeping ducks entirely

³See page 162 for a map of the Venetian lagoon. I have not been able to locate Parciporco.

ruining the hunt of the two others. He then proceeded to slash Antonio's and Maffeo's equipment all the while daring the two to come to the side of his boat.⁴

1.1 HUNTING AS INTERSECTION OF HUMAN AND NATURAL WORLDS

Although all three vignettes feature Italian hunting in quite different ways, and involve quite different people, all three relate critical insight into medieval Italian hunting practices. Why such complexities in an apparently straightforward activity of pursuing and killing? The aim of the present work is to explain such diversity by illustrating the details of the many hunts, and exploring the motivations and hunting dynamics of the different groups of humans engaged in the practice, and to show the degree to which, in the hunting practice, such motivations and *modus operandi* were inextricably connected. Through the observation of documented practice in medieval Lombardy, Tuscany, and Venice and its lagoon, this dissertation explains what hunting meant in medieval Italy. In some cases the animals were killed, in others they were captured alive. In every case the material practices and knowledge that created the encounters between the game animals, hunted for the value of their meats, and the various hunters, as well as the hunters' ideological or symbolic meanings, shaped the place of hunting and its landscapes.⁵

While there were many rules surrounding hunting, contemporary hunters seemingly left no records detailing definitions of the activity. Present-day authors, however, have sought such definitions of hunting and provide a useful place to start. For biological anthropologist Matt Cartmill hunting is “the deliberate, direct, violent killing of unrestrained wild animals; and we define wild animals in this context as those that shun or attack human beings.” *Prima facie*, this

⁴Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASVe), Podestà Torcello, (PT) 9, (1321-22), 22 November, 1321.

⁵Medieval Europeans pursued wild animals such as foxes, martens, and beavers for their pelts. These utilitarian hunts had little interest for the elites. No work exists on the topic specifically for Italy, but see, Robert Delort, *Le commerce des fourrures en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge (vers 1300 - vers 1450)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1978). Wolves were hunted because they represented a danger to humans and their livestock. For Italy the primary overview is, Gherardo Ortalli, *Lupi, genti, culture: Uomo e ambiente nel Medioevo* (Torino: Biblioteca Einaudi 3, 1997). For other European locations see, Jean-Marc Moriceau, *Historie du méchant loup. 3000 attaques sur l'homme en France XV-XX siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2007); Jean-Marc Moriceau, *L'homme contre le loup. Une guerre de deux mille ans* (Paris: Fayard/Pluriel, 2013) and Aleksander Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006).

would seem a fitting definition. But the author continues, “[t]he hunt is thus by definition an armed confrontation between humanness and wildness, between culture and nature. Because it involves confrontational, premeditated, and violent killing, it represents something like a war waged by humanity against the wilderness.”⁶

Even the author of such a disarmingly simple model must realize that things are not so easy. He qualifies that “methods and motives” of the hunter are important. Shooting elephants represents hunting, feeding them poisoned hay does not. Neither is shooting tigers at a zoo recognizable as hunting as the animals are restrained. The violence “must be inflicted directly, not mediated by a snare or a trap.” And while shooting a wolf that chases you is self-defense, not hunting, running animals over on the highway even if it is done on purpose, is similarly not hunting.⁷ Cartmill is praiseworthy in his attempt to define hunting. However, his focus seems to be what is not hunting, rather than what is hunting. His summary definition “a war waged by humanity against the wilderness,” and “an armed confrontation between culture and nature” simply reveals his narrowly modern and western vision which disregards centuries of commercially based hunts, disregarding how human culture and nature *sensu latu* have evolved dynamically in time.⁸ Even though some phases or aspects of hunting have pitted man against nature in what may be termed antagonistic terms, such generalizations are excessive, imprecise and unhelpful. Rather than embracing the complexities, Cartmill seems keen on fitting all hunting into his definition and redefining all that does not fit as “not hunting.”

Medieval game animals could die a violent premeditated death, but so could their domestic counterparts, butchered on a daily basis. Medieval game animals could die within the constrained precinct of a park wall, or when seized by the talons of a trained falcon while flying free through their natural element. For all its flaws, Cartmill’s definition raises relevant problems

⁶Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning. Hunting and Nature Through History* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 30.

⁷*Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁸The author engages medieval hunts, in the chapters titled *The White Stag*, (pp. 52-75) and *The Sobbing Deer*, (pp. 76-91) in his attempt to understand hunting as an anthropological activity over a long period of time. He is not a historian, so his work lacks the contextual complexity necessary in understanding the place of hunting in the past.

that reveal the complexities of medieval hunting matters. For example, if the violence is exercised by a humanly trained animal, but not the human itself, does it represent hunting? Does it make a difference whether this animal is a long-standing domesticate, such as a dog, or a young hawk seized in the wild and subsequently put through a taxing training regime? If a game animal is simply encountered during a ride, not initially intended to conduce hunting, and then chased and killed, is it hunting? All these hunting scenarios, and many more, took place in the Middle Ages. It seems clear then that understanding hunting requires a more holistic interpretation.

If Cartmill's definition reveals itself as too simplistic, perhaps the one posited by Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset is more promising. Intrigued by the devotion and seriousness dedicated to hunting by hunters for millennia, it was Ortega's intention to get to the root of "just what kind of occupation" hunting was, from antiquity to the present day.⁹ What Ortega appears to seek is existential, and so, apparently, universal. Ortega's answer is that hunting in essence provides man "vacations from the human condition"¹⁰ Man was a hunter for subsistence at the dawn of his experience on earth, as such he was similar to all the predators of the animal kingdom. But much has changed since. Humans no longer need to hunt, and their instincts have been dulled compared both to those of their ancestors and of wild animals. Burdened by cultural conditioning, reason, and other compensatory measures for pure instinct, and embattled with urgent problems, Ortega's humans yearn for that lost, instinctual existence. In essence, hunting becomes a physical and mental place in which some of that loss may be regained, if but briefly.¹¹ Hunting may thus lead "man to adopt the attitude of existence by which wild animals generally live and the abandonment of which constitutes precisely the characteristic of humanity."¹² For Ortega, hunting is liberating and for that reason widely pursued.

The most obvious problem with Ortega's definition is that it is not universal at all. Rather, it is elitist. For instance, it leaves out scores of commercial hunters and contemplates

⁹José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting* (New York: Scribner, 1972), 19.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 109.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 109-26.

¹²*Ibid.*, 129.

mostly hunters with the leisure to pursue self-indulgent activities. While Cartmill's definition is limited because it is so focussed on the violent killing of the animal, Ortega's is similarly narrow, because it focuses so much on the existential state of the hunter and elides the physical animal and its roles in shaping hunting. The environment is similarly eschewed from participation in hunting. Both authors place hunting in a realm isolated from the remaining flow of human experiences. The problem with both definitions lies with attempting finally to resolve what is hunting by providing *a priori* universal definitions.

Such generalizations alert us to the problems riddling contemporary definitions of hunting. What they leave out suggests that it may be more promising, indeed necessary, to fully grasp the meaning of hunting from medieval Italian hunts, to start with their description in contemporary documents, to see if understanding may spring from locally recorded action, rather than posterior intellectual speculation. Deconstructing the above definitions also makes clear that any definition of hunting must include the natural world, as the examples which opened this introduction demonstrate. This world was not a passive canvas for the activities of the human hunters in which animals were stereotypical automata. In hunting humans and *Natura* (the natural world) encountered each other in a dynamic exchange and thereby shaped one another. In the three examples, near absence of deer and the leafy trees in Valsassina and frightened lagoon fowl all redirected human activity. In the long run, the shaping process of the hunting encounters in the natural landscapes may be defined as a dynamic co-adaptation. The documented examples show that, when hunting, human action in its socio-economic and cultural context had to be organized around game animal ecology, and adjust dynamically to change and unpredictable situations. Hunting was a form of human-animal interaction within natural landscapes, involving differently cultured humans, a pool of game animals, and sometimes also some domesticated or tamed animals, dogs, horses, and raptorial birds. Hunting functioned through different and coexisting sets of exchanges, partnerships, and interfaces between humans and animals. Environmental history brings the dynamic relationship between humans and the natural world to

the fore. For these reasons, its methodologies are apt tools to systematize the many dynamics of medieval hunts.

1.1.1 Methodologies and Conceptual Frameworks

Hunting established dynamic encounters between specific and specifically cultured human beings and what I term the animal-habitat complex, that is the game animal operating within its congenial ecological niche of biotic and abiotic elements. In each case, an ensemble of human behaviors are functionally coupled to a paraphernalia of physical technologies such as horses, boats, weapons, trapping devices and so on. Human actions organized these technologies to create an interface with natural environs and certain animals within them. When successful, this process lead to the anticipated moment of a potentially successful kill or capture. But hunting went well beyond just killing or capturing. While these were the anticipated outcomes towards which the activity was geared, hunting consisted of a long process of a dynamic interaction in time and physical space between two entities, human culture and the natural world. Historians traditionally learn about these things from working with written documents, cultural products of a given time period. To understand these, these scholars usually take an emic approach, that is they approach the topic from its own sources and what they say. The etic approach, on the other hand, asks these texts questions they were not originally geared to answer but may be equally valuable in uncovering meaning.¹³ For example, an emic approach to the source on the hunt in Valsassina presented at the start of this chapter, would establish the difficulties and dilemmas facing the huntsman attempting to fulfill his duke's wishes. When applied in the wider context of the lives of the duke and his huntsman, the etic approach may allow that same source to contribute some information on the relationship to, and understanding of, the natural world of both, something the document was not consciously designed to yield. Similarly, information given in the hunting manuals (Chapter 2), was geared toward providing instruction on the

¹³Richard C. Hoffmann, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3-4.

mechanics of different hunting practices. An etic reading of such material may, however, also give insight into the type of relationship that the practitioners established with their animals. Given the highly descriptive nature of most medieval Italian documentation on hunting, coupling the two approaches analytically is particularly useful to identifying concepts of nature and hunting, building argument and interpretation, and establishing structural linkages between human actions and the natural world.¹⁴

In defining environmental history, environmental historian Verena Winiwarter writes, “[M]ost environmental historians can agree on formulations such as, ‘Environmental history deals with interactions between humans and the biophysical world in the past.’”¹⁵ As the opening examples illustrate, in medieval Italy hunting existed in a space that was at once cultural/human and environmental/biophysical. To negotiate such contemporaneous participation in order to make useful inferences about human existence in the natural world, the Vienna school of social ecology developed a heuristic model aptly called the “interaction model.”¹⁶ In this model, human societies and humans themselves are understood as existing simultaneously in two mutually independent spheres of causation, the natural and the cultural. Humans represent reality to themselves and do so symbolically and mostly through language. But humans are also material beings with biological needs. As such, they and their societies exist through a metabolic energy exchange with nature that involves co-dependent modifications that shape symbolic understanding and direct action. Both humans and their societies are therefore *hybrids* of the material and the symbolic, or of nature and culture. Different humans view the world from different systems of reference. Their representation will vary and will engender autonomous

¹⁴For the early modern period, Martin Knoll, “Power and Sustainability: Elite Hunting Culture in Early Modern Germany,” in *History and Sustainability. Third International Conference of the European Society for Environmental History*, The Third International Conference of the European Society for Environmental History (Florence, February 16–19, 2005, 2005), 40–43, links modern day concepts of sustainability to elite hunting practices and management of natural resources not consciously manifest in the contemporary documents.

¹⁵Verena Winiwarter, “The Challenges of Teaching Environmental History,” in *Human Nature: Studies in Historical Ecology and Environmental History*, eds. Péter Szabó and Radim Hédl (Brno, Czech Republic: Institute of Botany of the ASCR v.v.i., 2008), 8.

¹⁶Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Helga Weisz, “Society as Hybrid Between Material and Symbolic Realms: Toward a Theoretical Framework of Society-Nature Interaction,” *Advances in Human Ecology* 8 (1999): 244.

cultural “programs” or potential interactions with nature. When, and if, these programs are carried out through action in the natural world (called “work” in the model), the interaction causes change within the natural world which in turn elicits a new round of cultural representation.

The model serves hunting well as a general framework from which to articulate an activity that manifested itself variably both with regards to its biophysical detail and its peculiar cultural understanding. To its practitioners, any hunt was firmly embedded in unique and specific time, hybrid space, and animal ecology. In historical time, each hunt was a continuation of the hunts that came before it and had developed dynamically through techniques, knowledge, traditions, and environmental conditions. Space was specific also as all large or small stretches of medieval landscape in which hunting took place had a history that was both human and natural. Finally, as the three examples above already make clear, medieval hunters’ social class, wealth, knowledge base, and geographical location varied, sometimes dramatically, molding their relationship to the activity. The interactive model positions hunting at the interaction between the natural and the cultural sphere of causation, linking these dynamically through continuous rounds of interactive change through practice (“work”).

Meaningful analysis of past human lives recognizes that human activities such as hunting were situated in time and space, and that they were practiced by specific humans shaped by their needs, as well as their group allegiances. These humans acted (performed “work”) upon their hybrid natural landscapes with certain consistent sets of abilities, tools and routinized practices. Recent approaches in environmental history call these sets socio-natural sites.¹⁷ In medieval Italy, some such were the permanent fowling structures in the Venetian lagoon or the hunting parks of the Milanese dukes. By exploring a variety of case studies in the chapters that follow, we can achieve a clear picture of how hunting was a cultural and biophysical activity. The concept of these socio-natural sites will contribute as a tool of analysis in several of these.

¹⁷Verena Winiwarter, Martin Schmid, and Gert Dressel, “Looking at Half a Millennium of Co-Existence: The Danube in Vienna as a Socio-Natural Site,” *Water History* 5 (2013): 101–19; Hoffmann, 2014, 10-11.

As programs of action carried out into the natural world were based on human representation of this world, different people attributed different meanings, and values, to what they saw in *Natura* on the basis of what they needed to accomplish there. Motivation is meaning that drives action, and we may recognize work and play as the two such motivations of medieval Italian hunters. Medieval historian Paolo Squatriti recently wrote that, “proper environmental history should contain human productive processes and activities as integral to any understanding of nature.”¹⁸ Squatriti’s human actors were engaged in productive collaborations (work) with a tree species, *Castanea sativa*, or chestnut. By learning through experience what human “help” that species responded best to by producing more wood and/or more chestnut, useful to its caretakers, both humans and trees participated in what Squatriti aptly calls, the “hard work of living.”¹⁹ Squatriti insightfully articulates the efforts of the trees at growing and of humans at husbandry as co-equal and mutually conducive to work. The characteristics and requirement of the trees mattered to humans and shaped their behavior. In other words, in the process of doing work, the humans shaped the trees as the trees shaped them. For Squatriti, the need, or obligation, to work, and to do so productively, engendered a very specific attitude in the humans involved in growing the trees. It was one of acceptance of the limitations and opportunities posed by the chestnut over several human generations (chestnuts greatly outlive humans), one that developed certain techniques based on an intimate ecological knowledge of both the tree and its habitats, and, as Squatriti suggests in the *Conclusion* of his book, even a measure of human affection for the chestnut trees that thus shaped human existences.²⁰ Understanding chestnut growing, in Squatriti’s terms, was the sum total of all these elements together. I cannot convincingly demonstrate the presence of affection towards *Natura* or its game animals in any of the medieval Italian hunters. However, as I look at different instances of work-related hunting in subsequent chapters, I will argue that hunting for work established a special attitude and

¹⁸Paolo Squatriti, *Landscape and Change in Early Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 28.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*, 198-203.

knowledge among its practitioners, one akin to that of the tree growers. Squatriti's insight, and its articulation, allow us to understand the reasons behind the activities of some groups of hunters not simply as unilateral mechanical actions leading to desired effects, but holistically, as life defining gestures, involving the establishment of partnerships more than exploitation. Qualifying the degree to which nature's requirements were inescapably and physically embedded in the lives and bodies of humans for whom the natural world was a partner in the "hard work of living," allows a knowledgeable understanding of the actions and relationship to *Natura* also of those for whom it was a place to play.

The importance of Squatriti's recognition, comes into even better focus when we relate it to his inspiration, a famous 1995 essay by American environmental historian Richard White and provocatively titled, "Are you an Environmentalist, or do you Work for a Living?"²¹ In the essay, White discusses the relationship between human beings, their activities, and the natural world in a modern American context. White identifies that it was the motivation behind the activity that framed peoples' understanding of nature, their relationship to it, and, ultimately, what they thought ought to be done with nature. He identifies work and play as two motivations underpinning human actions in the natural world, and shows the differences, dependencies, and tensions between the two. White is reacting to what he identifies as a tendency in specifically northern American environmental history of disregarding work as an important interpretive tool for understanding human relationships to the natural world. This is a mistake, he says. Human beings have always learned about nature and the natural world through physical interaction with it. We learn through our bodies' effort and sensations, and through time these have most importantly been provided through culturally shaped, but materially informed working activities and the natural world. Through the concepts of work and play his essay cogently establishes the hybridity of human societies.

²¹Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?' Work and Nature," in *Uncommon Ground*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), 171–85.

Richard White's ideas afford fruitful application to hunting in medieval Italy. Some medieval Italians, as in the first example opening this dissertation, hunted for play, and their motivation served to established a complex system of meanings and symbols with vast and lasting material and cultural implications ranging from their hunting practices to their consumption patterns. The way hunting was practiced by the aristocrats was a consequence of it being a play activity; it was quite different from those of commercial hunters, and established different relationships with the animals involved.²² When hunting was motivated by work, as it was for the fowlers in the Venetian lagoon or the duke's huntsmen, its mechanics and implications were very different. In work as in play, hunting could be both strenuous and serious for its practitioners. It could carry consequences that ranged from recognition of manhood, claim to political power, and financial well-being. The fundamental difference that resulted from the motivation to hunt, was in the relationship that it established between the hunters and the hybrid landscapes that hosted their hunts. Working hunters were engaged in co-adaptive and dynamic process of exchange, exemplified by "the hard work of living." When hunting was motivated by play, its landscapes and what they contained were appropriated in a gesture that sought to elide any dynamic and vital connection between hunter and game. White's interpretive framework of the tensions between work and play, and Squatriti's fine-grained articulation of the ways in which work established meaning and purpose in medieval *Natura* while embracing ecological characteristics as limitations, opportunities, and shaping factors in human lives, are both functional to organizing some of the complexities of medieval Italian hunting.²³

Hunting existed at the intersection between human and natural worlds and invested a specific group of so-called game animals. What were the unique peculiarities of these animals and what role did they play? What did the landscapes that animals and humans shared consist of

²²White, 1995, 172, 174, 178.

²³For considerations on the role of work and play related to fishing, see Richard C. Hoffmann, "Trout and Fly, Work and Play, in Medieval Europe," in *Backcasts: Historical and Global Perspectives in Fly Fishing and Conservaton*, eds. Samuel Snyder, Bryon Borgolt, and Elizabeth Tobey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming 2015).

in medieval Italy? How had these been shaped and organized by larger political forces to result in the markedly different regional entities that the medieval Italian hunters operated in? The next sections will establish context and background and seek to inform about environmental and institutional connections between medieval Italian human and natural worlds surrounding hunting. The aim of these sections is to establish a larger background for the specific discussions that take place in the topical chapters.

1.1.2 Animals: Domesticated, Wild, and Game”

Historian Garry Marvin writes:

[p]eople in general do not simply look at animals in general. Different people look at individual animals or groups of animals, of many different kinds, at different times, in different spaces, places and environments in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. To understand the natures and purposes of the relationships involved, it is necessary to understand their complex specificities.[...] one cannot understand how particular people construct images of one animal species, and interact with members of that species, without also exploring how these animals interact with other animals that are significant to the people concerned and examining the nature of the spaces in which these relationships occur.²⁴

While Marvin writes about contemporary conditions, what he expresses would have been true in the Middle Ages also. Medieval people, including urban dwellers, had a much closer and quotidian interaction with animals than most of their modern counterparts.²⁵ Animals could be

²⁴Garry Marvin, “Wolves in Sheep’s (and Others’) Clothing,” in *Beastly Natures. Animals, Humans, and the Study of History*, ed. Dorothee Brantz (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 65, 67.

²⁵Gherardo Ortalli, “Gli animali nella vita quotidiana dell’alto medioevo: termini di un rapporto,” in *L’uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell’alto medioevo* (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1985), 1389–1444; Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within. Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York & London: Routledge, 2011).

harmful, useful, or plain indifferent, but they were ubiquitous and inescapable. Animals shared the spaces in and around where most work and living were done, providing food, clothing, and materials. Animals helped humans do work while parasites tormented human bodies, rats devoured stored-away grains, and locusts occasionally eliminated anything growing in fields, meadows, and orchards.²⁶ Live and dead, whole or in parts, the animals entered material culture, human value systems, and symbolic interpretations. In the various processes of co-existence, humans constructed understandings of the creatures and of the natural world at the level of both oral and literate culture. At times, these understandings served practical purposes. At other times, humans used the qualities they attributed to animals and the natural world in order to better understand themselves and their role in the world, and give meaning to their existence.²⁷ Given the quotidian proximity of the medieval animal world to the human, and given the close dependence of the latter on the former, the existence of a vast array of cultural and practical understandings surrounding animals should come as no surprise.

Any exploration into hunting must perforce start with a discussion of all the animal species involved, their ecological specificities, the way they were understood (in Marvin's terms) involving their role in society and their relation to other animals. Medieval hunting involved two groups of animals, the wild game animals, quarry of the different hunts, and a group of domesticated or tamed animals that helped the humans carry out their hunts. The latter were horses, dogs, and for the elites only, raptorial birds. Borrowing historian Thomas Allsens' definition, these may be valuably thought of as "animal assistants."²⁸

We define as game animals those wild animal species desirable to hunt because of the attractiveness of their meats. In the Middle Ages this characteristic garnered this group of

²⁶Locusts, Dario Camuffo and Silvia Enzi, "Locust Invasions and Climatic Factors from the Middle Ages to 1800," *Theoretical and Applied Climatology* 43 (1991): 43–73; parasites, Bernd Herrmann, ed., *Mensch und Umwelt im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 1998).

²⁷Esther Cohen, "Animals in Medieval Perceptions: The Image of the Ubiquitous Other," in *Animals and Human Society*, eds. Audrey Manning and James Serpell (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 59–79.

²⁸Thomas Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 52–53.

animals considerable status earning them a peculiar cultural attention, and endowing them with special meaning and value. Game species possessed autonomous causation, were relatively scarce, as their reproduction could not be controlled by human actions but only, at best, facilitated. These factors influenced cultural attitudes to them, as well as the strategies that had to be put in place in order to capture them. In Italy game animal species were primarily red and roe deer (*Cervus cervus* and *Capreolus capreolus*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), boar (*Sus schrofa*), waterfowl of various kinds, especially mallards and widgeons (*Anas platyrhynchos* and *Anas penelope*), upland birds such as quail (*Coturnix coturnix*), partridge (*Perdix perdix*), and pheasant (*Phasianus cholchicus*) and a variety of smaller passerines, thrushes, larks, and starlings (*Turdidae*, *Alaudidae*, and *Sturnidae*). Besides upland birds, falconry could also involve the capture of birds such as herons and cranes. In the Italian material, hares (*Lepus europaeus*) and wild rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are so far almost invisible.

Among the animal assistants, the ownership and use of raptors, or hunting birds, was an aristocratic prerogative of which it is almost impossible to overstate the importance for aristocratic identity. Indeed, varying aristocratic status was linked to a similar hierarchy constructed for the animals, prohibiting lesser aristocrats to fly the nobler birds destined for their social superiors.²⁹ Medieval falconry is a vast topic in and of itself, and has been extensively researched elsewhere. I will discuss it in the present only to the degree that it is germane to the discussion on hunting in general.³⁰ The species involved ranged from the falcons such as peregrines, gyrfalcons, sakers, lanners, merlins to sparrow hawks and goshawks.³¹ For all these

²⁹Casey A. Wood and Marjorie F. Fyfe, trans., *The Art of Falconry, Being the De Arte Venandi Cum Avibus of Frederick II of Hofenstaufen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), 526-27.

³⁰John G. Cummins, *The Art of Medieval Hunting. The Hound and the Hawk* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1988), 187-94; Baudouin Van den Abeele, "Les traités de fauconnerie latins du Moyen Age. 4 vol." (Louvain: Université catholique de Louvain, 1991); Baudouin Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge. Connaissance, affaitage et médecine des oiseaux de chasse d'après les traités latins* (Paris: Klinckschick, 1994); Baudouin Van den Abeele, "Le faucon sur la main," in *La chasse au Moyen Age: société, traités, symboles*, eds. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Baudouin Van den Abeele (Firenze: SISMEL - Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000); Robin Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks. Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

³¹See Appendix 1, p. 281.

birds, purchase, care, and training was both costly and time consuming, requiring the attention of skilled specialists.³²

While the falcons and hawks could be tamed, they were never domesticated in the way that dogs and horses were. Rather than relying fully on instinct, domesticated animals base part of their behavioral traits upon human instruction through repeated conditioning. Centuries of selective breeding has also honed certain desirable physical and temperamental qualities in the animals. Medieval hunters worked with two species that were long-term domesticates, horses and various breeds of dogs. Hunting horses could be called palfreys or coursers. These mounts were similar to the war horses (*destrier*), but lighter, more agile, biddable, and maneuverable as was fit for the territories they had to work in. The horses were also bred to certain standards of beauty, as were those of the dukes of Mantova.³³ The Italian sources identify an impressive array of dog breeds, and generic hunting dogs, mostly, but not exclusively, used by the elites. The specific terminology can be confusing, making it difficult to understand what dogs were used when.³⁴ In general, medieval hunting breeds involved greyhounds, swift animals that hunt by sight, mastiff-type dogs, heavy set, aggressive, and strong used to hold boar and deer at bay, and various breeds of keen-nosed dogs, lymers and hounds for example. Smaller, lighter breeds, the precursors to modern day spaniels, were involved in bird hunting.

All of the wild and domesticated creatures that partook specifically in hunting also participated in the general interpretive frameworks of medieval *Natura* of which, after all, they were part. I here identify two distinct written traditions of knowledge surrounding medieval animals. The first was more speculative and more exclusively literate and learned. The second was more practical, pragmatic, and aimed at problem solving, it was *Fachliteratur* or technical

³²Oggins, 2004, 18-35.

³³These horse were so appreciated that they were depicted on the walls of important ducal residences, for example Palazzo Te in Mantua. See, Giancarlo Malacarne, *Le cacce del principe: l'ars venandi nella terra dei Gonzaga* (Modena: Il Bulino, 1998), 34.

³⁴Corinne Beck, "Chasse et équipages de chasse en Bourgogne ducal (vers 1360–1420)," in *La chasse au Moyen Age: société, traités, symboles*, eds. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Baudouin Van den Abeele (Firenze: SISMELE - Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000), 161, reports on similar difficulties in Burgundian sources.

writing.³⁵ It reflected (also) parts of an oral tradition which we may not fully grasp but which I argue was nonetheless fully functional to the purpose of thinking of and interacting with animals. While the second tradition had the most visible impact on medieval Italian hunting it did not exist in a vacuum. Viewing both allows us to appreciate the breath and span of medieval thinking in which nature played an important part. Animals and hunting were part of this thinking.³⁶

In the literate tradition most visible to historians, medieval views on animals were mostly anthropocentric and derived from Latin Christianity. The so-called great chain of being (*scala naturae*) was a religious hierarchical structure that organized all matter and all living beings in a downward progress moving from God through angels, demons, heavenly bodies, high-ranking and ordinary folk. The structure ranked wild animals ranked higher than domesticates, but placed all animals higher than plants. Living things were followed by various minerals and metals. According to the eschatological view of nature, the material world was simply a station in the faithful Christian's journey to what really mattered, the afterlife.³⁷ In this context, animals and the natural world were indifferent tools to which it was unwise to attribute meaning. A different line of thinking viewed nature as adversarial to man, an obstacle to the obtaining of human desires, all of which were part of a grander and divine plan.³⁸ For example, hagiographic literature showed how different animals, including wildlife, helped or challenged saintly men. In both these avenues of thinking, what mattered were people, not the world around them. The latter was at best a symbol of human power over the material world. The ideas of Francis of Assisi (ca. -----

³⁵Fachliteratur is thus defined in, Baudouin Van den Abeele, *La littérature cynégétique*, in *Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1996), 27.

³⁶Hoffmann, 2014, 94-112; Steven Epstein, A., *The Medieval Discovery of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) points to the degree of sophistication achieved by medieval contemporaries in their understanding and material interaction with nature.

³⁷David J. Herlihy, "Attitudes Toward the Environment in Medieval Society," in *Historical Ecology. Essays on Environment and Social Change*, ed. Lester J. Bilsky (Port Washington NY: Kennikat Press, 1980), 100–116.

³⁸The impact of Christian thinking on human treatment of the natural and its far-reaching consequences, especially as it is outlined in *Genesis*, were first discussed in, Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (10 March 1967): 1203–7 which has since generated a vast debate. Summarizing White's opinion, Christianity positioned nature as a tool of man and as a way to know God. This stripped *Natura* of any spiritual connotations of which paganism was rich, concentrating such rather exclusively on man. At this point the natural world became simply an object for exploitation.

1182-1226), anachronistically hailed as precursor of contemporary environmentalism, should be contextualized with the miracle work of these saints.³⁹ As other saints, Francis may have been sympathetic to the animal creatures in God's creation. Yet his aim in famously interacting with animals, was to control them by telling them what to do. From the birds which he admonished to sing the Lord's praise, to the wolf of Gubbio told to mend his wicked albeit, for a wolf, ecologically sensible ways, in order to fit into human society, these interactions were informed by Francis' own anthropocentric Christian values.⁴⁰ Finally, another main intellectual medieval line of inquiry into the natural world viewed animals less on the basis of their ecological characteristics, and rather as participants in a complicated allegorical and symbolic system of reading the natural world as a system of signs. Bestiaries and other forms of encyclopedic collections participated in this approach by arranging available animal knowledge by categories and qualities.⁴¹ These texts also included unicorn and mermaids, unavailable in the natural world, but still available to medieval minds. Several strands of learned medieval knowledge and understanding of animals therefore consisted of an tightly interwoven mix of observation and allegorical interpretation of reality not intended to provide ecological understanding, but rather a system of interrelated anthropogenic symbols.

Dominican friars Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus, 1193-1280) and his famous disciple Thomas of Aquino (Aquinas, 1225-74) are examples of the results between perceptive hands-on and pragmatic observation of the natural world, coupled with sophisticated learned thinking. The two sought an understanding of nature that was neither adversarial nor allegorical, but which nonetheless, through a harmonious understanding of nature through learning and observation ("reading the book of nature"), would lead to God. According to this view, nature was a source of revelation, organized by God through a set of natural laws providing the "natural order" of

³⁹Hoffmann, 2014, 105.

⁴⁰We may congratulate Francis for at least having tried interspecies coaxing, rather than killed the canine outright.

⁴¹The medieval period had a fund of written sources (bestiaries) representing the pool of common knowledge about animals, which originated from a prototype, the *Physiologus* which appeared in the early centuries of the Christian era, see, James J. Scanlan, trans., *Albert the Great. Man and the Beasts. De Animalibus (Books 22-26)* (Binghampton and New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1987), 21.

things. However, nature was neutral. While engaging it was not sinful, the natural world did not exist merely as an uncomfortable palimpsest for human actions aiming at a quite different, and other-worldly, realm. In fact, Albertus, under the influence of Aristotelian methods, was deeply involved in observations of the natural world and demonstrated the degree to which human minds left free to learn through observation might be capable of fine-grained inferences about ecological mechanisms.⁴² This makes the Dominican part of what I termed above the second medieval tradition in thinking of animals. For instance, having observed four types of falcons (Albertus also had a keen interest in falconry), and believing them to be regional variants, and that more may exist, Albertus became curious as to what caused regional diversity within a species. According to Steven Epstein, in the “pre-Darwinian fixity of the universe of species,” incapable of producing anything new, Albertus’ claim was “truly audacious.” Through observation of the birds, Albertus attributed to environmental factors like “soil, the mating behaviors of birds, and the distance from the hottest zone at the equator” a possible role in fostering a new “mixture,” a new hybrid subspecies of falcon. He furthermore understood that what was taking place in nature was different, but related to, the selective breeding taking place in medieval kennels and stables.⁴³ While the natural world was still Albertus’ tool to understand God, and this prompted the need to understand it, this understanding had value also of itself. His relationship was, in Richard Hoffmann’s terms, a partnership.⁴⁴ Epstein discusses how Albertus may have sought the information available to his non-literate, contemporary practitioners, although Albertus nowhere claims this directly.⁴⁵ James Scanlan is more explicit, discussing how, in his travels on foot, Albertus had supplemented “his own observations with probative conversations with fishermen and falconers, farmers and farriers.”⁴⁶ In searching for an understanding of nature, the friar attempted, at least at times, to understand it on its own

⁴²Albertus was deeply interested in animals. His twenty-six books on animals aptly entitled *De Animalibus* (1260) have been named the *Summa Zoologica* of the Middle Ages. Epstein, 2012, 20.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁴Hoffmann, 2014, 101-102, 106.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁴⁶Scanlan, 1987, 3.

ecological terms, gathering his information not just through intellectual speculation and the authority of traditional sources, but also through active engagement.

Increasing economic development and urbanization led medieval Europeans and Italians to rely more and more on literate technologies of which a growing body of *ius comune*, or common law was part. In Italy, common law was developed and practiced out of Roman and Canon law.⁴⁷ The law is an important place to trace ideas about the natural world which develop out of the second, pragmatic and problem-solving, medieval tradition, because legal experts were increasingly tasked with resolving disputes that involved land and the use of its resources. In engaging *Natura*, the law reveals utilitarian contemporary attitudes and concepts surrounding also its animals.

In the eyes of medieval Italian law, domesticates including horses and dogs, but also livestock and working animals were easily considered private property and treated accordingly in common law. For the wild animals, however, the situation was different. The Roman legal principle on the matter stated that in the natural world, anyone could collect that which nobody owned. In Roman law, such things were termed *res nullius*, property of no one.⁴⁸ For example, all animals, honey, abandoned goods, flotsam and jetsam of the sea were available for the taking. For the Romans, the location in which the wild animal was found did not affect its status. The right to hunt was thus not routinely attached to the soil. As the centuries passed, this free taking was weighted down by an increasingly large body of legal qualifications and exceptions. This was exacerbated by the growing medieval populations. Early medieval commoners could still freely claim the *res nullius*, but by the fourteenth century, the capture of game animals was vigilantly controlled by aristocracies and private landowners, or regulated by municipal authorities. After this time, most social groups only had access to hunting at a cost or illegally.

⁴⁷Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), for Roman law applied with Canon law, see pp. 120-23. For *ius commune*, Ennio Cortese, *La norma giuridica: Spunti teorici nel diritto comune classico*. (Milano: Giuffrè, 1962); Francesco Calasso, *Medio Evo del diritto* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1951), 367-90.

⁴⁸W. W. Buckland, *A Textbook of Roman Law from Augustus to Justinian* (Holmes Beach, Florida: W. M. Gaunt & Sons, 1990), 184-86, 209 throughout.

The treatment of raptors, or hunting birds, by the law, represents an interesting case-study of medieval legal practice and ecological understanding surrounding wild animals. In its view of the animal, medieval law took into consideration the creature's specific ecological characteristics as determinant in its treatment by humans. Hunting birds were procured in the wild and subsequently trained and their nature thus at once embraced both a domesticated and a wild form. Their legal position was similarly a balancing act. As wildlife, the birds were *res nullius*, unless, that is, "the external habits of these animals showed their internal disposition." A falcon that flew away from its owner, and perhaps even let itself be taken by somebody else, clearly displayed no "homing disposition" towards its first handler, and was therefore free for the taking by the second person to whom the bird had flown.⁴⁹ Birds that ceased to return, ceased to be owned. Problems pertaining to such matters were important enough to be considered by eminent jurists. One real-life case involving a situation like the one above prompted legal investigation by a prominent Italian fourteenth century jurist, Bartolo (or Bartolus) da Sassoferrato, born in the Italian region of Marche, (1313-1357), but associated with Perugia, where he taught all his life. Bartolo concluded that matters of animal agency were legally binding.⁵⁰ Following a similar logic, animals pursued by hunters, even if severely wounded, were not property of the hunters until they were physically in hand. After all, by fleeing the animals had clearly shown their disposition not to be captured. This may have contributed to making the creation and enforcement of exclusive hunting rights in certain territories extremely attractive. While the fate of domesticated animals was simply to be bound by ownership rights to their masters, because this was their natural disposition, in consideration of their naturally wild nature, game animals had a special status which recognized some ability to control their own destiny.⁵¹

⁴⁹Tim Sistrunk, *The flight of the falcon in Medieval Law*, (2011), unpublished. Cited with permission.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹When domesticated animals behaved in unnatural ways, for example if a pig attacked a child, they could be taken to court. In this case, the animal's showing its "internal disposition" was harshly punished because, as a domesticate, it was not within the animal's nature (although the animal may be assigned an attorney). Hans Albert Berkenhoff, *Tierstrafe, Tierbannung und Rechtsrituelle Tiertötung Im Mittelalter*, Heitz & Co. (Leipzig, Strassburg, Zürich, 1937).

When the medieval contemporaries to the hunters we will encounter in the next pages thought about animals with which they had to interact to carry on the “hard work of living,” their thinking embraced the material and ecological characteristics of these creatures. Their actions clearly betray this. For all the theoretical speculation that could weigh down the actions of individuals such as Francis of Assisi in the natural world, medieval people could be keen observers, and partners, of nature for its own sake, acutely aware of the dynamic relationships that shaped natural things. Several documents presented in the topical chapters of this dissertation testify to this, although their original intention may have lain elsewhere. Apart from the writings of men such as Albertus and Bartolus, two other sets of medieval writings self-consciously display the understanding that the relationship between humans and nature was one of mutuality and partnership. These are the hunting manuals and the cookbooks. In the former human action was informed by ecological understanding for the procurement of game meats. In the latter, material characteristics of flavors and textures were manipulated according to ruling medieval understandings of chemistry and health, to produce dishes that were metabolically balanced, and delicious in taste. Both these written traditions involved the resolution of practical problems while engaging the material world. Hunting manuals represent an important source for the study of hunting. For this reason, their treatment is in the next chapter which details historiographical matters and source material. Cookbooks are discussed in Chapter 6, which is on the procurement, preparation and consumption of game.

For profit or play, with their animal assistants or without, very socially diverse hunters encountered their chosen game species in hybrid landscapes. In these they operated within local socio-economic frameworks shaped by larger political scenarios. The next section will provide a general overview of these, leaving regional specificities to the topical chapters to follow.

1.1.3 Landscapes, Habitats, and Political Structures

The long, narrow peninsula of Italy is characterized by a very long coastline and two important mountain ranges. The massive Alpine range runs east-west and divides Italy from the

rest of Europe. The narrower and lower Appennine range runs on an almost north-south axis from the modern day region of Liguria in the north to that of Calabria in the south and provides the Italian landmass with a central dividing watershed. Although lower than the Alps, the Appennines are snow covered all through winter and feature very rugged, isolated, and inhospitable landscapes.⁵² The relative space occupied by the mountains and their foothills and a vastly more unregulated hydrological regime than today, limited the narrow peninsula's suitable agricultural areas. Northern Italy is influenced by the North Atlantic climate system. Characterized by damp, relatively mild winters and warm summers northern Italy is excellent for the growing of a large number of crops. Southern Italy, as well as a narrow strip of Liguria and some small parts of Tuscany are part of the Mediterranean climate system. Precipitation is three times higher in the winter than in the summer, and the warm period is marked by scorching droughts that challenge grain growing. Habitation concentrated on lower hills and in river valleys of Italy's northern and central sections. These sections could boast some of the highest demographic concentrations in Europe at least up to the Black Death of 1348. Yet due to its morphology, Italy's varied landscapes still contained both large and small areas of wilderness, some of which were not far from intense human activity. These may have favoured wild animal populations by allowing for good refuge areas and corridors of travel.⁵³

Mediterranean vegetation is zoned by altitude. Typically, in medieval times altitudes up to 800-1,000 meters above sea level were characterized by savannah-type landscapes of oak and pine. Deciduous woods of species such as oak, elm, beech, and chestnut, required moister soils and thrived up to an altitude of 1,300 meters. From this altitude to the tree-line, located at about 2,500 meters, mountain forests of firs, junipers, and pines reigned. The landscapes of Lombardy, Tuscany, and Venice with its lagoon, contained much variance in their ecological make-up and

⁵²The Mont Blanc, the highest peak in the Alpine range is well above 4,000 meters. The Gran Sasso, its equivalent in the Appennines, tops 3,000 meters.

⁵³Luciana Frangioni, *Milano e le sue strade* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1983)1, 16-22, 57-66.

habitats.⁵⁴ It is not presently possible to assign numbers to medieval Italian game animal populations nor assess how they fluctuated in time.⁵⁵ We know of the presence of brown bear, boar, red and roe deer in hilly and even terrain of both deciduous and mixed woodland areas, as long as these areas provided enough cover, vegetation, and space to establish territories (and places to hibernate) in sufficient amounts. Ducks and other waterfowl inhabited rivers and river banks, deltas, wetlands and coastal areas as well as the Venetian lagoon. Upland birds such as pheasants, quail, and partridge on the other hand, preferred the edges of agricultural areas and woods, picking through stubble and feeding on berries and seeds. Italy lies on a major north-south European fly-way. In the Middle Ages, thousands of migratory birds ranging from thrushes to peregrine falcons traversed invisible highways of the Italian skies biannually and visited various congenial habitats on the ground while on their way to final, often distant wintering and breeding grounds.

The medieval Italian countryside provided resources to its inhabitants, local villages and more or less distant towns. Medieval historians have recognized the important political and material linkage that existed between increasingly powerful Italian cities and their countrysides.⁵⁶ Lombardy and Tuscany were characterized by the presence of important cities, such as Florence and Milan. Prior to the Black Death, these cities and their hinterlands were among the most

⁵⁴A habitat is commonly understood as an environment populated by a certain animal or plant species because its biotic characteristics (availability of food and presence of predators), and abiotic (water, soil and soil minerals, climate, air) characteristics come together to provide optimal or at least acceptable conditions for that species to perform all its vital functions. A habitat is not of fixed size and may of course provide favorable conditions to a number of different species. Ecosystems also come in all sizes, and contain within them a varying number of habitats. Animals, plants and abiotic characteristics all participate in habitats and ecosystems through a system of interlinked exchanges of nutrients and energy.

⁵⁵For the medieval period, the trend for Europe shows a reduction in total number of species as well as of individual populations due primarily to habitat destruction and (over-)hunting. Similarly, by the later Middle Ages, the beaver was all but extirpated, as was the wild cat and most furbearers larger than the weasel, notably martens. Aurochs (wild ox) dwindled rapidly and disappeared by the seventeenth century. Rabbits were introduced to replace hares between 1100 and 1200. By the end of the Middle Ages, wolf, bear and wild pigs no longer roamed the British Isles. Fish and marine mammals did not fare better. Hoffmann, 2014, 189-94.

⁵⁶This point is cogently developed by, Paolo Malanima, “La formazione di una regione economica. La Toscana nei secoli XIII-XV,” *Società e Storia* 20 (1983): 229–69, throughout. While the historian writes about Tuscany, the same considerations were true for northern Italy also. Map 2 illustrates the major cities and city-states of Italy ca. 1450.

densely populated areas in Europe. The demands of these numerous congested urban areas warranted that the material desires of urbanites, and the political machinations of their leaders, became controlling forces of both production strategies and resource exploitation in the surrounding countrysides and beyond. The vibrant commercial exchanges and importance of trade was one, famously Italian, of its characteristics, although this type of centre-periphery relationship was not unique to Italy. Other medieval European cities and towns likewise acted as sinks for increasingly large and diverse catchment basins.⁵⁷ On the basis of these exchanges, especially northern and central Italian towns had been able to build their tradition for independence. Strong metabolic connections between towns and their hinterlands also help explain why the increasingly centralizing governments of the city states of the later Middle Ages had to control their cities, with Venice being the exception, and why those towns at times resisted. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries two frameworks of power were apparent in the north-central peninsula. Lombardy was under the hegemonic rule of the Visconti and later Sforza families. Venice and Tuscany, on the other hand had republican governments. While the republic of Venice was exquisitely aristocratic, that of Florence may best be defined as democratic. Hunting was a form of resource extraction that took place in the territories and waterscapes controlled by all these cities. Its management and distribution was affected by the priorities and ideologies developed by the different forms of governance.

Italy's penchant for trade started early. When the Italian bishops appealed to German King Otto I (r.936-973) for help in the mid-900s, the Roman Emperor happily ended the dynastic squabbles of the landed aristocracies, cleaned coastal areas of many enclaves of Muslim pirates, and incorporated the Northern part of the peninsula into the Empire.⁵⁸ Italy's urban and

⁵⁷Richard C. Hoffmann, "Frontier Foods for Late Medieval Consumers: Culture, Economy, Ecology," *Environment and History* 7 (2001): 131–67 and Richard C. Hoffmann, "Footprint Metaphor and Metabolic Realities: Environmental Impacts of Medieval European Cities," in *Natures Past*, ed. Paolo Squatriti (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 288–325 illustrate the scope of urban procurements and their environmental consequences for other medieval European locations.

⁵⁸Giovanni Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy. Structures of Political Rule*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 165, 173.

mercantile destinies were set as the emperor launched Italian cities into their vigorous trade adventures run by a growing merchant class. Pisa and Genova in north-central Italy and Amalfi in the south developed great ports and fleets, as well as the strength to trade throughout the Mediterranean and launch raids against Muslim ports.⁵⁹

In turn, this bustling trade on the coast stimulated the growth of inland cities such as Milan, Bologna, and Florence so much so, that by the 1300s, these cities, as well as Florence, Genova, and Venice, reached and perhaps surpassed 100,000 inhabitants.⁶⁰ Two hundred years earlier, the townspeople of the northern Italian peninsula had risen up against their bishops and claimed for themselves the privileges that the prelates had originally wrestled from the aristocrats. From then on, these *liberi comuni* or “free communes” ruled themselves and their hinterlands with their own legal documents, the so-called *statuti*, and an oligarchic mostly mercantile class staffed municipal councils and bureaucratic offices. To varying degrees, the *comuni* subjected the surrounding countryside and its resources to their authority, a trend that continued all through the Middle Ages.⁶¹ These gradual processes were greatly helped by the demographic and economic growth of the tenth and eleventh centuries, disintegration of the manorial system, and the emergence of new agricultural systems, following intense reclamation.⁶²

Further strengthening of municipal independence came in the twelfth century with the defeat at Legnano in 1176 of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (r.1152-1190) by the cities of

⁵⁹For the peculiarities of Amalfi, *ibid.*, 147-48.

⁶⁰Italy participated in the generally recognized European trend of significant demographic and urban growth and agricultural colonization leading up to 1348, followed by demographic contraction and a rebound in non-agricultural landscapes after it. As elsewhere, neither socio-political and economic complexes, nor agricultural practices experienced structural changes, only adjustments. By 1500, if not before, the regions were well on their way towards pre-Black Death population levels and growth, despite regular re-occurrences of the disease. For population levels, see Maria Ginatempo, *L'Italia delle città. Il popolamento urbano tra Medioevo e Rinascimento (secoli XIII-XVI)* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1990), 106-107 (Tuscany, Florence); 71-75, (Milan, Lombardy); 79-83 (Venice, Veneto).

⁶¹For an overview of these general developments, Giorgio Chittolini, “Statuti e autonomie urbane. Introduzione,” in *Statuti città territori in Italia e Germania tra Medioevo ed Età moderna*, eds. Giorgio Chittolini and Dietmar Villoweit (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991), 7-47.

⁶²Alfio Cortonesi, *Ruralia. Economia e paesaggi del medioevo italiano* (Roma: Il Calamo, 1995), 21-28 (Lombardy specifically, 45-53); Carlo M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution. European Society and Economy: 1000-1700* (New York & London: Norton, 1980), 114.

northern Italy united in the Lombard League, centred around Milan, and allied with reformist Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) and his *curia*.⁶³ Ironically, the defeat of Barbarossa ushered in the end of communal independence and heightened destructive intra-urban factional wars between the party of the papal supporters (Guelph), and that of the imperial supporters (Ghibelline). Furthermore, Italian urban life was increasingly embattled between the wishes of the ruling oligarchies and the pressures of the “people” (*popolo*, urban lower classes made up of many groups). Domination by nobles in the urban oligarchies was replaced by partial popular participation punctuated by frequent uprisings and revolts. Members of local noble families took notice. By strategically supporting successful revolts, some of them managed to rise to the fore in urban governments. Their claim to power was the defense and protection of the city and the populace. As a consequence, the *signoria* moved into the chambers of rule and surrounded itself with a centralized and organized administration. The trend was visible in several northern Italian cities. In Milan the Visconti family did so in the person of Matteo Visconti (1311-1322), made imperial vicar in 1311. The position became hereditary in 1330 with Barnabò Visconti (r. 1354-1385).⁶⁴ The first actual Duke of Milan by imperial *fiat* was Gian Galeazzo Visconti (r. 1378-1402). In 1450, mercenary captain (*condottiero*) Francesco I Sforza (r. 1450-1466) marched into Milan and declared himself duke after three chaotic years of republican self-rule named the Ambrosian Republic. The Sforza were later obliterated in the Italian Wars of the early sixteenth century.

For two centuries, following the collapse of that city’s last Republic in 1530, Florence postponed a similar kind of political situation with the rule of the Medici dukes. The Tuscan city had already become a *comune* in the twelfth century and emerged as an important commercial centre during the thirteenth. Conflicts between the urban nobility on the one hand, and non-noble families and *popolo* on the other, finally established the priorate, or government by the Priori

⁶³Tabacco, 1989, 220.

⁶⁴Caterina Santoro, ed., *La politica finanziaria dei Visconti. Documenti. Vol I. Settembre 1369 - Agosto 1385* (Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 1976), XIV.

(governors), in the latter part of the thirteenth century. To some historians, what followed up to the establishment of the Medici duchy was symptomatic of the increasing weakness of the republican order, since these centuries were characterized by social turbulence and inter-factional conflict.⁶⁵ For all this, and three generations of Medici (Cosimo, Pietro and Lorenzo il Magnifico who died in 1492) exercised considerable power in political matters in Florence, and in 1537 Cosimo I de' Medici finally established himself as Duke of Florence and as Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1571. Through their respective political convulsions, both Milan and Florence created powerful regional states.

In the same centuries, Venice followed a different and unique trajectory that only at times resembled that of mainland Italian cities. Initially a Byzantine dependency, Venice had achieved virtual independence from Byzantium by the ninth century, although it continued to send its powerful fleets to that city's aid. Following the First Crusade (1096-99), the Venetians widened their inroads into the commerce with the Levant. As careful diplomats, they developed fruitful commercial exchanges with both Constantinople and Islamic North Africa, allowing the landless lagoon city to develop into the most important commercial and distribution centre for coveted eastern goods in western Europe.⁶⁶ Already in the early Middle Ages, Venetians could do something no other medieval Italian urbanites could muster. They lived by trade alone and ignored most of the problems that vexed organized human behaviour and environmental practices associated with agrarian Europe. It was not until the first half of the fifteenth century that Venice expanded its dependent territory inland, creating the largest Italian city state and remaining an independent republic until the invasion by Napoleon in 1796.

⁶⁵For example see, Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, London: Academic Press, 1980). Ferdinand Schevill argues that in the early decades of the fifteenth century Florence was governed by nothing less than an "oligarchic junta" controlled by certain families, the Albizzi first, and, after 1434, the Medici under Cosimo de' Medici. Ferdinand Schevill, *Medieval and Renaissance Florence* (New York, London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961), vol 2, 354.

⁶⁶Giorgio Zordan, *L'ordinamento giuridico veneziano* (Padova: Imprimerie, 2005), 40.

Venice's political organization grew to become distinctive in time. In the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, the doge, the duke of Venice, was a "monarch of unlimited power."⁶⁷ From the second half of the twelfth century, Venice also became a *comune*, but not, as in the mainland cities, to wrest power from bishops and feudal lords. The Venetian *comune* retained the doge as a monarch who personified the state, doled out justice, and negotiated treaties, only he was now increasingly controlled and directed by the advice of his councillors. From the communal era onwards, Venice's government was consistently aristocratic. Through different rounds of adjustments such as that which replaced the General Assembly with the Great Council, the *Serrata* of 1297, and the enlargement of the Great Council in the early 1400s, Venice reduced factionalism strengthening civic cohesion and the nobility of what, to all intents and purposes, had become a maritime empire.⁶⁸ Only nobles could serve on Venice's governing councils and administrative boards. Venice's state administration was furthermore organized through a complex system of magistracies, governing bodies, and councils that kept careful checks and balances on each other. Guilds and participation in the Ducal Chancery gave non-nobles decision powers in other spheres of life. Members of the church had stopped (officially) participating in the public assemblies already around 1130.⁶⁹ Through many centuries, this model served the maritime empire well. Despite challenges in the fifteenth century, compared to other Italian cities, Lane argues for "a general feeling of solidarity and loyalty among the Venetian nobility and even in the relation between the ruling class and the rest of the people."⁷⁰ This political tradition did not change when Venice expanded into the mainland in the fifteenth century taking its city-states and occupying its lands.

The Italian hunters of the Middle Ages hunted hybrid landscapes consistently organized in terms of cities and their dependent hinterlands and maritime waters. While autocratic regimes

⁶⁷Frederic C. Lane, *Venice. A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 90.

⁶⁸Lane, 1993, 201.

⁶⁹Zordan, 2005, 40-41.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 117.

early on tried to monopolize their access to their leisured hunts, as did the dukes of Milan and, in the sixteenth century, those of Tuscany, republican governments allowed hunting to be organized as a commercial activity by the ruling mechanisms of the market-oriented medieval Italian economies. The resulting hunts were quite different.

This dissertation is about medieval north and central Italian hunters, the game they hunted, and how they went about it. Its aim is to present the fullest range possible of such hunts, explain why they were different, how they connected to one another, and what kind of understanding, knowledge, and experience of the natural world the hunters displayed when they hunted. This view is novel, as only more occasional and circumscribed inquiry has so far been made into the topic of hunting for Italy. To these the present contributes an integrated approach informed by the methodologies and concerns of environmental history.

This dissertation is about action. To all the hunters encountered in these pages, nature mattered, albeit for different reasons as they all interacted dynamically with natural environments and distinct sets of animals. Medieval hunters were consistently motivated by either play or work. Motivation greatly affected the relationship of various individuals to nature through their hunts and served to shape human identities. Motivation also resulted in different frameworks of control over the natural world which in turn participated in larger socio-economic trends of, for example, commercialization, or dynastic assertion of power. Environmental history recognizes that cultural responses to the natural world engender action on it. This action produces change, which elicits new cultural responses. In the process human beings colonize their environments, as the changes produce predicted outcomes, but might also result in unintended consequences. Medieval Italian hunting contributes to environmental history a clear example of this process in action.

1.1.4 Organization

Chapter 2 is historiographical. It sets out to illustrate the European and Italian research germane to the present work and to establish the connection between this dissertation and the historical work on hunting that came before it. The last section of this chapter will establish and contextualize those hunting manuals most useful to the present. My aim in so doing is to allow the discussion of my findings, subject of chapters three through six, to flow more smoothly.

There is no extant evidence for commercial or vernacular hunts in Lombardy. Instead, Chapter 3 rather explores ways hunting was practiced for pleasure in the context of the Renaissance courts of the Milanese Visconti and Sforza dukes between 1378 and 1499. The cultural and material footprint of these hunts went well beyond the precinct of the court and indeed of Lombardy. It involved gaining exclusive hunting control over vast areas of territory, creating enclosed hunting parks, and establishing a complex staff of huntsmen and their animal assistants. This articulated organization of territory and resources made available to the dukes of Milan a veritable suite of hunting possibilities for a range of game animals hunted in a variety of ways. This became a matter of state necessity, not a simple frivolity.

The research that forms the basis for Chapter 4 on Tuscany is based on smaller locales which are taken to be representative of larger trends. It illustrates the mechanisms that underlay a completely different set of hunts, namely those motivated by commercial reasons and that took place in the Tuscan communes. Here there was nothing culturally special about the activity. Hunting was a minor, but noticeable activity of resource extraction. The chapter tracks the development of the activity from a customary use-right to one important enough for municipalities to regulate and tax. Indeed, hunting was part of the current economic and market system. Much like the aristocrats, but in completely different ways, the commercial hunters developed specialized techniques for hunting game animals and birds. Finally, Tuscan elites also attempted to exert privileged control over the hunt, but until the Medici asserted hegemonic power in Florence in the mid-sixteenth century, we see nothing like what had taken place in Milan, and the vernacular hunts continued.

Chapter 5 is also concerned with commercial hunts, but primarily waterfowl. These took place in the unique and rich habitats of the Venetian lagoon. As in Tuscany, here hunting also was a significant, if minor economic activity. Fowling rights, locations, techniques, and technologies were often linked to fishing, and they benefited from the hybrid landscape that human activity had helped create around the Venetian lagoon as a consequence of its environmental characteristics. The lagoon environments also informed the ways Venetian authorities regulated resource use in the lagoon and the ways this extraction was organized. The authorities evaluated claims to different parts of the lagoon, and dealt with conflict. This chapter provides the core evidence for waterfowling.

Having established how and where game animals were hunted, Chapter 6 traces the path of the game meats and fowl from the woods and the waters to the table. At the dinner table, the complexities of hunting as a material and cultural activity were transferred to the preparation and consumption of the game meat. Gamey goods reached different consumers through different procurement strategies which were socially mandated and not always interchangeable. Game meats were certainly food, but of high status, and access to them was culturally determined. The aristocrats were different in that their abundant consumption of the game was a transformative process. Within it, not just the actual meat, but the entire body of the animal, cooked up and served, could have symbolic and performative functions that echoed the animals' original procurement in the woods. The cultural function of game meats and fowl in the larger socio-cultural context of medieval festive food consumption was no small matter. Non-aristocratic consumers, who could not themselves hunt, resorted to different procurement strategies, including, but not limited to, purchase. While these people could not match aristocratic performance around game, they attempted to emulate it, albeit on a reduced scale. For all, the readying of the meat in the kitchens aimed at matching ruling nutritional, social, and culinary practices, and to enhance its good flavor. As game meat procurement and consumption highlight, food and eating were important signifiers of identity in the Italian Middle Ages.

The conclusion will discuss the role of the environment in shaping different hunting activities and how, in time, the Italian hunters shaped their environments through the different uses they made of them in their hunting encounters. The various users of game responded to habitats and animals according to their personal knowledge base. This was shaped by their motivation to hunt, whether for work or play. Different motivations allowed users access to different levels and types of ecological knowledge, and it made them hold different ideas concerning what game animals and habitats were to be used. The conclusion will bring together the major matters that concern hunting by looking at two typologies of hunting encounters, the aristocratic and the commercial. This will reconcile the cultural performances at the table with matters of technologies, ecosystems, hunters, social, economic, and political structures as well mentalities and attitudes towards nature. After exploring microhistorical narratives, and forcing the strands of meaning apart, bringing them back together will allow individual specificities to emerge from the larger comparative and structural framework of specific hunts and explain how these fit into the larger picture in conceptual, environmental, technical, and social terms. Hunting and game were important parts of medieval society, and firmly embedded in it, both for those who could hunt and consume game, and for those who could not. What follows explain why.

CHAPTER 2. HISTORIANS AND HUNTING

2.1 EUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Especially since the 1980s, the topic of hunting has garnered the attention of medieval historians.¹ The early evolution of European hunting historiography is ably summarized by Baudouin Van den Abeele, and much early work in the field concentrated especially on the publication of critical editions of hunting manuals and hunting etymology therein contained.² Monographs on hunting have followed as well as more circumscribed studies.³ An important body of work developed around the hunting parks, mostly, but not exclusively, English. Then, from 2002, the topic of hunting has benefited from the attention of environmental historians and archaeozoologists who have shown the merits of an interdisciplinary approach to an activity equally shaped by material restraints and cultural assumptions. The present is conceptually and methodologically indebted to much of this research. Literary studies on human-animal relationships as they emerge through manuals and narratives have brought valuable insights on knowledge and practice around animals to the historical material. It is the purpose of this section to acknowledge and explicate these legacies.

Hunting was an established tradition for all medieval aristocrats, as made explicit by for example Werner Rösener.⁴ A variety of studies, ranging, for example, from monographs on individual dukes, such as Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan, to specific hunting establishments,

¹An exception is Marcelle Thiébaux, “The Mediaeval Chase,” *Speculum* 42, no. 2 (April 1967): 260–74, who, as the title illustrates, primarily details the aristocratic hunting technique of the *chasse per force* (the chase).

²Van den Abeele, 1996. Notably, Gunnar Tilander was responsible for many such editions. For example, Gunnar Tilander, ed., *Les Livres du Roy Modus et de la Royne Ratio* (Paris: SATF, 1932); Gunnar Tilander, ed., *La vènerie du Twiti* (Karlshamm: Cynegetica 2, 1956); Gunnar Tilander, ed., *Gaston Fhébus, Livre de Chasse* (Karlshamm: Cynegetica, 1971).

³Allsen, 2003; Richard Almond, *Medieval Hunting* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003); Richard Almond, *The Daughters of Artemis. The Huntress in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009); Cummins, 1988.

⁴Werner Rösener, ed., *Jagd und höfische Kultur im Mittelalter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Werner Rösener, *Die Geschichte der Jagd: Kultur, Gesellschaft und Jagdwesen im Wandel der Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). The latter covers hunting from the early beginnings of humankind until today and, as his other book, mostly from the perspectives of elite hunting.

such as those of the dukes of Burgundy, have been flanked by inquiries into the consumption of game, or the practice of falconry at the English court, and matters of symbolism, cultural preoccupations and material infrastructures surrounding aristocratic hunting.⁵ Although individual specificities vary, it is clear that Italian aristocratic hunting was not an isolated island in Latin Christendom, but participated in a common pool of practices and understandings, both within the courts and without. From this research it becomes apparent, for example, that game animals, and the institutions that surrounded them, became an integral part of aristocratic identity, and of the body of the prince. Social historians studying poaching (illegal hunting) of deer in England view poachers as agents in a broader context of social unrest, in opposition to the aristocratic hunters and their policing forces. Attacking the lord's deer or the walls of the hunting parks that contained them were potent symbols of revolt not just for poorer subjects.⁶ These well-defined groups or individuals acting out the complexities of their societies, also disprove the historical validity of the widespread assumption that, in obedience with Church dictates, clerics should not hunt. Indeed, in matters of hunting, clerics were as enmeshed as their secular counterparts with its meanings and material structures. Episcopal hunting infrastructures, and animals were also welcome and useful targets for all kinds of disgruntled offenders. The

⁵Christoph Niedermann, *Das Jagdwesen am Hofe Herzog Philipps des Guten von Burgund*, Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique (Bruxelles, 1995); Gregory Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court. Milan Under Galeazzo Maria Sforza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Beck, 2000; Corinne Beck, *Les eaux et forêts en Bourgogne ducal (vers 1350–1480.) Société et biodiversité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008); Jean Birrell, "Procuring, Preparing, and Serving Venison in Late Medieval England," in *Food in Medieval England*, eds. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 176–88; André Chastel, ed., *Le chateau la chasse et la foret* (Pollina, Luçon: Editions Sud Ouest, 1990); Claude d'Athaise and Monique Chatenet, eds., *Chasses princières dans l'Europe de la Renaissance*. (Paris: Actes Sud, 2007); Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Baudouin Van den Abeele, eds., *La chasse au Moyen Age: société, traités, symboles* (Firenze: SISMEL - Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000); Oggins, 2004.

⁶Jean Birrell, "Peasant Deer Poachers in the Medieval Forest," in *Progress and Problems in Medieval England*, eds. Richard Britnell and John Hatcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 68–88; Barbara Hanawalt, "Men's Game, King's Deer: Poaching in Medieval England," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1988): 175–93; Roger B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers. A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

symbolism involved, and the reactions elicited, did not differ.⁷ Some churchmen were notorious hunters, and the papal court of the sixteenth century was a veritable hub for the activity, involving the Pope, Leo X, (r. 1512-21) and some of his cardinals, for example Ascanio Sforza, brother to one of the hunting-happy dukes of Milan: Ludovico il Moro.⁸ As for the secular princes, so for those of the church: Jeremy Kruse states that for that pope, hunting was part of a “strategy of magnificence,” and that it “should be understood as an aspect of papal statecraft.”⁹ In all aristocratic circles, the hunting apparatus involved habitats and habits and represented an extension of a physical person. Attacks to this would be treated accordingly.

Nowhere was the sacrosanct value of aristocratic hunting more clear than inside the walls of their hunting parks, mostly studied for post-Conquest England, less so for continental Europe.¹⁰ There is little doubt that medieval parks were established primarily for deer because of the significance for aristocratic culture of that animal and the ability to hunt it.¹¹ Emparkment satisfied the requirement in view of increasing scarcities of roaming populations of deer.¹² In

⁷Andrew G. Miller, “Knights, Bishops, and Deer Parks: Episcopal Identity, Emasculation and Clerical Space in Medieval England,” in *Negotiating Clerical Identities: Priests, Monks, and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jennifer D. Thibodeaux (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 204–37; Andrew G. Miller, “‘Tails’ of Masculinity: Knights, Clerics, and the Mutilation of Horses in Medieval England,” *Speculum* 88, no. 4 (October 2013): 958–95. Despite his focus on the cultural operation put in place by the Church in order to limit bear and boar hunts, Michel Pastoreau never tackles the subject of clerical hunting. This author bases his argument of a demoting of the cultural image of both animals on a comparative reading of the fathers of the Church and the Latin bestiaries, literary sources, and the collection of *exempla*. Michel Pastoreau, *L’orso. Storia di un re decaduto* (Torino: Einaudi, 2008); Michel Pastoreau, “La chasse au sanglier: histoire d’une dévalorisation (IVe - XIVE siècle),” in *La Chasse au Moyen Age. Société, traités, symboles*, eds. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Baudouin Van den Abeele (Firenze: SISMEI Il Galluzzo, 2000), 7–23.

⁸Jeremy Kruse, “Hunting, Magnificence, and the Court of Leo X,” *Renaissance Studies* 7, no. 3 (1993): 243–57, see note 5 on page 244 for references to the traditional clerical interdict against hunting. For Leo X and his hunts, see also, Cesare De Cupis, *La caccia nella campagna Romana secondo la storia e i documenti*. (Roma: Dr. Attilio Nardecchia Editore, 1922) and Domenico Gnoli, “Le cacce di Leon X,” *Nuova Antologia* 3rd series, vol. 43 (1893): 433–58 and 617–48. Ludovico Sforza will be discussed in Chapter 3.

⁹Kruse, 1993, 244.

¹⁰However, for Artois, in northern France, see, Sharon Farmer, “Aristocratic Power and the ‘Natural’ Landscape. The Garden Park at Hesdin, Ca. 1291–1302,” *Speculum* 88, no. 3 (July 2013): 644–80. For (Lombard) Italy, Magherita Azzi Visentini, “La chasse dans le duché de Milano a l’époque des Visconti et des Sforza: les parcs de Pavie et de Milan,” in *Chasses princières dans l’Europe de la Renaissance*, eds. Claude d’Athenaise and Monique Chatenet (Paris: Actes Sud, 2007), 179–215.

¹¹S.A. Mileson, “The Importance of Parks in Fifteenth-Century Society,” in *The Fifteenth Century*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge: V. Boydell and Brewer, 2005), 19–37.

¹²Jean Birrell, “Deer and Deer Farming in Medieval England,” *The Agricultural Review* 40, no. 2 (1992): 123.

2002 historian and archaeologist Aleksander Pluskowski, puzzled by what he saw as the strong cultural bias applied to studies on hunting, wondered if different perspectives on medieval animals were compatible, suggesting that the study of animals lends itself well to interdisciplinary approaches.¹³ Medieval park studies have been a particularly fortunate beneficiary of this puzzlement. Recent scholarship has gone well beyond the basic understanding of the park especially in a monograph by S. A. Mileson and a collection of essays edited by Robert Liddiard which also includes an essay by Pluskowski.¹⁴ Mileson places medieval parks in the wider context of medieval society through an in-depth and long term survey of parks through a variety of evidence. The author understands parks as “a special and distinctive kind of land use” in an attempt to “counteract the inherent shortcomings of the pursuit of the individual park through local studies.”¹⁵ Freed from a predominantly cultural understandings of the park, this approach allows reactions of wider groups to the parks, conflicts, and rational market-focused approaches to the park to emerge more clearly. The parks were also part of the local countryside and the local economy, and they were not just for deer. Liddiard’s collection is based on individual interdisciplinary approaches that complement one another in providing a nuanced understanding of the various roles deer parks played in medieval English economy and society. For example, while the parks contributed to the wider medieval economy they also served as focal points for the creation of political and ethnic aristocratic identities and a culture of hunting

¹³Aleksander Pluskowski, “Hares with Crossbows and Rabbit Bones: Integrating Physical and Conceptual Studies of Medieval Fauna,” *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 18 (2002): 153; 166. Subsequently, Pluskowski took well to his own advice as the editor of two collections on animals and hunting based on archaeozoological data, Aleksander Pluskowski, ed., *Just Skin and Bones? New Perspectives on Human-Animal Relations in the Historical Past* (Oxford: Archeopress, 2005); Aleksander Pluskowski, ed., *Breaking and Shaping Beastly Bodies. Animals as Material Culture in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007).

¹⁴S. A. Mileson, *Parks in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Robert Liddiard, ed., *The Medieval Park: New Perspectives* (London: Windgather Press, 2007); Aleksander Pluskowski, “The Social Construction of Medieval Park Ecosystems: An Interdisciplinary Perspective,” in *The Medieval Park: New Perspectives*, Robert Liddiard (London: Windgather Press, 2007), 63–78. Earlier work on English parks includes, John M. Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh: Donald cop, 1979). Scores of regional studies exist on individual English parks. See Mileson’s (2009) excellent bibliography in this regard. Studies on the English Forest are corollary to park studies, for example, Charles R. Young, *The Royal Forest of Medieval England* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979).

¹⁵Mileson, 2009, 10.

through environmental management in parks.¹⁶ Finally, archaeozoologist Naomi Sykes establishes a connection between the consumption of game and establishments of related structures through the introduction of fallow deer (*Dama dama*), an ungulate species especially suited for emparked condition.¹⁷ Based on this body of research, the hunting park may be defined as a locale-specific hybrid. This observation has been very important in informing and contextualizing the documentary Italian material on hunting parks beyond their standard accession as cultural necessities.

Consumption of foodstuffs in general, and of game specifically, has also benefited from interdisciplinary approaches in the recent years especially from the field of archaeozoology. For example, archaeozoologist Benoît Clavel has established that the consumption of game meats and birds in northern France was primarily seigneurial, with religious and urban environments lagging far behind, and rural ones being absent.¹⁸ This view is confirmed by several authors in a collection from 2006 devoted exclusively to the consumption patterns of religious houses in France.¹⁹ Except when monastic houses or church establishments had direct access to gamey natural resources and hunting rights to boot, as in Ponthieu and Vimeu, or were located by vast stretches of marsh, as the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Martin de Troarn, such consumption remained limited, although, as Marinval-Vigne points out, the diversity of species consumed

¹⁶Robert Liddiard, "Introduction," in *The Medieval Park. New Perspectives*, ed. Robert Liddiard (London: Windgather Press, 2007), 1. Climate historians have so far been less involved in possible climatic factors affecting emparking. However, see, Willam Z. MacDonald, "At the Crossroads of Culture, Economy, and Climate: Herstmonceux Park in the Late Middle Ages," MA thesis (Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 2013).

¹⁷Naomi Sykes, "The Introduction of Fallow Deer to Britain: A Zooarchaeological Perspective," *Environmental Archaeology* 9 (2004): 75–83; Naomi Sykes, "Animal Bones and Animal Parks," in *The Medieval Park. New Perspectives*, ed. Robert Liddiard (London: Windgather Press, 2007), 49–62, also note 23 below.

¹⁸Benoît Clavel, ed., *L'Animal dans l'alimentation médiévale et moderne en France du Nord (XIII-XVII siècles)* (Picardie: Revue archéologique de Picardie - n. special 19, 2001), 112-118. The view is confirmed by Isabelle Rodet-Belarbi and Vianney Forest, "Alimentation carnée du XIV au XVI siècle dans le sud de la France, d'après les sources archéozoologiques: la part des mammifères sauvages et des oiseaux," in *La cuisine et la table dans la France de la fin du Moyen Âge. Contenus et contenants du XIV au XVI siècle.*, eds. Fabienne Ravoire and Anne Dietrich (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2009), 134–45.

¹⁹Benoît Clavel, ed., *Production alimentaire et lieux de consommation dans les établissements religieux du Moyen Âge et à l'époque Moderne*, vol 19 (Amiens: CAMPUS, 2006).

could be significant.²⁰ For England, Dale Serjeantson is able to establish distribution patterns for bird consumption and identify it as a “mark of status” reserved to the upper classes.²¹ Jean Birrell approaches manorial records and household accounts to explain how extensive game meat consumption was a prerogative only of the very well-off and based on procurement on part of the royal huntsmen.²² Archaeozoological research on bone assemblages from game animals has allowed Sykes to see changing butchering practices and differentiation between rural and high status sites and pointing to the emergence of different types of hunting techniques.²³ Thus butchering could enforce cultural and political domination and help new lords assert themselves.²⁴ For the fifteenth and early sixteenth century Corinne Beck compared the butchering practices described in hunting manuals with archaeozoological remains from several French sites and found discrepancies between the two.²⁵ While documentary sources spoke for specific elite-type butchering techniques of mostly older male individuals as part of a prestigious class, the bone remains rather point to the presence of animals of both sexes and of all ages and butchering techniques similar to those applied to domesticates such as cattle and pigs. Two practices

²⁰Raphaëlle Jaminon, “Les ressources alimentaires des établissements religieux du Ponthieu et du Vimeu au Moyen Âge à travers l’étude des droits de pêche et de chasse,” in *Production alimentaire et lieux de consommation dans les établissements religieux du Moyen Âge et à l’époque Moderne*, ed. Benoît Clavel (Amiens: CAMPUS, 2006), 141–54; Vincent Carpentier, “De la garenne au gabion. L’exploitation des oiseaux sauvages dans le marais de l’abbaye bénédictine de Saint-Martin de Troarn depuis le XIe siècle,” in *Production alimentaire et lieux de consommation dans les établissements religieux du Moyen Âge et à l’époque Moderne*, ed. Benoît Clavel (Amiens: CAMPUS, 2006), 181–202; Marie-Christine Marinval-Vigne, “Consommation d’animaux sauvages en milieu ecclésial à Orléans au XVI siècle: données archéozoologiques et livres de cuisine,” in *Exploitation des animaux sauvages à travers le temps. XIII Rencontres Internationale d’Archéologie et d’Histoire d’Antibes. IV Colloque International de l’Homme et l’Animal* (Juan-les-Pins: Éditions APDCA, 1993), 470–90.

²¹Dale Serjeantson, “Birds: Food as a Mark of Status,” in *Food in Medieval England*, eds. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 131–47.

²²Birrell, 2006, 176–88.

²³Naomi Sykes, “The Impact of the Normans on Hunting Practices in England,” in *Food in Medieval England*, eds. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 162–75. Sykes has been very prolific in exploring this approach. For example, Naomi Sykes, “Taking Sides: The Social Life of Venison in Medieval England,” in *Breaking and Shaping Beastly Bodies*, ed. Aleksander Pluskowski (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 149–60.

²⁴Naomi Sykes, “Hunting for the Anglo-Normans: Zooarcheological Evidence for Medieval Identity,” in *Just Skin and Bones? New Perspectives on Human-Animal Relations in the Historical Past*, ed. Alexander Pluskowski (Oxford: Archeopress, 2005).

²⁵Corinne Beck, Isabelle Rodet-Belarbi, and Marie-Christine Marinval, “Le découpe du cerf et du sanglier au Moyen-Âge,” in *La chasse. Pratiques sociales et symboliques*, eds. Isabelle Sidéra, Vila Emmanuelle, and Erikson Philippe (Paris: De Boccard, 2006), 235–65.

therefore co-existed surrounding game animals with one underlining social identity and status, the other establishing a practical procedure, geared primarily towards the obtention of material products in the form of hides, meat, and antler material. All this work shows the important contribution that the studies of material culture may give to more strictly historical material. It is likely that some such similarities may be found in Italy, but given the state of Italian archaeozoology, it is impossible at present to establish connections.²⁶

In a little over a decade, environmental historians have increasingly populated the natural landscapes with hunting and game animals.²⁷ In a 2002 essay, John Cummins established the clear connection between the landscapes created in (medieval English) hunting parks, and the *chasse par force* technique of hunting stags.²⁸ In that same volume of essays, Petra van Dam discussed a very pervasive environmental change linked to changes in wild life. In the fourteenth century, the disappearance of the hare (*Lepus europaeus*) as a consequence of habitat change and over-hunting, prompted the introduction of rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) for pelts and meat.²⁹ Initially tended with great care in warrens in the sandy dunes of Holland, the adaptable creature escaped and colonized the countryside.³⁰

²⁶For commercial urban-based slaughtering of game animals (but not actual practice), see Giampiero Nigro, *Gli uomini dell'Irco. Indagine sui consumi di carne nel basso Medioevo. Prato alla fine del '300* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1983).

²⁷The creatures, and their hunts, are now an integral part of the curriculum of environmental history, alongside all other wild and domesticated species of animals, see Hoffmann, 2014, 190-92.

²⁸John G. Cummins, “*Veneurs s’en Vont en Paradis: Medieval Hunting and the ‘Natural’ Landscape*,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Sense of Place in Western Europe*, John Howe and Michael eds. Wolfe (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2002), 33–56.

²⁹Petra J.E.M. van Dam, “New Habitats for the Rabbit in Northern Europe, 1300–1600,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, John and Michael Wolfe Howe, eds. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), 57–69, it was followed almost a decade later by, Petra van Dam, “Rabbits Swimming Across Borders: Micro-Environmental Infrastructures and Macro-Environmental Change in Early Modern Holland,” in *Ecologies and Economies in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Scott G. Bruce (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010).

³⁰Cécile Callou. *De la garenne au clapier: étude archéozoologique du lapin en Europe occidentale*, (Paris, Publications Scientifiques du Muséum, 2003) narrates the story of the small rodent from a European perspective. The interdisciplinary study includes medieval archeozoological and iconographic material.

Corinne Beck and François Duceppe-Lamarre both analyze hunting in the framework of larger environments, respectively the forests of Burgundy and those of northern France.³¹ Beck's fourteenth and fifteenth century Burgundy, a region with close proximity to both Savoy and Lombardy (Chapter 3), is richly documented through the archives of the comital bureaucracies. Beck is an archaeologist as well as a historian. In the introduction to her 2008 book, she states her interest in the dynamically unfolding relationship between human beings and their environments and the role of historical biodiversity in developing both the natural landscapes and the anthropogenic understandings and practices within them. Hunting in the duchy of Burgundy was informed by ducal practices of resource allocation within the multiple uses of "forests and water." Commissioned hunts, carried out by ducal huntsmen, resulted in a successful extermination of wolves which were a threat to the prized deer (as well as otters, fond eaters of riverine fish). At the Burgundian court, hunting moved in different directions, elitist and professional, by cultural requirement which established multiple co-evolutionary relationships between humans and animals which resulted in altered species compositions and landscapes.

Duceppe-Lamarre states how fourteenth century human beings no longer operated within "natural" ecosystems, but rather in hybrid landscapes made up of cultural and environmental factors. In these, for example, he tracks the developments in animal species as the result of multiple co-adaptations subject to several pressures. For example, the beaver disappeared due to human hunts for pelts as well as human encroachment on vital habitat through the buildings of mills and other hydraulic operations. Forests were specifically managed by human beings to ensure hunting and pasturage, the former through warrens and parks, permanent and semipermanent traps. These practices changed the natural landscapes, but Duceppe-Lamarre is also interested in how the hunting activity and its infrastructures became palimpsests for cultural ideas. For example, the location of parks and warrens could be motivated by strategic (defensive)

³¹Beck, 2008; François Duceppe Lamarre. *Chasse et pâturage dans les forêts du Nord de la France. Pour une archéologie du paysage sylvestre*, (Paris, l'Harmattan, 2006).

needs as was the case with the enlargement of the hunting park at Hesdin starting in 1293, prompted by escalating tension between the King of France and count of Flanders, owner of that park. Through hunting, humans changed and (re-)created the forest environments through various structures and the regulation of ecosystems and animal populations.³² Both authors establish hunting landscapes as hybrids, and posit that hunting dynamically partook in shaping them. For most of these historians, hunting was an activity primarily centered around the elites, even professional huntsmen were employed by courts, and commercial hunting remains relatively invisible.³³

Literary historians have also shown interest in hunting as it appears in the hunting manuals.³⁴ An essay by Susan Crane illustrates how productively the manuals may serve the purpose of understanding hunting as a tightly interconnected cluster of material practices, knowledge, and symbolic connotations.³⁵ In this essay the author takes into consideration the most formal and prestigious of the hunts, the driven hunt on deer, or *chasse par force de chiens*. Crane recognizes the cultural and ritual context that surrounded the hunt, but also contextualizes the hunt around the interactive dynamics that existed between huntsmen and dogs. She identifies that other, and different communication systems were involved, namely the relationship of all hunters with the game, one which involved both contact with the actual animal, but also with the various signs (notably the *fumets*, or excrement) that they left. She concludes that to their contemporaries “aristocratic mastery of nature” (which involved formalized behaviors and symbolic understanding) took place “through masterful *understanding* of nature” based on

³²What was created thus were socio-natural sites, although Duceppe-Lamarre does not himself use that term.

³³The capturers of raptors in Burgundy were commercially motivated although the products of their activities were not destined for the table, Corinne Beck, “Oiseaux et oiseleurs en Bourgogne aux XIV et XV siècles,” in *Milieux naturels, espaces sociaux*, eds Élisabeth Mornet and Franco Morenzoni (Paris: Publications La Sorbonne, 1997), 299–311. See also, Dirk Van Damme and Anton Eryvnek, “Medieval Ferrets and Rabbits in the Castle of Laarne (East-Flanders, Belgium); a Contribution to the History of a Predator and Its Prey,” *Helinium XXVIII/2* (1988): 278–84.

³⁴For example, Armand Strubel and Chantal de Saulnier, *La poétique de la chasse au Moyen Âge. Les livres de chasse du XIV siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994).

³⁵Susan Crane, “Ritual Aspects of the Hunt à Force,” in *Engaging with Nature. Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Lisa J. Kiser and Barbara A. Hanawalt (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 63–84.

ecologically informed participation in the practice.³⁶ To Crane, the symbolic (cultural), and the material were not mutually exclusive, rather they reciprocated one another and shaped human identities. Such a framework provides a common set of references for all participants in the specific typology of the hunt performed, not a confining container operating at the expense of individual variance, be it human or animal.

Recent research that incorporates literature and animal studies yields valuable insight also to historians grappling with understanding medieval activities involving animals.³⁷ This research is primarily based on literary texts, but complemented with perspectives from the natural sciences, animal training, and husbandry, and it articulates the ways in which medieval humans culturally, materially, and emotionally embraced the lives of those animals that participated in their human life journeys. The work makes clear how mentalities and understandings pertaining to animals sprung from material and practical interaction with and around the beasts, and in which the physical animal body played a shaping role on par with the human one in a process that Crane terms “interpenetration.”³⁸

Attitudes to animals and to the natural world differed widely, and none sprung exclusively from abstract theorizing. Jeffrey Cohen points out that “allegories and moralization seem insufficient in their power to contain” the animal. David Salter indicates to the “crucial role” played by the narrative genres of hagiography and romance in producing two fundamentally different views representing and understanding (medieval) animals “the one ostensibly spiritual the other social.”³⁹ From these the author finds a “multiplicity of representations of, and attitudes towards, animals and nature.”⁴⁰ As all three authors show, such cultural complexities arose from actual animal handling notwithstanding the animals’ symbolic, allegorical, and mimetic functions

³⁶*Ibid.*, 79, Crane’s emphasis.

³⁷Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters. Contacts and Concept in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2013); David Salter, *Holy and Noble Beasts. Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001); Jeffrey Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

³⁸For example, Crane, 2013, 9 and throughout.

³⁹Salter, 2001, 147-48.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 149.

evident in certain strands of learned written culture. To exemplify practical animal handling both Crane and Cohen write extensively about the process of co-adaptation and the development a dynamic physical and mental intimacy between knights and their horses, carefully bred and selected animals adapted to mounted combat.⁴¹ In a different case of animal handling, that of cohabitation, especially dear to hagiographic literature for example in the lyric about a scholar-monk, and Pangur Bân (White Fuller), his cat, Crane writes that, “when saints speak with wild animals and change their behavior, they are experimenting with the environment.”⁴² Pangur Bân’s owner is not keen on changing feline behavior, rather, admiring the cat’s hunting skills and concentration, he seeks a similarity, flattering to the cat, between proficiency in catching mice and his own attempts at catching words. To Crane, Cohen, and Salter, literature shows that animals could, and did, participate in human lives as partners. To these three authors, from knights to monks, the medieval human stance towards the animal world, was (also) one of mutuality rather than of anthropocentric dominance or mechanistic indifference. Salter points out how the heroes of romances, much like the saints, “submit themselves to chance or ‘adventure’ refusing to shape their own destinies,” rather letting “supernatural forces,” as well as animals, determine their paths.⁴³

Different intellectual strategies have helped develop the Italian narratives on hunting that are presented in the following pages. Much like their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, the Italian hunters operated in hybrid environments which their activity dynamically contributed to shaping through a variety of strategies. Although these differed widely, no hunter could act as if the natural world did not matter. Where it is possible to tell, in the activities of aristocratic hunters and their huntsmen, the Italians followed suit with established European strategies. Through the centuries, medieval human-animal encounters shaped medieval human identities

⁴¹Crane, 2013, 159-160, Cohen, 2003, 50-52.

⁴²Crane, 2013, 5, 29-31. The ninth century lyric, written in Old Irish, is entitled “The Scholar (or Monk) and His Cat.” Crane’s complete treatment of it is in the chapter titled *Cohabitation*, 11-41.

⁴³Salter, 2001, 58, as for example in the case of St. Eustace whose new, Christian destiny, is sealed by the appearance of a stag with a crucifix placed betwixt its antlers.

and understandings of animals in different social contexts, and some of these encounters happened through hunting.⁴⁴ On the one hand, the ecological behavior of the game animals offered opportunities and posed restraints for hunting strategies, on the other, as a hunting partner the animal shared responsibility in creating meaning and action. One strand of contemporary medieval thinking about animals recognized this partnership as a valuable one which required both skill and respect on part of its human partner, and that, when successful, amounted to mastery.⁴⁵ Thus qualified, the perception and interaction of medieval humans with the animals involved in hunting deepens our understanding of both their work and their play. The central chapters of the present study will show how Italian documentary material from both aristocratic and non-elite matrices displays these types of understandings on hunting. But first it is time to ascertain what Italian historians think about hunting.

2.2 ITALIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Hunting has not elicited the same amount of interest amongst Italian historians as it has for their counterparts north of the Alps. However, despite relatively little available material, developing trends are clearly discernible. From initial antiquarian approaches developed mostly in discursive fashion in the first half of the twentieth century, in the latter part of the century inquiry into matters of hunting became part of an emerging trend of serious critical historical inquiry into local rural and social studies even with some environmental content. The early 1900s over-arching accounts mostly lacked systematic and/or helpful referencing. The only exception is the earliest of those, Cesare De Cupis' *La caccia nella campagna romana* (1922).⁴⁶ The book's

⁴⁴These encounters are transformative for both parties. As such they go well beyond what historian Keith Thomas rather obviously noted, and that is that because animals are neither wholly similar or dissimilar to human beings they provide a useful location from which to understand what it is to be human. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 40–41.

⁴⁵Cohen, 2003, 59 details how proper treatment of a great warhorse, or *destrier*, involved “reverence” for the animal quite apart from specific hard-won skills in handling it and how “cowardly knights” are betrayed when they display “inept relation to their horses.”

⁴⁶Cesare De Cupis, *La caccia nella campagna Romana secondo la storia e i documenti*. (Roma: Dr. Attilio Nardecchia Editore, 1922).

narrative concentrates on the elite hunts in the Roman countryside, starting with the fifteenth century popes and cardinals and ending in the nineteenth century with imported aristocratic fox hunts, while also devoting a separate chapter to hunting legislation. In Luigi Ghidini, *La caccia nell'arte* the major interest is with the depiction of a raft of examples of hunting in the visual arts.⁴⁷ It is difficult to discern the author's general selection criteria of the otherwise very pertinent collection of paintings and sculptures which are loosely organized thematically or by historical period. The treatment of the medieval period amounts to one short chapter written, as the rest of the book, in mostly anecdotal form. While Giuseppe Bonelli's (*La caccia in Italia*, 1933) rather cursory overview of common hunting and capturing techniques is devoted to various Italian areas, Mario Borsa's *La caccia nel Milanese* (1924) focuses on hunting in Lombardy through the ages including a section on the hunts of the Visconti and Sforza dukes.⁴⁸ Borsa's book is considered something of a classic amongst Italian historians. Its pleasant, but non-academic account offers however little if any substantial guidance for readers interested in archival referencing. Finally, Luigi Ugolini's *Il regno di Diana* (1954) embarks on a completely unsupported and seemingly personally biased overview of hunting through the ages.⁴⁹ In the case of all five books, it is difficult to discern a precise intention or scholarly direction beyond general description and anecdotal reporting.

Yet even as Ugolini was writing, serious scholarly Italian interest in the natural world, of which hunting is a recognized part, was taking hold through two venues; the Spoleto-based (Umbria region) Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, started in 1952, and the Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "Francesco Datini," in Prato (Tuscany) founded in 1967. Under the influence of Fernand Braudel, the *Annales* School, and the growing insights coming out of the latter's microhistorical approaches, resulting Italian publications promoted a new form

⁴⁷Luigi Ghidini, *La caccia nell'arte* (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1929).

⁴⁸Giuseppe Bonelli, *La caccia in Italia* (Milano: Raimondi & Zaccardi, 1933), Mario Borsa, *La caccia nel Milanese attraverso i secoli* (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1924).

⁴⁹Luigi Ugolini, *Il regno di Diana. Storia della caccia attraverso i secoli* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1954).

of historical methodology. Departing from the traditional interests of the field of history which embraced leaders, politics and warfare, the Spoletine tradition was interested in the lives of common people and issues surrounding, for example, climate, agriculture, demography, commerce and technology.

This development was momentous. To it goes the merit of opening up to serious academic inquiry the field of Italian medieval rural history, which, in 1958, then pioneer landscape historian Emilio Sereni stated was but poorly researched, and then only through the sources of legal history.⁵⁰ The methodological ideas of Spoleto and Fondazione Datini provided what proved to be very suitable frameworks for the often highly locale-specific medieval Italian conditions, rich in archival material. The results are plainly visible in a continuous stream of voluminous publications centered, for example, on food, landscape, agrarian economies, natural resources, plants, and human-animal relationships.⁵¹ Spoleto's influence furthermore insured that in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Italian landscape and rural studies became part of the academic historical curriculum in Italy. While nature is not a passive backdrop for human activities in these studies, few of them declared themselves as being self-consciously environmental in method and approach.⁵² Yet new cohorts of historians in the field, still busy

⁵⁰Emilio Sereni, *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano*. (Roma: Laterza, 1974), 10-11.

⁵¹For example, Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo. *L'uomo di fronte al mondo animale nel'Alto Medioevo, 7-13 Aprile, 1983*, 31 (Spoleto: presso la sede del Centro, 1985); Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo. *L'ambiente vegetale nel'Alto Medioevo, 30 marzo-5 aprile, 1989* (Spoleto: presso la sede del Centro, 1990); Simonetta Cavaciocchi, ed., *Alimentazione e nutrizione sec. XIII-XVIII*, Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini," Prato. (Roma: Le Monnier, 1996); Simonetta Cavaciocchi, ed., *L'uomo e la foresta secc. XIII-XVIII*. Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini", Prato. (Roma, Le Monnier, 1996).

⁵²As is, for example, Karl Appuhn's work on Venetian forest policies, Karl Appuhn, *A Forest on the Sea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), which uncovers practices, legislation, and attitudes of the Venetian government in the *longue durée* within forest management practices and Venetian procurement of wood and lumber. In this context the Venetians and their forests were engaged in a dynamic, co-evolving relationship. But see, Giovanni Cascio Pratilli and Luigi Zangheri, eds., *La legislazione medicea sull'ambiente. Vol. IV. Scritti per un commento* (Firenze: Olschki, 1998), and Catherine Kovesi, "Muddying the Waters: Alfonsina de' Medici and the Lake of Fucecchio," in *Communes and Despots in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds. John E. Law and Bernadette Paton (Farham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010) 223-47, who details the environmental consequences of constant Medici sponsored micro-management of local landscapes and their resources and, mostly for the modern period, Guido Alfani, Matteo Di Tullio, and Luca Mocarrelli, eds, *Storia economica e ambiente italiano (ca. 1400-1850)* (Milano: Franco Angeli Storia, 2012).

building local and regional narratives, only show that much work may still be done, also in the field of hunting.⁵³ Environmental historians may also build, and specifically expand, on this tradition.

The present work is born out of the concerns of environmental history and is twice indebted to the Spoletine tradition. Firstly, local-specific approaches have demonstrated the potential of building up a more comprehensive study of the topic of medieval Italian hunting from the basis of small-scale narratives. The second debt lies with the opportunity to interpret and the activities of different hunters within an existing historiography on local communities.

In the context of studying medieval communities Italian historians recognized non-aristocratic hunting as a commercial activity embedded in local rural landscapes and shaped by existing the socio-economic strategies. In the Tuscan village of Fucecchio, for example, Alberto Malvolti has identified that commercial hunts, carried out by local practitioners, were organized through changing municipal strategies.⁵⁴ Andrea Zagli reflects on some of the early modern developments of so-called marginal activities of commercial resource extraction, of which hunting was one, around the Padule of Fucecchio area.⁵⁵ Giovanni Riganelli has published an exhaustive analysis on natural resource uses in the area of Corciano, in modern day Umbria, again including hunting.⁵⁶ Giuliano Pinto includes observations on hunting and the role it played

⁵³Regional rural studies have been produced, for example, by Rinaldo Comba, (Piedmont), Giovanni Pini, (Lombardy), Luisa Chiappa Mauri (irrigation, Lombardy), Giorgio Chittolini (Lombardy), Francesco Panero (peasants and villages, Lombardy) and Zefiro Ciuffoletti (Tuscany). Vito Fumagalli was the first Italian historian interested in acknowledging and establishing the perceptions and attitudes to different landscapes exhibited by medieval Italians, Vito Fumagalli, *L'uomo e l'ambiente nel medioevo* (Roma: Laterza, 1992); Vito Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

⁵⁴For example, Alberto Malvolti, "Le risorse del Padule di Fucecchio nel Basso Medioevo," in *Il Padule di Fucecchio*, ed. Adriano Prosperi (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1995), 35–62; Alberto Malvolti, "I proventi dell'incolto," in *Incolti, fiumi, paludi. Utilizzazione delle risorse naturali nella Toscana medievale e moderna*, eds. Alberto Malvolti and Giuliano Pinto (Firenze: Olschki, 2003), 247–72; Alberto Malvolti, "Nel Padule. Uomini e acque nel Medioevo," in *Uomini del Padule. Lavoro, vita, tradizioni nel Padule di Fucecchio dal Medioevo a oggi*, ed. Andrea Zagli (Firenze: Polistampa, 2003), 11–20; Alberto Malvolti, "Il padule di Fucecchio, un'area 'marginale' al centro di secolari conflitti," *Atti del Convegno Di Buggiano Castello del 26 Giugno 2004* (Buggiano Castello, 2004).

⁵⁵Andrea Zagli, "'Oscure economie' di palude," in *Incolti, fiumi, paludi. Utilizzazione delle risorse naturali nella Toscana medievale e moderna*, eds. Alberto Malvolti and Giuliano Pinto (Firenze: Olschki, 2003), 159–214.

⁵⁶Giovanni Riganelli, *L'economia rurale nel Medioevo. Un'indagine sulle comunità dell'attuale territorio di Corciano* (Perugia: Fabrizio Fabbri Editore, 1999), 260-71.

especially in his research on trade and exchanges on the Tuscan area around Volterra.⁵⁷ These matters also concerned Giampiero Nigro, who has also written on culinary matters, and researched the life and activities of Tuscan merchant Francesco Datini of Prato through the holdings of the archive that bears his name.⁵⁸ We shall explore these in greater detail in Chapter 3 on Tuscany, and Chapter 6 on consumption.

To this group of colleagues, Alfio Cortonesi, Bruno Andreolli, and Giovanni Cherubini have contributed foundational and mature pieces to medieval Italian rural studies. All authors investigated hunting.⁵⁹ Cherubini explored the more general role of hunting in society with an emphasis on Tuscany, Andreolli those in the area of Bologna, while Cortonesi presented case studies from central Italy (Rome and south). Cherubini's Tuscan hunts involve all strata of society.⁶⁰ His mostly fourteenth and fifteenth century Tuscan landscapes are populated by a host of socially diverse hunters, drawn from both archival and literary sources, each engaged in the hunting activity most germane to his social and economic standing. The historian established a heterogenous hunting landscape where hunting is ubiquitous in habitats that seemingly well furnished with game. In this investigation of the aristocratic hunts of the Pico counts of Mirandola from the *Trecento* to the early eighteenth century, Andreolli also recognized the

⁵⁷Giuliano Pinto, "I rapporti economici tra città e campagna," in *Economie urbane ed etica economica nell'Italia medievale* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2005), 5–73; Giuliano Pinto, "Le risorse naturali nella Toscana medievale e moderna," in *Incolti, fiumi, paludi. Utilizzazione delle risorse naturali nella Toscana medievale e moderna*, eds. Alberto Malvolti and Giuliano Pinto (Firenze: Olschki, 2003), 1–16; Giuliano Pinto, *Toscana medievale. Paesaggi e realtà sociali* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1993); Giuliano Pinto, "Volterra: l'evoluzione economica fra XIII e XVI secolo," in *Città e spazi economici nell'Italia comunale*, ed. Giuliano Pinto (Bologna: CLUEB, 1996), 203–21.

⁵⁸Nigro, 1983; Giampiero Nigro, et al., *Et Coquatur Ponendo* (Prato: Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "Francesco Datini", 1996); Giampiero Nigro, *Francesco Di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant* (Prato: Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "Francesco Datini", 2010)

⁵⁹Giovanni Cherubini, *L'Italia rurale del basso medioevo* (Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 1984), see also Giovanni Cherubini, "Il bosco in Italia tra il XIII e il XVI secolo," in *L'uomo e la foresta secc. XIII-XVII*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1996), 357–74. Cherubini importantly established the methodological and conceptual link between medieval Italian cities and their countrysides. This conceptual framework has since proved itself useful to many medieval Italian historians. He also, famously, dubbed medieval Italy a "land of cities" (*una terra di città*), in Giovanni Cherubini, *Scritti toscani. L'urbanesimo medievale e la mezzadria* (Firenze: Salimbeni, 1991). Cortonesi, 1995.

⁶⁰Cherubini, 1984, 40-47; Giovanni Cherubini, "La caccia nel medioevo," in *Incolti, fiumi, paludi. Utilizzazione delle risorse naturali nella Toscana medievale e moderna*, eds. Alberto Malvolti and Giuliano Pinto (Firenze: Olschki, 2003), 105–15.

presence of several groups of hunters.⁶¹ The historian of medieval Italian landscapes and their human inhabitants illustrated the interdependent socio-cultural and environmental factors that shaped all the Mirandolese hunts. Finally, Cortonesi found the habitats of Lazio similarly well stocked between the *Trecento* and the sixteenth century.⁶² The laziali hunts that Cortonesi explores were those practiced by local folk for whom hunting was motivated by the varying patterns of consumption of urbanites. Cortonesi outlines techniques and practitioners, landscapes and animals, tracing the game from the woods to the markets demonstrating the tight interaction established, also through hunting, between urban centers and their surrounding landscapes.

Despite the demonstrated presence of viable commercially motivated hunts and non-aristocratic practitioners, one of the pervasive narratives for medieval Italian hunting remains seemingly uninterested in their existence and role. In 1983 and 1984 this narrative was developed through one essay by Hannelore Zug Tucci, and a book chapter by Massimo Montanari. Montanari is a prominent and prolific social historian of food and nutrition whose great merit was to develop this field in Italian historiography. Zug Tucci's approach to hunting is diffuse. In 1979 she published a partial description of the north-central Italian statutory legislation on hunting. In 1992 she published an article on hunting and fishing in the Venetian lagoon. In general Zug Tucci identifies problems and valuable areas of investigation, but her writings typically eschew interpretive frameworks, and her research is based almost in its entirety on a synthesis of published material. With all their differences, both Montanari and Zug Tucci, see the story of hunting in medieval Italy as consisting of a progressive expropriation of the lower classes by those in power.⁶³ From a scantily documented situation in which apparently everybody

⁶¹Bruno Andreolli, *Le cacce dei Pico* (San Felice sul Panaro, Modena: Gruppo Studi Bassa Modenese, 1988).

⁶²Cortonesi, 1995, 122-168; A. Cortonesi, "Cacciatori, selvaggina e sussistenza a Roma e nel Lazio nei secoli XIII-XIV," in *La chasse au moyen age: Actes du Colloque du Centre d'études médiévales de Nice*, ed. Marcelle Thiébaux (Nice: Les Belles Lettres, 1980), 317-30 (mostly on bird hunting).

⁶³Hannelore Zug Tucci, "La caccia, da bene comune a privilegio," in *Economia naturale, economia monetaria* (Torino: Einaudi, 1983), 397-445, statutory material, Hannelore Zug Tucci, "La chasse dans la législation statutaire italienne," in *La Chasse au Moyen Age: Actes du Colloque du Centre d'études médiévales de Nice*, ed. Marcelle Thiébaux (Nice: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1979), 99-113, Venetian hunts, Hannelore Zug Tucci, "Pesca e caccia in laguna," in *Storia di Venezia, Vol. 1*, eds. Gino Benzoni and Antonio Meniti Ippolito (Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1992), 491-514. Massimo Montanari, "Vicende di un'espropriazione. Il ruolo della caccia nell'economia e nell'alimentazione dei ceti rurali," in *Campagne medievali: strutture produttive, rapporti di*

had access to the hunting resources, (not confirmed by archaeozoology, see below p. 54), this was slowly eroded by the nobility who increasingly made the activity a culturally justified class-based privilege strictly reserved for themselves. This view is certainly not fabrication as has been confirmed by data collected by other historians, as well as the present work (Chapter 1), but it is reductive. Expropriation was seldom as *tout court* as the ruling aristocrats may have wished, or been able to enforce.

This narrative engendered a lasting legacy; aristocratic hunting features prominently in the existing medieval Italian hunting literature. The book of reference for many historians of aristocratic hunting is by Paolo Galloni.⁶⁴ In this book the historian investigates the reasons behind the prominence of hunting in aristocratic lives. Galloni's answer is based to a large extent on literary and hagiographic sources. From these he develops an elitist answer that harks back to a traditional reading of (Germanic) warrior ethics and behavioral codes as justification for all aristocratic hunting in Latin Christendom. Galloni is valuable for his interest in the symbolism and mentalities of power, but he remains uninterested in the game animals and their habitats and their roles in shaping hunting. In very different settings a richly illustrated and well-referenced book by Giancarlo Malacarne details all the trappings of the hunting-happy court of the Gonzaga of Mantua, while Francesca Erba presents the results of her careful collection of contemporary literate and humanist texts on the Pavia hunting park of the Visconti and Sforza dukes of Milan.⁶⁵ The hunts of the Medici from the fifteenth century onwards have been also been studied, as have those of landowning Venetian aristocracy.⁶⁶ In various ways, all these books establish important material aspects and attitudes to hunting displayed by the Italian elites showing how these were

lavoro, sistemi alimentari, ed. Massimo Montanari (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1984), 174–90. Montanari's publications' list is extensive and influential, see for example, Massimo Montanari, *L'alimentazione contadina nell'alto medioevo* (Napoli: Liguori Editore, 1979).

⁶⁴Paolo Galloni, *Il cervo e il lupo: caccia e cultura nobiliare nel Medioevo* (Milano: Laterza, 1993), followed by Paolo Galloni, *Storia e cultura della caccia dalla preistoria a oggi* (Bologna: Laterza, 2000), for which *Il cervo e il lupo* provide the material for the medieval chapter.

⁶⁵Malacarne 1998; Luisa Erba, *Il parco visconteo nella letteratura "il giardino onde svelse i gigli d'oro"* (Pavia: Tipografia Commerciale Pavese, 1999).

⁶⁶Susanna Pietrosanti, *Le cacce dei Medici* (Firenze: Vallecchi Editore, 1992); Renata Salvarani, *Dimore di caccia nelle terre dei Dogi* (Bologna: Greentime, 2001).

distinct, but consistent, across regional divides and aligned with those founds at other European courts. They remain, however, mostly cultural studies which engage the animals involved in hunting as static objects of human interests.

A more nuanced approach to aristocratic hunts within the Lombard landscapes of the Visconti and Sforza dukes of Lombardy are the focus of historian Francesca Vaglienti's 1997 research. From her thorough explorations into the holdings state archives of Milan Vaglienti demonstrates how the "passion" for hunting for these rulers was consciously developed also as a political tool.⁶⁷ A year before Vaglienti had published a shorter article in which she built on the ruling theory that hunting was an act of expropriation by the elites, as was certainly the case in Lombardy, but also argued that the resulting body of legislation meant to protect habitats and game indeed represented both a conscious *politica ambientale* and a *tutela del territorio* (environmental politics and protection of the territory) on part of the ruling authorities.⁶⁸ Through hunting, the dukes gained an appreciation and understanding for natural phenomena. Through actual practice and observation this its protection.

Both Vaglienti's essays go well beyond the superficial legibility of aristocratic hunting, where several of the just cited historians stop, attempting both an emic and etic reading of her sources. The political implications of hunting and as a tool to rule are readily recognizable in the evidence presented. Certainly the dukes were intent upon preserving as much of the hunting patrimony of Lombardy as possible, and they had the, not particularly surprising, knowledge to understand that protecting habitat -- although it may be exclusively for their own enjoyment -- was a fine way to do so. Vaglienti establishes a close functional link between environmental knowledge, political power, and hunting echoing similar findings by other European historians.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Francesca Vaglienti, "Cacce e parchi ducali sul Ticino (1450–1476)," in *Vigevano e i territori circostanti alla fine del Medioevo*, ed. Giorgio Chittolini (Vigevano: Unicopli, 1997), 185–260.

⁶⁸Francesca Vaglienti, "Le cacce ducali. Politica ambientale e tutela del territorio in età sforzesca," in *Il territorio lombardo: prospettive di ricerca storico-naturalistica dal medioevo all'età contemporanea*, ed. Agnese Visconti (Milano: Società Italiana di Scienze Naturali, 1996), 63–81.

⁶⁹For the early modern period, Martin Knoll, "Power and Sustainability: Elite Hunting Culture in Early Modern Germany," in *History and Sustainability. Third International Conference of the European Society for Environmental History*, The Third International Conference of the European Society for Environmental History (Florence, February 16–19, 2005, 2005), 40–43.

As shown in the previous section archaeozoologists such as Naomi Sykes have expertly plumbed their findings to provide answers to socio-economic, cultural, and environmental questions connected to hunting. Similar work is lacking for Italy. In 1993, and on the basis of the results of fifteen years of Italian archaeozoological work Polydora Baker and Gillian Clark expressed hopes for achieving a more complete picture of medieval stock economies as well as “the role of hunting in medieval subsistence.”⁷⁰ New technologies and a better awareness of the apparent potential of archaeozoology for archaeologists and historians were part of her optimistic evaluation. The authors show this potential by pointing to the apparent contradiction between archaeozoological evidence showing but scant amounts of (large) wild animal bones in (unspecified) “sites” from the early middle ages, and a larger historical narratives (such as Massimo Montanari’s of 1979) that described rather the ubiquitousness of hunting for all social classes. Apparently, such optimistic hopes for future interdisciplinary analysis were not met if, in 2003, Frank Salvatori repeated Baker’s and Clark’s words.⁷¹ Salvatori bemoaned the lack of data from early medieval villages, while pointing to the (relatively) high percentage of large game mammals in high status sites, such as early medieval castles. While the latter confirmed aristocratic prerogative of hunting, the picture of the consumption of game meats was far from comprehensive and skewed.

The leading publication in Italian medieval archeology is the annual journal *Archeologia Medievale*, now in its 40th year of publication. Since 1996 the publications of the proceedings of the *Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Medievale* (the last one was the sixth, held in 2012) has also provided younger archaeologists with a recognized publication venue.⁷² Comprehensive

⁷⁰Polydora Baker and Gillian Clark, “Archaeozoological Evidence for Medieval Italy: A Critical Review of the Present State of Research,” *Archeologia Medievale* 20 (1993), 65. After 1993 Clark and Baker shifted the focus of her research elsewhere.

⁷¹Polydora Baker and Gillian Clark, “Archaeozoological Evidence for Medieval Italy: A Critical Review of the Present State of Research,” *Archeologia Medievale* 20 (1993): 45–77, After 1993 Baker shifted the focus of her research elsewhere. Frank Salvatori, “Archeozoologia e Medioevo. Lo stato degli studi,” in *III Congresso nazionale di archeologia medievale* (2003), 176–81.

⁷²Both are published by *All’Insegna del Giglio*, located in Borgo San Lorenzo (Florence).

interpretative narratives on medieval animals in general and game animals in particular are still lacking in both publications.⁷³ However, when it is pertinent, information on animals and hunting is now routinely included in the archaeological studies and flotation is now the norm revealing the presence of bird and fish bones. For the early medieval period it is possible to say that these findings confirm Baker and Clark's 1993 observation. In any case, tentative general trends consist of small overall amounts of game animals, always marginal in relation to domesticates. Game meat consumption peaks, especially for high status mammals, within aristocratic context (castles in the early medieval period) while the consumption of lesser game birds can be a feature of more humble folks. In high status religious sites game meat remains are present in small amounts. I will cite pertinent archaeozoological literature especially in chapter 6 on consumption but so far, archaeozoology has provided little to make confident comments about the state of game animals in the wider medieval Italian context.⁷⁴

Italian climate studies similarly provide little that is applicable to the study of local landscapes. Jürg Luterbacher's summary of climatic studies and tree ring data in Italy confirms the availability and usability of both documentary and paleoclimatological evidence. In 2003 a short essay by Franco Ortolani and Silvana Pagliuca hinted at the potentials of climate studies in Italy by employing geoarchaeological stratigraphy to establish correlations between geology and

⁷³For larger comprehensive narratives of consumption of domesticates, Gillian Clark, "Stock economies in medieval Italy: a critical review of the archaeozoological evidence," *Archeologia Medievale* 14 (1987): 7–26; Gillian Clark, "Butchers and Butchery in Late Medieval Italy: A Critical Assessment of Archaeological and Historical Sources," in *Papers of the Fourth Conference of Italian Archaeology*, Herring et al. (1992), 57–67; Gillian Clark, "Town and Countryside in Medieval Italy," *Anthropozoologica* 16 (1992): 75–82.

⁷⁴Marco Valenti and Frank Salvadori, "Animal Bones: Synchronous and Diachronic Distribution as Patterns of Socially Determined Meat Consumption in the Early and High Middle Ages in Central and Northern Italy," in *Breaking and Shaping Beastly Bodies. Animals as Material Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Aleksander Pluskowski (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 170–88; Polydora Baker, "Le rôle de la chasse comme moyen de subsistance durant le haut Moyen Âge dans le nord de l'Italie: une comparaison des sources zooarchéologiques et historiques," in *Exploitation des animaux sauvages à travers le temps. Actes des rencontres 15–16–17 octobre 1992*, eds. Jean Desse and Frédérique Audoin-Rouzeau (Juan-les-Pins: APDCA, 1992), 505–16; Gillian Clark, "The Food Refuse of an Affluent Household in the Late Fourteenth Century: Faunal and Botanical Remains from the Palazzo Vitelleschi, Tarquinia (Viterbo)," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 57 (1989): 200–304.

the Mediterranean climate evolution.⁷⁵ However, little interdisciplinary work has been done to integrate the information into the Italian historiography.⁷⁶

Italian historians have variously studied hunting as part of local landscapes and the people who lived in them. The present work seeks to extend this tradition and thus enlarge historical understanding of what hunting was in medieval Italy. Any such answer must establish the cultural and material relationships between apparently very diverse and sometimes co-existing activities, all called “hunting” by their contemporaries and do so in geographically diverse locations. We may derive information about knowledge and attitudes to the natural world from a variety of medieval sources, although doing so may warrant different readings. In what follows I will outline those which are foundational to this work.

2.3 HUNTING MANUALS

Hunting manuals represent the normative and “public” descriptions of hunting now extant. The hunting manual of the Middle Ages meant in essence a book of instructions or,

⁷⁵Jürg Luterbacher, et al., eds., “Mediterranean Climate Variability Over the Last Centuries: A Review,” in *Mediterranean Climate Variability* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006); K. Nicolussi, et al., “A 9111 Year Long Conifer Tree-Ring Chronology for the European Alps: A Base for Environmental and Climatic Investigations,” *The Holocene* 19, no. 6 (2010): 902–20, Franco Ortolani and Silvana Pagliuca, “Cyclical Climatic-Environmental Changes in the Mediterranean Area (2500 BP-Present Day),” *PAGES News* 11, no. 1 (April 2003): 15–17. Later research by these scholars follows similar interests on a wider, but still Mediterranean scale. It is not currently available to me.

⁷⁶Pioneer local research has mostly been the result of efforts by Dario Camuffo and Silvia Enzi in Venice and its lagoon ranging from charts for hailstorms and thunderstorms (Padova), sea surges in the Adriatic, Western Mediterranean, and at Venice, to instances of freezing of the Venetian lagoon and occurrences of “dry fogs.” The work has not been matched by similar efforts in other Italian locales. Dario Camuffo, “Freezing of the Venetian Lagoon Since the 9th Century AD in Comparison to the Climate of Western Europe and England,” *Climatic Change* 10 (1987): 43–66; Dario Camuffo and Silvia Enzi, “Critical Analysis of Archive Sources for Historical Climatology of Northern Italy,” in *European Climate Reconstructed from Documentary Data: Methods and Results*. (Stuttgart and New York: G. Fisher, 1992), 65–74; Dario Camuffo, “Analysis of the Sea Surges at Venice from A.D. 782 to 1990,” *Theoretical and Applied Climatology* 47 (1993): 1–14; Dario Camuffo and Silvia Enzi, “Chronology of ‘Dry Fogs’ in Italy, 1374–1891,” *Theoretical and Applied Climatology* 50 (1994): 31–33; Dario Camuffo, Claudio Cocheo, and Silvia Enzi, “Seasonality of Instability Phenomena (Hailstorms and Thunderstorms) in Padova, Northern Italy, from Archive and Instrumental Sources Since AD 1300,” *The Holocene* 10, no. 5 (2000): 635–42; Dario Camuffo, et al., “500-Year Temperature Reconstruction in the Mediterranean Basin by Means of Documentary Data and Instrumental Observations,” *Climatic Change* 101 (2010): 169–99; Dario Camuffo, et al., “Sea Storms in the Adriatic Sea and the Western Mediterranean During the Last Millennium,” *Climatic Change* 46 (2000): 209–23.

Fachliteratur (technical writing, p. 17). They represent a prime example of that second medieval pragmatic line of approach to the natural world discussed in Chapter 1 and there exemplified by the ideas on nature of Albertus Magnus (pp. 18-19) and on those on the legal status of hunting birds of law professor Bartolus of Sassoferrato (p. 21). Some scholars have treated the books as literary material and/or as repositories for information about the symbolism of the hunt, and what it reveals about *mentalité*.⁷⁷ While this aspect is present at least in some of the manuals, we may identify a clear tradition and body of manuals which attempted primarily to solve practical hunting related problems through the applications of workable and tested procedures (techniques). These hunting manuals make it plainly clear that to excel in hunting, it was necessary to learn the rules that regulated life. It was necessary to understand, on the basis of observation and hands-on practice, the abilities and limits of the animals in their natural habitats, or, in the case of domesticates, train them and care for them on the basis of their innate dispositions. Nature mattered, and human behavior had to adapt accordingly.

Medieval hunting manuals could be exhaustive in scope, not only explaining how to perform specific hunts, but often also instructing on the habits and behavior of different game species, proper behavior of the hunters, and how to offer daily care and veterinary assistance to the animals partnering in the hunts. Manuals typically were divided between those detailing falconry, and those detailing terrestrial hunts.⁷⁸ Horses were of course involved in hunting as mounts, and thus bred for specific qualities of agility, speed, and endurance. Details on their care and the veterinary medicine pertaining to them, (*maniscalcheria* in Italian) are typically contained in specific treatises that will not be considered here.

A body of sources such as that of the hunting manuals is of course very important for the present work for the technical information that they contain, for what they reveal about the

⁷⁷Anne Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993) suggests that some exclusively literary fourteenth century texts also inform on hunting, sometimes drawing their information from hunting manuals. For example the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*. 141-143, 166-185.

⁷⁸Van den Abeele, 1996.

knowledge of both their writers and practitioners, and for how they inform on the ways in which medieval humans involved in hunting experienced the natural world. Four of them are particularly germane to these concerns and will be for that reason referenced all through; this section serves to introduce them. The four manuals were authored by a very diverse group of individuals, respectively the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1194-1250), who was writing in Latin, Gaston Phoebus (or Phébus 1331-91) count of Foix in the Pyrenees, writing in his vernacular dialect, fourteenth century Pietro de' Crescenzi of Bologna, an agronomist and jurist writing in Latin, and Domenico Boccamazza (b. ca. 1480-90), huntsman to Pope Leo X. Boccamazza wrote in the vernacular. Across differences in origin, diversity of authors and their languages, and the centuries that separate them, these manuals share important features. Much of the information they contain was accrued through the hands-on experience of their writers and other skilled individuals around them. The four authors were trying to solve, and inform on, different sets of hunting problems. They all illustrate procedures, practices, and understandings which were firmly grounded in ecological and practical knowledge of animals and habitats. Manuals were not the repositories of all medieval hunting knowledge, and must be viewed also in the context of an existing written tradition. For example, Strubel and de Saulnier argue for two thirteenth century encyclopedic works which were particularly strong in animal knowledge, serving as references for some hunting texts. These were *De Animalibus* (1260) by Albert the Great (b. ca. 1200), and *De Proprietatibus Rerum* ('On the characteristics of things, 1240) by Bartholomew the Englishman (Bartolomaeus Anglicus, 1203-1272).⁷⁹ However the manuals inherited and transmitted an equally strong, or stronger, oral tradition which also circulated on such matters, and one that underpinned much of what is included in the manuals. Due to its specific function, it is arguable that each manual practiced a self-conscious selection of material. They still serve historians well in making otherwise invisible procedures legible, provide a template for techniques, and reveal attitudes through action in very different settings. Before

⁷⁹Strubel and de Saulnier, 1994.

proceeding to more detailed information on these four manuals, a brief overview of the main medieval manual tradition is in place.

In the twelfth century, Europe saw a multiplication of writings on the art of hunting in both Latin and the vernacular that was already about 2,000 years old.⁸⁰ Likely as a consequence of increased literacy connected to the use of the vernacular in writing, in the fourteenth century France and England both had established a somewhat interconnected manual traditions while also Spain, Germany, and Italy produced hunting and falconry manuals.⁸¹ The French tradition includes the *Livre de la Chasse*, ('Book of the Hunt') written by Gaston Phoebus, one of the four authors detailed here.⁸² The count's book borrows material from the *Livres du Roy Modus et de la Royne Ratio* by Henry de Ferrières (1360-79), which was a fictional and allegorical dialogue between King Modus and Queen Ratio, his inquisitive hunting apprentice.⁸³ The count also borrowed from the *Roman des Déduis* ('Book of Pleasures') by Gace de la Buigne (finished before 1377), a long poem containing the debate over the respective merits and superiority of hunting with dogs (terrestrial hunts) and hunting with birds (falconry).⁸⁴

The earliest extant English vernacular hunting manual was *The Art of Venerie* by William Twiti, (or Twici), huntsman to Edward II (1307-27).⁸⁵ Gaston Phoebus' manual influenced an English manual, the *Master of Game* written between 1406 and 1413 by Edward Plantagenet, second Duke of York.⁸⁶ This book appropriated, in translation, entire sections of Phoebus' text, while adding locally relevant information. The *Boke of Huntyng* better known as the 'Second Treatise' is in the *Boke of St. Albans*,⁸⁷ dates from c. 1400 in manuscript form and was not

⁸⁰Van den Abeele, 1996, 39; Kurt Lindner, ed., *De Arte Bersandi. Ein Traktat des 13. Jahrhunderts über die Jagd auf Rowild und Neptalym Cervus Emissus. Eine Jagdpredigt des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1966).

⁸¹Van den Abeele, 1996, Spain 41-44, Italy, 59, Germany 52-54 respectively; Richard C. Hoffmann, *Fishers' Craft and Lettered Art. Tracts on Fishing From the End of the Middle Ages* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1997), 13-14 (role of vernacular literacy in the production of fishing manuals).

⁸²Tilander, 1971.

⁸³Tilander, 1931.

⁸⁴Å. Blomqvist, ed., *Gace de la buigne. Le roman des deduis* (Karlshamn: SRH, 3, 1951).

⁸⁵Tilander, 1956.

⁸⁶William A. Baillie-Grohmann, ed. *The Master of Game.* (London: Chatto and Nindus, 1909).

published until 1486.⁸⁷ Wide-ranging in its subject matter its text is presented in the form of a verse monologue by a ‘dame’ instructing her children. Literary historian Anne Rooney points to one important difference between the England and French traditions when she writes that the English manuals’ “preoccupations reveal the attitude of the authors towards the hunt -- that it was essentially a noble, non-utilitarian activity in which knowledge of form and demonstration of that knowledge were of paramount importance, of more importance than the ostensible aim of killing animals.”⁸⁸ Both traditions show the span of differences in rhetorical devices and form. These were common for the presentation of the material intended to deliver different results, from the more formal erudition (Phoebus), to lighter entertainment (*Modus and Boke of Huntyng*).

The Italian tradition contains influential manuals.⁸⁹ The court of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen in southern Italy was the birthplace of one of most important manuals of falconry in Latin, the *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* (‘The Art of Falconry’) as well as the very first hunting manual in Latin, the aforementioned *De arte bersandi*. Indeed, its author, Avicenna was a German knight and hunter living at Frederick’s court.⁹⁰ Then, between 1304 and 1309, Bolognese judge, city manager, and landowner Pietro de’ Crescenzi wrote the important twelve book *Ruralia Commodorum* of which book X is dedicated to hunting and quite original.⁹¹ The entire *Ruralia* was in essence an instructional book on agronomy and the efficient running of an agricultural estate which, to de’ Crescenzi, included hunting. Finally, Domenico (“Menico”)

⁸⁷Rachel Hands, ed., *Hunting and Hawking in The Boke of St. Albans*, (Oxford, 1975).

⁸⁸Rooney, 1993, 19.

⁸⁹Italy has 71 manuscripts on falconry comprising a total of 29 different texts. Baudouin Van den Abeele, *Texte et image dans les manuscrits de chasse médiévaux* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2013), 95, but the tradition is less studied than elsewhere. Apart from Van den Abeele’s comments, see Antonio Lupis, “Petrus de l’Astore, Moamyn, Ghatriph: sulla tradizione dei trattati di falconeria d’epoca federiciana,” *Codices Manuscripti* 3–1 (1977): 13–17; Antonio Lupis, *Petrus de l’Astore edizione critica del trattato di falconeria mistilingue con una traduzione in antico franceses dal ms. B.N. 2004* (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1979).

⁹⁰Van den Abeele, 1996, 39; Kurt Lindner, ed., *De Arte Bersandi. Ein Traktat des 13. Jahrhunderts über die Jagd auf Rowild und Neptaly Cervus Emissus. Eine Jagdpredigt des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1966).

⁹¹Will Richter, ed., *Petrus de Crescentiis, Ruralia Commoda* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1995), 169-210,

Boccamazza, master of the hunt to Pope Leo X (r. 1512-21) wrote the *Trattato della Caccia* ('Treatise on Hunting').⁹² The *Trattato* was eight books long and self-consciously presented itself as a hunting manual containing the *summa* of "Menico's" life-long venatory knowledge and expertise.⁹³ For all their differences in time and location, these three Italian manuals, and Phoebus' *Livre de la Chasse* share important features that make them germane to the present research.

Frederick II was an avid falconer who kept an extensive entourage of falconers, and built castles from which to hunt in remote areas of what is the modern day Italian region of Apulia. Widely read, the emperor was critical of untested knowledge and much preferred to base his knowledge acquisition on personal experience. One consequence of this attitude was his responsibility in the tout court adoption of the Arab hood for hunting birds. The device was meant to temporarily blind the bird in a hunting situation, thus keeping it calmly perched. Frederick's influence, and skills, were so pervasive, that modern falconers still employ some of his training techniques.⁹⁴ The Hohenstaufen heir was keen on building the fullest possible body of knowledge on falconry. His thorough approach included thinking about the finer implications of human-animal relationships making sure that the falcons were exploited to their fullest potential, but also that they received the best possible care.⁹⁵ To ensure the best possible success rates in these animal-human relationships, the Emperor included several paragraphs on the qualities of a suitable falconer in his manual.⁹⁶ Frederick's hunts were high-class ones, meant for

⁹²Giuliano Innamorati, ed., *Arte della caccia. Testi di falconeria uccellazione e altre cacce. Dal secolo XIII agli inizi del seicento*. (Milano: Edizioni il Polifilo, 1965), vol. 1, 293-512.

⁹³The first four books painstakingly detail different hunts in the surrounds of Rome and in central Italy. The are followed by different advice on hunting and a section on dogs. The last three books are simply a complete translation of Mon's boami on falconry based on the tradition of the so-called Moamin I, Martin-Dietrich Glessgen, *Die Falkenheilkunde des "Moamin" im Spiegel ihrer volgarizzamenti. Band I und II* (Tübingen: Max Niermeyer Verlag, 1996), 179-197.

⁹⁴Van den Abeele, personal communication.

⁹⁵Frederick appears to have know, for falcons, what a nineteenth century a horse logger from British Columbia stated, that "a horse won't work for everybody the same. [...] The horses themselves became...part of the man that drove them." White, 1995, 177.

⁹⁶Wood and Fyfe, 1943, 150-57.

the amusement of an aristocratic class. That notwithstanding, the emperor is valuable in showing how at any level, and no matter the motivation, successful hunting practice was based upon a process of co-adaptation between man and nature. Frederick proves how high skill in interacting with natural things, was desirable, perhaps necessary, even for the highest representatives of the aristocracy.⁹⁷

Pietro de' Crescenzi's readers were likely thinking less about amusement, and more on the hard work of agricultural economy when they approached the natural world. De' Crescenzi's work as a judge and the problems it entailed, ties him to the empirical tradition connected to utilitarian problem solving of men like Bartolus. The Bolognese agronomist's stance is pragmatic, despite his use of learned, classical authors (e.g. Columella) even, to some historians, when it involves falconry.⁹⁸ Giuliano Innamorati notices that there is nothing "sporting" about de' Crescenzi's non-raptorial hunts, they represent work, and as such they are "demystified."⁹⁹ What is striking about what de' Crescenzi teaches about hunting, is the degree of explanation of fine-grained detail necessary when hunting. Whether de' Crescenzi practiced as a hunter or not does not much matter. His chapters on animal capture allows us a unique vantage point to the type of observational, practical skills, involvement and experience of nature that this activity warranted. The agronomist is aware that this may involve habituating the animal gradually to a hunting device, camouflaging it, and dynamically taking into account the varying conditions of weather and season and their effects on animal behavior. Similarly he is invaluable in describing fine-tuned human behavior in the natural world when intent upon hunting in general, and for the striking contrast these descriptions provide to those of aristocratic hunts in particular, involving as much skill but also abundant manpower, animal assistants, and much hue and cry. To illustrate

⁹⁷This confirms the conclusion of Crane, 2008, 79, for whom "aristocratic mastery of nature" took place "through masterful *understanding* of nature" based on participation in the practice. Crane's emphasis.

⁹⁸De Crescenzi's falconry information is heavily indebted to the learnings attributed to the mythical king Dancus, alleged founder of falconry. Baudouin Van den Abeele, *Les traités de fauconnerie latins du Moyen Age* 4 vol. Diss. Université catholique de Louvain, 1991. According to Van den Abeele, however, de' Crescenzi's perspective on falconry is utilitarian.

⁹⁹Innamorati, 1965, 129.

this, I provide an example of how the agronomist would go about hunting ducks and geese in the winter. In italics are my translations of the parts of the original which highlight stealth, ecological insight, and use of camouflage. De' Crescenzi writes that in the cold season, the animals may be profitably hunted with nets laid on the ground on those days (common enough in the plains of the Po River) when the combination of frost and the sun *cover the fields with a fine dust*. Then the nets are to be *laid out at dawn for an evening hunt and in the evening for an early morning hunt*. Decoying is provided by *tame exemplars*, and when the wild birds land, a man, *dressed in brown, wearing a hat, and who is pretending to be working*, is to push the wild birds slowly towards the nets. It is important not to walk to the nets in the morning, *when the dew or the frost is still on the ground and so making footprints*.¹⁰⁰ It is these details that reveal long practice, painstaking observation of environment and animal behavior, and the ability to adapt human behavior to the task. Notably, de Crescenzi's various procedures continued to be in use for centuries thereafter.¹⁰¹ Local environmental detail notwithstanding, we may well think of the practitioners in Chapter 4 and 5 of the present, the commercial hunters of Tuscany and Venice, as operating from a similar relationship with nature and its animals.

Gaston Phoebus' book was informed by personal experience as a hunter who could avail himself of an extensive body of huntsmen. His desire to educate is evident. One of the manuscripts of the *Livre de la chasse*, the richly illuminated Ermitage manuscript not only depicts the count as a teacher, but game animals and huntsmen both are portrayed in their respective activities.¹⁰² The book contains instructions on how to hunt thirteen different species of animals in several different ways. It covers how to rear, care for, and train different breeds of

¹⁰⁰My rendition of parts of Richter, 1995, Book X, Ch. 17, parts 6-7, p. 184. Italics in the body of the text are mine and serve to highlight the various uses camouflage and ecologically insightful ways to habituate the animals to (apparently) safe environs.

¹⁰¹For the seventeenth century, see for example, G. P. Olina, G. P. *Uccelliera, ovvero discorso della natura, e proprietà di diversi uccelli e in particolare di què che cantano, con il modo di prendergli, conoscerli, allevargli e mantenerli. E con le figure, cavate dal vero, e diligentemente intagliate in rame dal Tempesta e dal Villamena*. (Firenze: Olschki, 2000) who details several of the devices described by de' Crescenzi, such as the *panthera* and the *ragne*.

¹⁰²Tilander, 1973, teaching 139 and 145, the bear, 84, care of dogs, 113, and tracking with dogs, 162-63.

hunting dogs, and imparts knowledge about the habits of the game and techniques to make nets and snares. Famously, Count Gaston's book details the *chasse par force de chiens*, or chase with force of dogs. This was the most famous and prestigious aristocratic hunting technique through which a single male animal (mostly a stag or a boar) was driven by dogs, sometimes for the duration of a day, until it was cornered and killed at close range with a sword.¹⁰³ Besides his erudition on the aristocratic driven hunt, Phoebus was also willing to instruct on how to make snares, nets and the ropes for them, typically not counted as part of the aristocratic hunting paraphernalia.¹⁰⁴ This may seem surprising for a man of his rank, and indeed, the author admitted that he does so only *mal volentiers*. But, he says, "as it is known, hunters live long and happy lives, and *ilz vont en Paradis*, ("they go to Paradise").¹⁰⁵ So although these lesser forms of hunting may only bring their practitioners to the lower courts of Paradise, the count still felt it was necessary to inform about them. It is also notable that, despite his status and his preferences for aristocratic hunting practices, the count was still well versed in the theory and presumably also the practice of these lesser forms of venery. We may speculate if this may not have been the case also for many of his social equals elsewhere. Over the years, Phoebus' text has become something of a standard model of the medieval hunting manual to many historians. It is an accomplished and articulate book on the techniques and knowledge necessary to operate in nature as a hunter.

Pope Leo X's master huntsman, Domenico Boccamazza, was ideologically close to both de' Crescenzi in having conquered his knowledge through personal work, and to the count of Foix in his desire to share it. However, we do not know if "Menico" knew of either. His writings were a reflection of his life's work, and were informed by the need to facilitate good hunting as a

¹⁰³For a detailed discussion of this hunt in the literature on hunting, see, for example, Cummins, 2008, 32-46; Almond 2011, 73-75. The symbolic meanings implicit in the procedure have also been object of detailed studies, for example by Crane, 2008.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 143-44.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 250-51. By contrast, the Milanese dukes snickered at these "treacherous" techniques.

service to the pope.¹⁰⁶ As a court huntsman, it was this huntsman's job to make sure that nothing went wrong during the hunts which may have involved notables and important guests to the pope, as well as the pontiff himself. For all their sporting value, the huntsman and the pope knew well that these hunts were very much about power politics. Boccamazza's value lies in providing an insider's view to an important aristocratic hunting apparatus with all its hunting techniques and etiquette. In this context, what is particularly impressive is the degree of very detailed knowledge of often very large tracts of landscapes that the huntsman had accumulated. In "Menico's" eyes, these landscapes became hunting landscapes in which every element is functional to the purpose of hunting in all its possible variations. Boccamazza and the other three manual authors show the historian what it entailed to understand hunting, and the process of applying this knowledge to purposeful practice in a variety of settings.

2.4 ARCHIVAL SOURCES

The vicissitudes of Italian archives and the geographical spread of this dissertation have involved working through diverse and poorly indexed source material. The chapters that follow will be based on different bodies of evidence. Some such variety arose from different past institutional structures and other from subsequent histories of individual archives. All of this has required diverse reading strategies, which uncovered different hunts. A brief overview of the peculiar sources and the medieval Italian institutions that generated them will ease understanding of their use in subsequent regional chapters.

The primary repository of documents in Lombardy is the Milan state archive, or Archivio di Stato di Milano, (ASMi). Its history was marked by two events. As happened in other places, in the nineteenth century, the Milano archive's holdings were re-organized by topic. The process

¹⁰⁶The text is fairly neglected although see, Giovanni Vignazia, "Le traité de chasse de Domenico Boccamazza," in *Chasses princières dans l'Europe de la Renaissance*, eds. Claude d'Athenaise and Monique Chatenet (Paris: Actes Sud, 2007) 363-74.

permanently separated the individual documents from the institutions that had produced them. The second event were the bombings during World War II, which practically eliminated that material from the Visconti period which had managed to survive the destructions of the Ambrosian Republic (1447-50). The bombings also destroyed documents issued by the Senato, the magistracy tasked with control over the finances of local communities. The loss of these collections limit our understanding of the workings of local communities as well as the centre-periphery relationship before the fourteenth century. For the early decades of Visconti rule, when documents are sparse, their administration and control of territory was only gradually being built up.

Despite this state of affairs, some *cartelle* (or folders) contained in the *archivio* named Ducale Visconteo Sforzesco turned out to offer a rich and unique opportunity for studying aristocratic hunts.¹⁰⁷ They contain the result of the often intense epistolary, legislative, and administrative activities of organized princely institutions of the later Visconti and Sforza dukes. Commercial hunts for this period are absent within available Milanese sources.¹⁰⁸

Lombard primary sources for this work consist mainly of letters written by the dukes themselves, their families, and the various members of their hunting staff, as well as Milanese officials working the territory and tasked with hunting related matters. The content of the letters

¹⁰⁷The best English translation for the Italian word *fondo* (pl. *fondi*) is “collection.” The word *archivio* (archive) when not used to denote a building with all of its documents (as in Archivio di Stato di Milano), has a similar connotation, although in this case the contents of the *archivio* are larger than those of the *fondo*. *Busta* (pl. *buste*), or *cartella* (pl. *cartelle*) both mean “folder,” (literal translation “envelope”) which refers to the subdivision inside a *fondo*. Finally *registri* or registers, refer to bound collections of consecutive documents. I will use the Italian archival terms throughout.

¹⁰⁸here are mere hints to the fact that commercial hunting existed and the fact that game meats were sold on the markets. One ducal decree, dated 1 June, 1389 proclaims a safe conduct decree to enable Filippolo de Maxate, poultryman of the lord, to go every day from Pavia to all the territories of the duchy to buy chickens, eggs and *selvaggina* (general term for game meats). He is not to be molested in his activity. The other, documents is dated 1 April, 1449 and states among other things that it is prohibited for the poultrymen to buy or have somebody buy for them chickens or *selvaggina* in the suburbs of Milan. All this demonstrates that the poultrymen apparently had access to the purchase of game meats which means that there were commercial hunters of some sort, market outlets for the meat, and that there were several middlemen in the process of selling game meats. A similar situation can be found in Tuscany. Both documents are published in Caterina Santoro, ed., *I registri delle lettere ducali del periodo sforzesco*, in *Comune di Milano, inventari e registri dell'Archivio Storico Civico* (Milano: Comune di Milano, 1961), 11.

ranges widely over almost all aspects of courtly hunting. Due to the post-nineteenth century re-organization, there are many *cartelle* that contain extant hunting related material, as do those pertaining to individual dukes, or the folder entitled Cacce (hunts). Collections of copies of ducal correspondence (the Registri delle Missive, or registers of letters) also contain hunting material. Letters originating from hunting staff and other employees are grouped in the *fondo* called Finanza Parte Antica, Caccia. Occasional documents have emerged in papers pertaining to individual families (i.e. Crivelli) because the dukes employed some of their members for hunting-related tasks. Epistolary material on all matters pertaining to the Pavia hunting park may be found in some *cartelle* pertaining to that city, the Carteggio Interno, città, Pavia.

The *fondo* called Archivio Panigarola Registri degli Statuti contains information regarding the dukes' regulation of their territories in matters of hunting, as well as a host of other matters. These collections of laws, or statutes, were created on a yearly basis by the ducal administration. The nineteenth century organization of the archive of Milan bound the sheets in books, variously grouped by date and following a new numeration. There are overlaps in the annual coverage of the different books. I have consulted those for the years 1383 to 1498.¹⁰⁹ While the books run well beyond this date, the French rule that followed shortly after 1498 merely reiterated Sforza legislation in matters of hunting (although how efficiently we don't know). The contemporary groupings of the documents do not follow the years of ducal rule. The marked influence of certain individuals especially that of Galeazzo Maria Sforza (r.1466-1476) and Ludovico Sforza or il Moro (r.1494-1499) is discernible in the content and overall frequency of hunting related legislation in certain books.¹¹⁰ The documents do not reveal actual results which would have depended on enforcement. In the absence of accessible judicial records results are impossible to gauge. Still, and despite their rhetoric, the regulations provide a good indication

¹⁰⁹The dating of the books in which I have found hunting material runs as follows: ASMi, Archivio Panigarola, Registri degli Statuti, 1 (1393-94); 3 (1429-38); 8 (1400-1473); 9 (1474-78); 10 (1479-1483); 11 (1486-96); 13 (1498); 15 (1500-1512); 16 (1520-25); 21A (1412-1423) and 22 (1462-66). The folios have been bound and renumbered with in blue ink. I have used this numbering in the references.

¹¹⁰Namely, 8, 9, and 10.

of what measures the dukes considered to produce good tutelage of the game resource and its habitats.

The *statuto* (pl. *statuti*, now mostly edited) represented the back-bone of municipal medieval Italian rule. As discussed, starting in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Italian *liberi comuni* (free communes p. 26), ruled by urban-based oligarchies, were established over most of northern and central Italy. The *statuti* governed all matters of town rule such as the election and tasks of public officials. Their content was generally informed by the desire to establish and maintain civil coexistence for all, protect movable and immovable private property of citizens (*cittadini*), control the urban and extra-urban territory, and allocate resources. The communes also inherited many of the rights, including hunting, previously granted by imperial decree to feudal lords. Hunting rights in their territories was one of these rights. Although specific hunting regulation is not frequent within the *statuti*, this framework represents a good starting point to understand commercial hunting as the municipally sponsored type of resource extraction in fourteenth and fifteenth century Tuscany. For hunting that could involve forbidding hunting in early spring and summer when the animals had their young. Or it may involve prohibiting the use of certain techniques on the basis of their high efficiency. Finally, statutory legislation may have organized hunting in specific ways. This legislation may have benefited the game resources but it is difficult to argue convincingly for this being a conscious motive. Rather the regulations organized civil co-existence and protected the wealth of both the citizens and the municipality.

Hunting was a marginal activity, but its results were high status products, destined for urban markets and integrated into the mechanisms of local economies. Among Tuscan local archives, the municipal archive of Fucecchio (Archivio del Comune di Fucecchio, ACFu) is remarkable because of its rich extant holdings, dating to the last two decades of the thirteenth century. The archive holds decades of documentation pertaining to the fees paid to the municipal authorities for the use of municipal territory, including hunting. Tuscan towns collected fees as

indirect taxes called *gabelle* (sing. *gabella*) on a variety of items and uses. As taxes they were recorded in the municipal account books, such as those labeled Dare e Avere (“to give and to have”) and Rendite e Proventi (“debits and credits”). Dare e Avere (357; 358; 359; 360) range from 1412-1443 and 1440 and then 1525-26 and 1528. The sixteenth century volumes are very damaged. The volumes useful to this study in Rendite e Proventi (285; 286; 287) range from 1342-1368; 1394-1410, and 1405-1441. The records of the *gabelle* on hunting after the early 1440s are damaged beyond readability. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain the commercial hunting situation in Fucecchio between the 1440s and the 1550s. After the institution of the Medicean hunting reserves, (the *bandite*), starting in the mid-sixteenth century, hunting in those areas became the privilege of aristocrats and the municipal licensing system stopped.

The rich archival situation in Fucecchio also involved a record of the duties (also called *gabelle*, in this case *alle porte*) paid by goods entering the town for sale on its market. These goods included game meats. Further research into other Tuscan locations in the period 1350 to 1500 unearthed several of these tax records. Game animal meats, in unknown amounts, were routinely considered a potentially taxable, and sellable, good in several locations.¹¹¹

Two documents in the fondo Notarile (notaries’ collection) of Lucca, contribute to showing how the hunting activity also partook in standard medieval commercial organization.¹¹² The documents pertain to the creation of two different *societas*, (“societies”), organized for the purpose of commercial hunting from 1370 and 1375. Various documents on taxation, contracts, a couple of court cases, and statutory material from various localities made it possible to establish and articulate the mechanisms of commercial hunting in Tuscany.

Where it was possible I researched the consumption side of this activity through account books and letters of various individuals and institutions. These ranged from the famous and

¹¹¹The locations are Fucecchio (1352), in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, (ASFi), Statuti delle Comunità Autonome e Soggette (SCAS), 338, ff 10r-18v, Pisa (1350 and 1352), in Castiglione, 2004, 57, Lucca (1353), *ibid.*, 54, Santa Maria a Monte (1391), in Casini, 1963, 245-52, Colle Val d’Elsa (1407), in Renzo Ninci, ed., *Statuta antiqua communis Collis Vallis Else (1307–1407)* (Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 1999), 4–10, Volterra,(1459), SCAS 939 ff. 47r-47v.

¹¹²This *fondo* has been systematically studied, yet these were the only two documents of this type found, (Giorgio Tori, personal communication).

extensively edited letters of Prato merchant Francesco Datini (1335-1410), to the food expenses of a *capitano di custodia* (captain of a garrison in 1339), and those of fourteenth century middle class Florentine families. Accounts also testify to the eating and purchasing habits for that same century for the eight Priors (governors) of Florence (Florence, Libreria Medicea Laurenziana, (LML), Codice Asburnham, 1216, those of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence (*fondo Estranei*), and those of the monastery of Santa Trinita, also in Florence and presently edited for the period 1360-1363. Finally some of the *Deliberazioni* (“municipal decisions”) of Fucecchio revealed that the top-most Florentine political elites, the *Priori* (Priors) requisitioned game from the Fucecchiese area outside of the market system. All this documentation confirms that game meats were a marginal status products, but also that, to a degree at least, Tuscan non-aristocrats who did not hunt were successful in procuring game meat for their tables.

Hunting in Venice consisted of commercial waterfowling in the lagoon environments. Occasional documents helpful to this study may be found in pre-1200 Benedictine monastic archives. Two bodies of documents have particularly informed the study on Venice. The first is the collection of rulings issued by the so-called Magistratura del Piovego (or *super publicis*, or *publicorum*, both meaning public) otherwise known as the *Codex Publicorum*.¹¹³ This magistracy was tasked with providing boundaries, monitoring, controlling, and deciding over all activities on “that which is public,” (*publicis* or *piovego*) the lands and waters belonging to the Venetian state. In its proceedings it often found itself engaging local matters. The other location is the *fondo* Podestà del Ducato, Podestà di Torcello e Contrade, 263. This contains all the extant rulings of the *podestà* (local judge) of the island of Torcello and its pertinence (*contrade*, for example the

¹¹³Now fully edited, Bianca Lanfranchi Strina, ed. *Codex Publicorum (Codice del Piovego) Vol. I.* (Venezia: Comitato per la pubblicazione delle fonti relative alla storia di Venezia, 1985); Bianca Lanfranchi Strina, ed. *Codex Publicorum (Codice del Piovego) Vol.II.* (Venezia: Comitato per la pubblicazione delle fonti relative alla storia di Venezia, 2006). The original of the *Codex* is held at the Museo Correr in Venice. I will refer to the magistracy as the “Piovego” all through the present text.

island of Burano). Documentation starts in 1289 and runs, on a mostly annual basis linked to the tenure of individual *podestà*, to well beyond the time limits of the present work.¹¹⁴

The *Magistratura del Piovego* was formed in 1282 through the merger of several existing magistracies. A Venetian *magistratura* was an executive body, which investigated and made final decisions upon the matters put under its control. As an appellate court, the *Piovego* ruled in matters that went beyond local competency or ability to resolve conflict. The Venetian *magistrature* were numerous, and specifically tasked. It was not an uncommon strategy in Venice, to create a new one, when the need arose. In the case of the *Piovego* it was the need to exercise tighter control over the activities that took place in the public waters and lands of the Venetian republic. Increasing populations and increased anthropogenic pressure on natural resources needed to be closely monitored in order to protect existing rights of private owners and, especially, avoid the erosion of public territory. As well, the magistracy was called upon to make decisions on matters of boundaries and uses when the interests of the two, the private and the public, collided, or were challenged by environmental change. When the duchy became a *comune* in the thirteenth century, it was important to send a clear message that what had been a more or less loosely organized system of local communities was now becoming politically centered around the *qualitas soli* (“common good”), an organizing factor in Venetian law.¹¹⁵

Over the 219 years of its life span which lasted until 1501, when it was subsumed into the Magistrature alle Acque (waters), the Piovego presided over a total of 150 cases. Of these, 36 yield information on waterfowling. The specific information obtained varies from rents and rental payments in ducks to the use of certain fowling techniques and the ways in which the legal status of certain areas affected the ways they were used. The documents also show the notable environmental changes in the landscape. They show the important role that the shifty lagoon

¹¹⁴Statutory material did not contain material on hunting, as far as I can see. Gherardo Ortalli, ed., *Statuti della laguna veneta dei secoli XIV-XVI. Mazzorbo (1316) - Malamocco (1351–1360) - Torcello (1462–1465) - Murano (1502)* (Roma: Società Editoriale Jouvence, 1989); Nicolò Battaglini, *Il consiglio e lo statuto di Torcello con appendice* (Venezia: Tipografia del Commercio di Marco Visentini, 1874).

¹¹⁵Silvano Avanzi, *Il regime giuridico della laguna di Venezia* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1993), 18 and throughout.

environments played in Venetian mentalities, and the organization of Venetian resource allocation and extraction. The decisions of the Piovego were articulated around various documents in support of individual cases. But they may also involve perambulations on the part of the three appointed magistrates alongside members of local communities expert in local environmental conditions. The result of this activity was a binding sentence pertaining to rights and obligations for the different parties involved, and a written description of the territories subsequently marked off by planting wooden boundary markers, or *mete*, in the lagoon. Maintaining public access was as sacrosanct a municipal task and boundary definitions of the Piovego were part of a common municipal literature, that of the *libri terminorum* or *finium*: the boundary books. The Piovego's collection of information and *modus operandi* provide important understanding of commercial Venetian waterfowling.

The office of the *podestà* (local judge) was held by a nobleman, and was found in most medium-sized and larger Italian medieval towns subject to a dominant city. The one year tenure involved upholding the law in his appointed locale, as well as nurturing the interests of the dominant city. The *podestà* judged local criminal cases, among which occasionally emerged aspects of commercial waterfowling. Information on rental agreements and allocation of resource within the municipal precinct also provided some information on hunting and hunting related activities. The municipal waters and natural resources of a Venetian locale played a similar role as those of the terrestrial environment of a Tuscan *comune*. They were to be used only by the citizens, were subject to local regulation, and held to be a very important part of the economic, financial, and social well-being of a community. What the *podestà* could not resolve was sent to the higher appellate Venetian courts.

Venetian fowling was an ubiquitous local activity, practiced mostly on a seasonal basis by the lagoon fishermen. These reasons justified mining a very poorly indexed, large, and often (water and mold) damaged *fondo*, called Podestà di Torcello e Contrade. Its documents allow for an insider view on the small-scale events (quarrels, resource allocation) of local everyday life,

and among them fowling. This collection has remained mostly ignored by historians, except for the work of Élisabeth Crouzet Pavan and a few others.¹¹⁶

The *fondo* Podestà di Torcello stands out amongst the archive's holdings on the Venetian podestà from various lagoon locales, because it is the longest, largest, and, at least according to the Venetian archivists, the least damaged.¹¹⁷ Even so, some parts are deemed to be too fragile to handle and await restoration. Unfortunately, the archive also only occasionally lists damaged or entirely unreadable folders, and inexplicably missing *buste* in this *fondo*. My research which began with the series starting in 1289-90 with folder 1 (missing) ended with number 124 (1490-91). My intent was to start with folder number 1 and then operate a choice between the 124 folders, which involved looking at six followed by a break of four. This was not consistently possible, but in trying to apply this criterion, I ended up viewing a total of 92 folders with some only partially decipherable.¹¹⁸ Eighteen of these contained information directly pertinent to water fowling, including information on rents, techniques, or conflicts arising around the activity.¹¹⁹ None of the folders contained information on consumption or resale. References to waterfowling were rather evenly spread over the decades covered, with a small concentration in the 1360s and 1370s and one very rich folder, number 94 (1449-50). Fishing-related information featured prominently in most of the folders. Given similarities between the two activities, and

¹¹⁶Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan. "*Sopra le acque salse.*" *Espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du Moyen Âge vol. I - II.* (Roma: École française de Rome, Palazzo Farnese, 1992); Mahmoud Salem Elsheikh, *Atti del Podestà di Lio Mazor* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1999).

¹¹⁷The other locations for which there are extant collection of papers from the administration of the *podestà* are, Caorle, Chioggia, Lio Mazor (Lido Maggiore, for which papers are in the Torcello *busta* for the years 1307-1423), Malamocco and Murano. Archival references are as follows. ASVe, *fondo podestà*: Caorle, *busta* 266 bis (1444-1797); Chioggia, *busta* 261 (1380-1792); Malamocco, *busta* 1020 (sixteenth to eighteenth century); Murano, *busta* 1010 (1279-1797). According to Crouzet-Pavan, 1992 (p. 41), however, it is Murano's collection that is least damaged.

¹¹⁸Each *busta* or folder covers roughly the administrative acts of one *podestà*, or two at most over the course of one, or (rarely) two years. The chronological distribution within the series is as follows. 1 is the inventory, which is not obtainable to view. 2,3, contain the mostly fragments and cover up to the end of the thirteenth century. 3 to 64 cover the fourteenth century while 65 to 130 cover the fifteenth century.

¹¹⁹After prior exclusion of what was reportedly damaged or missing, actual attempts at viewing the folders gave the following result: 3, 4, 7, 49, 77 are missing, 8, 10, 12, 27, 28, 61, 82, 102,109, 124 are either partially or fully damaged. Parts of them may be readable still. Crouzet-Pavan reports the following as impossible to read for various reasons. 32, 60, 61, 62, 74, 77. Crouzet-Pavan, 1995, 414.

commonality of practitioners, I have used fishing information where it appeared germane to illustrating issues pertaining to fowling. These *fondi* remain a very rich, but so far only marginally mined resource for historians involved with studying social history.

Having established the frameworks and assumptions upon which this work rests, it is time to turn to hunting, and specifically, to fifteenth century Lombardy.



Figure 2.1: Map 2 Lombardy 1454

CHAPTER 3. THE PRINCE, THE LAND, AND THE PREY. THEY HUNTS OF THE
VISCONTI AND SFORZA DUKES OF MILAN.

On a winter morning of 1476, an unnamed gentleman headed to Milan on a business call had a strange encounter. Dressed in drab hunting clothes, surrounded by a pack of black hunting dogs, and astride a handsome dark horse, appeared his duke, Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1444-76), alone. The duke looked extremely perturbed. The gentleman approached the duke, asking him why his lord was alone, which was uncommon. Galeazzo Maria shrugged off the question by claiming, *la mia brigata è adietro che fa collectione* thus indicating that his hunting companions were somewhere behind him, “loitering.” The winter day was December 26. As the perplexed gentleman would learn on arrival in Milan, that morning, before mass, Galeazzo Maria had been surrounded by a group of conspirators, stabbed fourteen times, and left dead on the floor of the church of St. Stephen (Santo Stefano) in Milan.¹

Gregory Lubkin asserts that the young “Galeazzo alienated many of the Sforza’s friends with his impatience and thoughtlessness.”² Those who took action against him, delivered him to a lonely afterlife, culturally satisfying to his contemporaries. Dante Alighieri’s *contrappasso* theory required that the nature of punishment match and reflect the nature of the sin, in the opposite. Alone, as in life he had been surrounded by his court, the assertive duke hunted restlessly, implicitly for something he would never catch. The hunter had become the prey of his murderers. But the ghost’s hunting attire was appropriate for other reasons especially suited for Galeazzo Maria. While other types of hunters and hunts existed in Italy, hunting the countryside with dogs, horses (and falcons) was an exclusive aristocratic prerogative and mark of status. In life, this duke had been more than generally fond of the activity, so much so, that in death it aptly became his punishment.

¹Reported in, Vaglianti, 1997, 186. The source for the legend was the account of a soul traveling to heaven where it learns many things from Christ. The duke’s death and his ghostly unrest are there framed as the culminating point in the strange events and times that preceded it.

²Lubkin, 1994, 87.

Young Galeazzo Maria Sforza's education as a nobleman involved proficiency in the use of arms, horseback riding, and all matters of hunting. It appears that he took well to his training. Numerous letters testify that he hunted all through his youth.³ As an adult, this duke of Milan enthusiastically hunted all the game species in his realm, pursuing boar, deer, wolf, bear, birds with falcons, and even chamois.⁴ Such a feat of technical skills, prowess, and courage was ideologically inherited by Galeazzo Maria through the traditional value system of the (knightly) warrior class, for whom hunting came in a close second to war as a worthy, and indeed identity-defining, occupation. Already Xenophon's treatise, the *Cynegeticon* (390-91 BCE), had prescribed hunting as the best training for war. In fifteenth century Milan, the feat increasingly required a solid staff of huntsmen and animal assistants, the means to pay salaries, establish hunting parks, and maintain dog kennels, horse stables, and mews for raptors, all in grand style. In his *Historia* of Milan, contemporary historian Bernardino Corio claims that the duke each year spent a staggering 16,000 (*sedecem migliaia*) ducats on dogs, hunting, and falconry, and indulged in wasteful ostentation, to the point that he ordered the perches of his beloved raptorial birds be adorned in velvet, embroidered with his coats of arms.⁵ Galeazzo Maria's 1473 hunting budget amounted to 3,000 ducats, 720 of which just for the kennel at Pavia.⁶ By the time of the Galeazzo Maria, there is no denying that an aristocrat's personal involvement in redundant and conspicuous hunting, employing specific techniques and procedures, amply reinforced and broadcast political power and social status and was necessary for both.⁷ Hunting commonly had

³Archivio di Stato di Milano (ASMi), Potenze Sovrane, (PS) 1461 contains a variety of Galeazzo's letters on hunting some of which will be presented later in this chapter.

⁴In addition to archival documentation see, Alfio Rosario Natale, ed., *I diari di Cicco Simonetta. Tomo Primo* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1962), 65, 91, 94, 118, 124, 145, 146, 155. Simonetta was the head of the Secret Council, or advisory board to the duke, at the time of Galeazzo Maria Sforza.

⁵Francesco Novati, "Di un codice sforzesco di falconeria," *Archivio Storico Lombardo* seconda serie, no. 15 (1888): 91. An anonymous writer of a popular song celebrating the duke after his death remembers him in one of the verses as an avid hunter who put all of his thoughts into making money to sponsor his passion. E. Medin, "Frammento di un cantare in morte di Galeazzo Maria Sforza," *Archivio Storico Lombardo* XII (1885): 803.

⁶PS 1483.

⁷For other courts, see among others also, Malacarne; 1998, Beck, 2000; Christoph Niedermann, "'Je ne fais que chassier' La chasse à la cour de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne," in *La chasse au Moyen Age: société, traités, symboles*, eds. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Baudouin Van den Abeele (Firenze: SISMEL - Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000), 175–86.

this function at European courts. Galeazzo Maria was not an isolated case, but his extreme approach helped earn him his *post-mortem* outfit.

Solidly ensconced in a firmly established pan-European aristocratic tradition, this duke's playing of the game of hunting also variously involved a control of the landscapes of Lombardy. For example, Lubkin reports how the duke, fresh back from his successful 1467 military campaign, reserved no fewer than six districts in his duchy exclusively for his hunting pleasures.⁸ The gesture marked his military accomplishment, and the political power that derived him from it. By the fifteenth century, the dukes of Milan hunted and consumed every possible game animal species available in the Lombard habitats from the foothills of the Alps to their backyards. They build socio-natural sites centered on hunting which took the form of fenced-in hunting parks. They demanded gifts related to hunting from the communities in the duchy and hunting related services from lesser nobles.⁹ This feat was achieved through the implementation of stringent hunting and habitat protecting legislation in large tracts of their territories. This exclusive appropriation of space amounted to a colonization. It marked off certain areas, endowed them with specific functions and meanings, and partially alienated them from the rest of society. Through hunting the dukes of Milan used the hybrid landscapes of Lombardy as a stage for the practice of their political power, and to take their pleasures. The line between the two was becoming blurred.

Aristocratic hunts in Milan were the result of cultural assumptions superimposed upon natural landscapes. They participated in the political world at court, and in the woods and hills of Lombardy. They involved common huntsmen and noblemen, legal instruments, hunting techniques as well as game animals. To separate the many strands of meaning, I will first situate hunting and its techniques in the variously constructed hybrid landscapes in which the dukes practiced it, then discuss how the dukes made their hunts work through a variously articulated

⁸Lubkin, 1994, 90, note 17.

⁹Vaglianti, 1997, 189; PS 1483, 4 September, 1467 which reports how the *podestà* of Cremona sends the falcon and the pair of dogs that are due to his lord every year from that community as does, on 4 December, 1476, Giovannetto dei Conti Valperga who sends the duke a pair of hawks.

labor force. Finally, I will illustrate the mutually reinforcing cultural mechanisms that underpinned such a state of affairs. While I must discuss these themes separately, the reader should bear in mind that they were connected through an integrated cluster of mutually dependent assumptions and practices.

3.1 TERRITORIES FOR THE DUCAL HUNTS

When the dukes of Milan stepped outside their palaces to go hunting, several options presented themselves. Their out of bound hunts for deer, boar, and bear could take them as far as the foothills of the Alps, but rivers such as the Ticino presented closer-to-home opportunities for falconry, and two of their three hunting parks were mere extensions of the gardens behind the Milan and Pavia castles. Outside of the parks, Lombard ecosystems varied widely. The highest peak of the Alps, the Mont Blanc, rose to almost 5,000 meters. Below the line of the glaciers, down through the woods of conifer, lived chamois and mountain goats. These areas as well as those of deciduous forest further downhill, were used for transhumant summer pasturage and woodcutting. Ecosystems located below these altitudes were lined with vines and orchards before descending gently into level agricultural lands. Ducal correspondence attests to the presence of the whole spectrum of Italian game animals in all these areas.

The dukes controlled their Lombard territories by superimposing upon the existing natural and cultural landscapes a three-tiered zoning system subjected to increasing degrees of legislative regulations. The three zones included the parks adjacent to the castles of Milan, Pavia, and Cusago, a core zone, and an outer zone. In these areas hunting was not only variously regulated, it was an activity which in different ways allowed the dukes high visibility and interference with local matters, both valuable tools of political control. The park walls were very visible signifiers of status. The dukes and their huntsmen could be seen hunting in the countryside. These areas were also monitored by *campari*, a policing force consisting of local inhabitants under the aegis of a central Milanese magistracy. And besides deliveries of hounds and hawks, towns were under the obligation to provide room and board for travelling huntsmen

and their animals, help organize hunts, and keep roads in overall good shape.¹⁰ Under the pretense of hunting, these factors gave the dukes an admirably strong, and subtle, tool for political and territorial control. At the same time, the dukes could avail themselves of a fully staffed and ready to use “suite of hunting spaces” containing a variety of ecosystems and game animal species at varying travel distances from home: a hunter’s dream.¹¹ Finally hunting thus afforded the dukes the opportunity to move around the territory. Galeazzo Maria Sforza notoriously preferred an itinerant court to one fixed in Milan. This behavior was resented because it took away from the luster of the capital, imposed heavy demands on resources, and involved far-reaching territorial organization.¹² Even so, it maximized his hunting opportunities.

3.1.1 Outer Zone

Furthest away from the centers of power, this area pushed up against the Swiss cantons in the North, French Savoy in the West and South, and the Venetian lands in the East. Overall, demographic pressure here was more contained than in the lowlands. The area contained high mountains and their valleys and foothills, woodland areas with chestnut and oak woods, and it supported pasturage and grew vines. Especially in its northern sector, the outer zone contained habitats for a variety of game animals, and may have been an excellent reservoir for them. A fifteenth century compilation lists men “to contact about bears,” mostly *podestà* and captains of different locations, obviously conveniently positioned, and therefore apparently tasked with keeping their eyes open for potential princely bear hunts. Among them were the *podestà* of the Valsesia and of the Valsugana, both remote mountain valleys in the outer zone.¹³ For example, an undated (but fifteenth century) bear hunt was organized in a location near Bellagio in the northern core zone.¹⁴ The timid bear likely benefited from the lighter demographic pressure,

¹⁰for example PS 1483, July 2, 1498.

¹¹The term is from, Sykes, 2007b throughout.

¹²Vaglianti, 1997, 201-12, throughout.

¹³PS 1483, undated document (marked “112” in pencil in the margin).

¹⁴PS 1483, undated.

coupled with rougher territory which was more difficult for the hunters to penetrate. In fact in this specific case the creature outsmarted its pursuers and slipped through their lines. The preparation for the deer hunt of 1476 outlined in the Introduction (p. 2), similarly took place in the outer zone. Wooded hilly territory benefited the deer populations, as several documents attest to the quality of the hunting in the outer one. A mountainous forested area located between Romagnano and Gattinara in lower Valsesia was where Galeazzo Maria hunted some large ungulates and boar in 1474.¹⁵ Higher altitude of course allowed hunts for species not available elsewhere, specifically the chamoix hunted by Galeazzo Maria for example in 1474.¹⁶ Chamoix hunting may have been the duke's ultimate challenge, given the higher altitude and difficulties posed to human hunters by that creature's open and craggy habitats. Incidentally, at about the same time the young future emperor Maximilian was hunting them in Tyrol.¹⁷

That this area was a good reservoir for game, and recognized as such, may be reflected in the legislation which only prohibited hunting for highly prestigious red deer.¹⁸ Thus protected, the populations were left free to move and perhaps replenish other areas, or they may have been used to replenish the parks following capture by ducal huntsmen. Lack of legislation on other species may be due to a combination of factors including the lesser status and larger availability of creatures such as boar in less difficult, and far-away terrains. The area's more marginal role in anthropocentric activities perhaps also meant that local populations were considered a small threat to the game animal populations. Otherwise, the area was simply too distant and extensive to control effectively. The outer zone likely provided opportunities for the collection of raptor chicks for later training as courtly sporting birds. This is maybe what is behind a 1468 document one Albertino sending Galeazzo Maria two sparrow hawks that he tells the duke were born in a

¹⁵Natale, 1962, 94.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁷Heinz Engels, ed., *Kaiser Maximilian's Theuerdank* (Stuttgart: Verlag Müller und Schindler, 1968).

¹⁸ASMi, Archivio Panigarola Registri degli Statuti (PRS) 1, pp, 1393-94. All over the dominions one only had to be caught in the field hunting (evident presumably from gear and perhaps dress) to be fined as severely as if one had actually poached.

local, but unnamed valley.¹⁹ A number of factors point to the potential of the outer area for being superb hunting territory.

3.1.2 Core Zone

At its maximum extension, this area covered about one third of the most fertile and populated part of the Lombard territories, spanning from the Sesia river in the west, to roughly Cremona in the east, close to the border with the Venetians. From Milan, it was about 40 kilometers to the southern border of the core area, about 70 kilometers to the western and eastern borders, and about 20 kilometers to the northern one. It incorporated all the major Lombard rivers and waterways, some of the most developed agricultural territories in the region, important irrigated meadows, and major cities. This was the heartland of the duchy and of the dukes' activities. Lubkin outlines how Galeazzo Maria Sforza spend 87.5% of his time in a relatively small area, "a triangle whose longest side measures around 80 kilometers" including the cities of Monza, Pavia, and Novara.²⁰ While there, he hunted.

Here, in the duchy's heart, fifteenth century agriculture was organized around large estates, leased to tenants on short contracts (one to three years) and on very precise terms. This period saw an increase in Lombard cattle production, supported to a large extent through the creation of the trademark irrigated meadows which allowed the production of one extra harvest of hay every year. Peasant holdings were in marked decline in the period, a trend that the Milanese dukes participated in through the creation of large tenant-operated estates of their own, for example La Sforzesca and the Zelata both in the area of Vigevano. Here the Sforza dukes experimented with the introduction of new products, notably silkworms.

Large parts of the core zone were put under hunting legislation.²¹ These areas were the so-called *cacce* (hunts), a general term indicating both preserves which one could hunt with an

¹⁹PS 1483, 23 June, 1468,

²⁰Lubkin, 1994, 92-93.

²¹This legislation, often meticulously spelled out, runs all through the volumes of the *Archivio Panigarola Registri degli Statuti* (PRS).

ad hoc licence issued by the duke, and areas where all hunting was exclusive princely domain. We remain ignorant as to the criteria determining whether an area was to become one or the other. We do know that the total acreage under ban reached its maximum extension under Galeazzo Maria Sforza, then declined. While the total number of *cacce* and their respective boundaries fluctuated, some of them may have remained in place for a long time. A map produced by Vaglianti shows the situation in 1467.²² The boundaries of the *cacce* were carefully described in the legislation, and the areas were named, for example *cazis Cusagi* (“Cusago’s hunt”) or *cazis Sancti Columbani* (“St. Columban’s hunt”). Through their long permanence they became landmarks in their local landscapes. Although these were not enclosed parks, they were still special landscapes. A veritable circuit of castles in the outer area, whose original function was protective, offered convenient accommodation for traveling hunting parties.²³ For an afternoon or a week, for small groups, or to entertain visiting dignitaries in style, the core area afforded the dukes the possibility of chasing their favorite game on horseback with dogs, much like the ghost of Galeazzo Maria appeared to be doing, or fly their raptors along rivers and streams. It is from this area that the dukes and their huntsmen primarily procured game.

Part of the hunting legislation involved the protection of the woods and riverbanks of the reserved areas.²⁴ No direct statement of positive correlation between protection of deer (and riverine birds), and wooded cover or woodlands has emerged in the legislation, but it was likely apparent to contemporaries. There is no current evidence that Lombardy experienced anything more serious than local scarcities of wood.²⁵ When these took place it seems that there were enough reservoirs to tap from including, indeed, the ducal hunting reserves.²⁶ Therefore it is

²²Vaglianti, 1997, 256.

²³Among them were Villanova, Galliate, Vigevano, Abbiategrasso, Cremona, Cassano d’Adda and, less frequently, Gambolò, S. Giorgio, Candia, Mede, Lomello, Gropello, Sannazzaro de’ Burgundi, Bereguardo, Belgioioso, Novara and Varese. Lubkin, 1994, 260-264, also Map 1.

²⁴PRS 6, f. 162; PRS 21, f. 16 v; PRS 25, 399-403. The restrictions involve timber as well as firewood.

²⁵Enrico Roveda, “I boschi nella pianura lombarda del Quattrocento,” *Studi Storici* 30, 4 (1989): 1013–30, details the uses and organization of users of wood and timber but eschews significant shortages.

²⁶For example, in 1402, the duke allowed for firewood to be cut in his reserved areas of Loghignana, Senago and Bollate, to the city of Milan. Caterina Santoro, ed., *I registri dell’Ufficio di Provvisione dell’Ufficio dei Sindaci, sotto la dominazione viscontea. Vol. I* (Milano: Castello Sforzesco, 1929), 136, letter n. 95. Also Vaglianti, 1997, 209.

likely that, although unstated, the intention behind prohibiting woodcutting was to maintain a viable habitat for the deer, and cover for riverine birds, as well as reduce the risk of poaching and undue disturbance. This assumption is lent credibility also by the fact that ducal strategies of habitat protection involved far more than just tree cover. These strategies involved prohibiting grazing in young coppice to favor re-growth and to provide browse and cover for the deer. Collection of acorns could be specifically prohibited to help the boar.²⁷ Prohibiting the burning of stubble and gleaning protected both cover and food source for upland birds. Similarly to protect the birds, it was in one instance prohibited to access certain woods in April, May, and June, because the birds had their young.²⁸

Milanese hunting legislation prohibited the use of techniques which may negatively impacted local game bird populations. Even in instances when hunting for the birds may not have been generally prohibited, the *struxa*, consisting of a sort of drag net used on quail, and the *sonagliera*, a type of call again used for quail could not be employed. Legislation calls these techniques “treasonous.” This definition was based on their *modus operandi*, which involved stealth, camouflage, and the deceit involved in luring an unsuspecting bird with a call. The negative value judgement was based on the fact that the techniques did not require prowess, a characteristic of aristocratic hunting. This posturing served the purpose of highlighting the moral superiority of aristocratic techniques reserved to princes, thus endorsing them. When the dukes wanted to limit falcon hunts, practiced by lesser nobles as well as themselves, the moral high ground did not hold. In this case legislation found it convenient to impose limitations on the claim that the exercise of falconry was destructive of agricultural crops and so detrimental to the livelihood of local populations, subjects of the dukes. Trampling of fields by hunters was a notorious pan-European complaint on part of local populations and destructive aristocrats had normally to pay compensation. Curiously no evidence of this has been found so far for the dukes of Milan. However, and probably as an unintended consequence of their protective measures,

²⁷PRS 8, p. 222 (coppice); 11, p. 383 (acorns).

²⁸PRS 10; 11, p. 382 (stubble); pp. 382-83 (birds).

boar populations grew to the point of becoming too destructive of crops, at which point it became mandatory to reduce them, assigning the task to local noblemen as well as ducal huntsmen.²⁹

The documents detailing the aristocratic hunts that took place in the core area were variations on the common aristocratic theme involving chases, dogs, huntsmen, and sharp weapons. For one hunt in 1467, for instance, no fewer than 24 horses and 100 dogs stood ready for a hunt which also involved tents and other outdoors equipment for the huntsmen involved.³⁰ In both 1471, and 1497, red deer of noteworthy size were taken out of the area of Robecco (south-east of Pavia). In the first case, the three animals were hunted with “dogs,” and we know not by whom. Since the writer of the letter described the “great pleasure” taken in their killing, this suggests a man of some standing, writing to thank the duke. One of the deer in this hunt weighed an impressive 360lb. In the second case, it was the duke Ludovico Sforza (il Moro, r.1494-99), who hunted two red deer in the area, subsequently sending them home as gifts.³¹ In 1497 Ludovico hunted and killed three red deer near Boffalora, also in the core zone.³² We know no details of these hunts. It is worthwhile noticing that although their overall numbers are difficult to ascertain, red deer were at least present in an otherwise developed landscape.

Less remarkably, because of their more opportunistic nature, boar were similarly a presence in the area. A horseback hunt for boar near Pavia involved an unknown bishop as well as Duke Galeazzo Maria.³³ Details surrounding a boar hunt with dogs in Lombardy were the subject of a letter sent by viscount Galeazzo Sforza to Ludovico il Moro in 1497. It took place in an woodland area called Riota, near Novara, and was prompted by the sighting of a 200lb boar as well as several others. Had the large boar been captured, he was to have been sent to the duke. The description is a fine summary of real-life hunting dynamics as well as of all that can go wrong in a hunt, manual wisdom notwithstanding. The *sausi*, (hounds) were sent into the woods

²⁹Caterina Santoro, ed., *I registri delle lettere ducali del periodo sforzesco* (Milano: Comune di Milano, 1961), 270, 365. Also PS 1483, 24 October, 1494, and 15 June, 1495.

³⁰PS 1483, 7 June, 1467.

³¹PS 1483, 6 August, 1471, and 6 May, 1497.

³²PS 1483, 6 August, 1497.

³³PS 1483, 29 September, 1491.

presumably to drive the boar out to where Galeazzo Sforza and the other mounted hunters waited. Instead of driving the boar, the dogs killed a small sow, apparently of their own volition. The court huntsmen did little better than the uncontrolled canines. They sighted another small boar, mistook it for the large one, and then proceeded to drive it through the woods for a while before releasing the greyhounds on the animal. These dogs also killed this boar, at which point the huntsmen realized their mistake. Likely the smaller sized boar made them easy prey for dogs habituated to dealing with large, adult animals which they would only dare to hold at bay. Finally, a third small boar escaped out of the woods, and was only with some difficulty saved from the hounds by the timely intervention of Galeazzo Sforza.³⁴ The viscount sent the duke the two small boar, and was traveling on to Mortara and Vigevano where, he was told, other large boar resided.

A much more serene day was that experienced by Isabella d'Este in the Ticino valley, again in the core zone, on an August day of 1492. The wife of Gian Francesco II, Marquis of Mantua, was also the sister of Beatrice and, much like her sister, enjoyed hunting (p. 1). On this occasion, Isabella was guest of her sister's husband: Ludovico il Moro.³⁵ Isabella describes the wait for the game under a constructed canopy, set up in a large opening on a natural rise over the river and in full view of river, woods, and game. The animals had been corralled through corridors made of stretched canvas panels, called *tele*, and driven across a narrow side branch of the Ticino. On that day, several red deer were sighted, but "only two climbed the slope" to the plateau. As the animals went into the woods, they were chased by men on horseback armed with swords who wounded, and eventually killed, the deer. Isabella did not see this, nor did she at any point participate as anything but a spectator. Later in the day, other animals came into view. A pregnant female deer was left free to go, but not so the stag and the boar that eventually came by the canopy. A fox closed the hunting day.

³⁴PS 1483, Oct.? 13, 1497.

³⁵The letter is transcribed in modern Italian in, Mario Comincini, *Storia del Ticino. La vita sul fiume dal medioevo all'età contemporanea* (Milano: Società Storica Abbatense, 1987), 141-42.

Milanese documentation shows that the landscapes and habitats in the core areas lent themselves to, and were actively used for, different types of aristocratic hunts some of which were detailed in hunting manuals. These ranged from the traditional driven hunt, sometimes in combination with stationary shooters, to the establishment of semi-permanent hunting arenas which circumscribed the location of the kill while also providing entertainment for non-hunting spectators.

3.1.3 Parks

The medieval park, or hunting park was an enclosed area, often located on the doorstep of major aristocratic residences. Dependent upon exogenous inputs, and geared towards maintaining and hunting deer, hunting parks were carefully managed landscapes.³⁶ The park's specific and hybrid functions colonized the space it contained, marking it off as "a special and distinctive kind of land use," with sometimes unintended consequences.³⁷ The *barcho*, as the northern Italians called it, was the most symbolically meaningful and intimate core of the territories dedicated to hunting, and, as elsewhere in Europe, it carried immensely important cultural connotations.³⁸ The different meanings and material aspects of the park warrant its treatment in different locations of the present. I will here be mostly concerned with park culture, the physical set-up, and the ways in which the park territories were hunted as part of the dukes' "hunting suite." A more environmentally informed discussion of the park will appear in the concluding Chapter 7.

The dukes of Milan had three *barchi* located in Milan, Pavia, and Cusago, about ten kilometers south-west of Milan. We know most about Pavia, the largest and newest of the three. This was the flagship park of the Lombard dukes. For this reason, while I will detail Cusago and Milan briefly, it is the Pavia *barco* that will garner the most attention. With local differences, the

³⁶The aristocrats flew their falcons in the park, as well, they apparently occasionally kept and hunted other animals there, but evidence on these hunts is very spotty.

³⁷Milesen, 2009, 10.

³⁸These issues are discussed throughout Azzi Visentini, 2007; Erba, 1999; Miller, 2010.

cultural premises, functions, and material structures visible at Pavia are also present in the other two, as well as in other parks in Italy and Europe.³⁹

The *barcho* at Cusago was the oldest of the Lombard parks, and characteristically fenced by a wooden palisade rather than the staunch brick walls of the other two parks.⁴⁰ Cusago's genesis is uncertain. It was a treasured hunting location for several of the Milanese dukes, and its woods were famous, as well as famously guarded.⁴¹ It is likely that this was an area particularly rich in game, and the absolute hunting ban surrounding Cusago and its woods supports this impression, although some of the wood may have been destined for the maintenance of the park fence.⁴² From a 1460 petition from disgruntled tenants to the duke, we learn that cutting bans included also coppice, useful for fencing, tools, repairs, and as firewood, but also excellent browse and cover for deer.⁴³

³⁹The lords of Mantua did not have a park, Malacarne, 1988, neither did, apparently the Pico at Mirandola, Andreolli, 1988. The “queen Cornaro,” or Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, was exiled by the Venetians to Asolo in the modern day region of Trentino in 1489. Starting in 1491 she had a palace with a *barcho*, locally known as *il barco della regina Cornaro*, located in Altivole, a location only a few kilometers from Asolo, where she organized various hunts, see Luciana Piovesan, *Il barco della regina Cornaro ad Altivole* (Asolo: Imprimatur, 1980). From this location, in 1492, she gifted Ludovico Sforza with some falcons, PS 1483, undated. The king of Naples, Alphons II had the villa with park of Poggio Reale built (with a park) between 1484 and 1487, and duke Frederick of Montefeltro in Umbria similiary had a park and palace built in the location of Fossombrone between 1474 and 1479. *Ibid.* 51. The literature on the English parks was detailed in chapter 2. The earlier (ca. 1291-1302) park of Hesdin, belonging to Count Robert II of Artois in northern France, shared many of the characteristics (and meanings) of the later parks. Hesdin is discussed in, Farmer, 2013; Anne Hagopian Van Buren, “The Park of Hesdin,” in *Medieval Gardens*, Elizabeth MacCullough (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1986), 115–34.

⁴⁰Either type of wall was a drain on local resources whether of timber or wood and clay for the kilns to make bricks and mortar. Evidence for the latter exists at Hesdin, Farmer, 2013, 651.

⁴¹Giangaleazzo Visconti (r. 1378-1402) issued the first extant and extensive legislation (re-iterated later) for the protection of Cusago's woods in 1401. The woods were always off-limits for hunting, RPS 21, throughout. The first document pertaining to the building of the wooden palisade around the castle is datable to the time of duke Filippo Maria Visconti (r.1412-1447). The palisade was built in 1421, RPS 21A. Francesco Sforza (r. 1450-1466) was adamant about the protection of the Cusago woods. In the period between September and December of the year he became duke, 1450, he issued no less than ten decrees in order to protect them especially after their depredations during the Ambrosian Republic, see Cominicini, 1987, 9 who also discusses how Ludovico il Moro did much towards the improvement and beautification of the castle. He and his court were fond of the place as a hunting location and hunted there frequently.

⁴²Either type of wall was a drain on local resources whether of timber and wood or clay for the kilns to make bricks and mortar. Farmer cites François Duceppe-Lamarre's evidence for stone quarries and lime kilns at Hesdin discussing emparkment's “major ecological impact” on a region. Farmer, 2013, 651.

⁴³ASMi, Archivio storico-diplomatico, Comuni (Cusago), (ADC) 29, undated petition from ca. 1460.

The castle of Milan at Porta Giovia (Giovia gate), originally had purely military functions. As the importance of the court grew in the Visconti ducal establishment, so did the requirements to the castle. It was to become a comfortable permanent residence (which it did in 1413) and seat of power. In this context, the creation of Milan's *barcho*, radiating out from the premises of the castle of Porta Giovia, quickly became a cultural necessity for the up-and-coming Milanese rulers.⁴⁴ Despite its relatively small size, the park carried important symbolic weight evidently displayed by its destruction, as a beacon of odious lordly power, during the tumultuous interlude of the Ambrosian Republic (1447-50). Equally telling of its symbolic significance, was its quick reconstruction, following Francesco Sforza's (r. 1450-66) coming to power in 1450.

In 1359, Galeazzo Visconti II's (r. 1354-78) conquest of the city of Pavia, the ancient Italian capital of the Lombard kings, was momentous for the Visconti image. The ascendant family was quick to appropriate for itself the emotional and symbolic meanings of the location. Between its creation, and its destruction by French troops on 25 April, 1525, the *barcho* became legendary. Contemporary literature waxed eloquently about it.⁴⁵ That its creation coincided with a time when Europe saw "an intense wave of enclosures, or emparkments, by highly place royal and aristocratic land-owners," highlights the cosmopolitan flavor of the Milanese court, and proclaims its status. During the park's construction, the Visconti were ruthlessly expropriated existing buildings and land. One exasperated Bartolino Sisti, who had lost his property to the park in 1369, attempted to kill Galeazzo, and paid with his life for the attempt.⁴⁶ The park was organized along the traditionally established lines of a deer park. It received water through a system of streams that ran off its main water artery, the Vernavola stream. It was provided with a road system to connect its various parts and to ease hunting. It had fishponds, gardens, buildings

⁴⁴Evelyn Samuels Welch, "The Image of a Fifteenth-Century Court: Secular Frescoes for the Castello di Porta Giovia, Milan," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 53 (1990): 163–84; Azzi Visentini, 2007, 191-196.

⁴⁵Erba, 1999 is based on such literary accounts.

⁴⁶Carlo Magenta, *I Visconti e gli Sforza nel castello di Pavia e le loro attinenze con la Certosa e la storia cittadina vols. I, II* (Milano: Hoepli, 1883), 92–93. In England emparkment of agricultural areas could involve the movement of entire villages outside of the park boundaries.

and pavillons. To landscape it, the Visconti were quick to exploit their inter-court connections, for example asking the Mantua dukes for plants, and various animals.⁴⁷

The development of the park took place by slow accretion. To Galeazzo II's start, the so-called Parco Vecchio (Old Park), followed his son Gian Galeazzo Visconti's (1378-1402) extension, the Parco Nuovo (New Park), starting in 1378, an expansion which would double the *barcho*'s size expanding it northwards all the way to the Certosa di Pavia. Founded in 1396, the Certosa hosted a monastery and was used as the dukes' private chapel, ideally linking secular and religious powers through the park territory. Sixteenth-century historian Stefano Breventano observed that the whole complex was an exquisite contemporary cultural product. Gian Galeazzo had wanted "a palace for his residence, a garden for his pleasure, and a chapel for his devotion," a perfect microcosm of aristocratic life.⁴⁸ The park was trapezoidal in shape, narrower at the end of the castle and wider at the opposite side of the Certosa. Thus visitors standing on the castle terrace, which was designed to afford sweeping views of the park, would have been able to take in the park all at once without visual foreshortening, something not possible had the park been rectangular in size.⁴⁹ In its largest incarnation, this *barcho* was approximately 7.4 kilometers long and 3.7 wide, covering an area of 27 square kilometers with a perimeter of 22 kilometers and circled by 2 meter high brick wall, pierced both by gates with draw bridges, and by smaller "half-doors," designed to allow passage for the different watercourses.⁵⁰

The fifteenth century Lombard parks were just the most recent expression in a long tradition. The Persian paradise, described by Xenophon in the fourth century BCE, consisted of a hunting park. The Chinese had hunting parks as well. Parks for deer were known from the first century BCE in Roman Italy and Gaul. A Carolingian document from 821 attests to the existence and maintenance of a park and its boundary. Anglo-Saxon England, as well as perhaps more

⁴⁷Magenta, 1883, 26-29, docs. XXXII, 13 October, (plants); XXVIII, 11 February, (falcons); XXXI, 19 September, (hounds); XXXIV, 28 December, (swans).

⁴⁸Erba, 1999, 18.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁰Azzi Visentini, 2007, 182, 206, notes 9 and 13; Erba, 1999, 18-20, 36-40.

famously post-Conquest England, had parks which are being extensively studied. Danish deer parks were established on islands. In summary, “as a private arena for the pursuit of pleasure and game, hunting parks operated as a symbol of sovereignty throughout Eurasia,” and ideas and layouts of parks were shared broadly through Europe.⁵¹ For example, King Edward II of England enlarged his own deer park at Windsor following a visit to the park of Hesdin in the county of Artois, in 1313, while the renovations and changes at Hesdin itself, had been the result of the skills of “immigrants,” namely Cunt Robert’s Sicilian and Apulian court members.⁵² The rulers of Milan followed suit in a long-established tradition, and they did not have to look far for inspiration.

Two contemporary Italian texts provide ideological backing to the material presence of the fifteenth century Lombard parks. One is Pietro de’ Crescenzi’s estate management manual (*Ruralia Commoda*, ca. 1304-09 described pp. 60-61), the other, the *Trattato di Architettura* (‘Treatise on Architecture,’ ca. 1402-64), by Florentine architect Antonio Averlino, known as Filarete, who in those years was working in Milan under Sforza patronage.⁵³ In the case of the Bolognese agronomist, what is detailed is really a garden (*viridarium*), a carefully laid out complete plan for the landscaping of a pleasant verdant area outside of a royal house, and an area where the noble inhabitants might seek solace and refreshment in the surroundings of natural things. Among them, de’ Crescenzi lists “hares, stags, roebucks and rabbits and like harmless beasts,” although no explicit mention is made of actually hunting them.⁵⁴ Although the text may have inspired the layout of its gardens, it is more difficult to agree with Luisa Erba that de’

⁵¹Allsen, 2006, 34-51, 46. For Denmark, Anders Andrén, “Paradise Lost. Looking for Deer Parks in Medieval Denmark and Sweden,” in *Visions of the Past: Trends and Traditions in Swedish Archaeology*, eds. Anderson et al. (1997), 469–90.

⁵²Farmer, 2013, 645. William Tronzo, “The Royal Gardens of Medieval Palermo: Landscape Experienced, Landscape as Metaphor,” in *Le vie nel medioevo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studi, Parma, 28 settembre-1 ottobre 1998*, ed. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milano: Electa, 2000), 362, 370 discusses the Byzantine influence on the layout of the twelfth century gardens and hunting parks of Palermo under Norman rule, especially that of Roger II (1130-54).

⁵³Richter, 1995, vol. book VIII, 14-15; A.M. Finoli and L. Grassi, eds., *Antonio Averlino detto Filarete, Trattato di architettura* (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1972).

⁵⁴Richter, 1995, vol. 3, 14.

Crescenzi's text was much of an inspiration for the actual hunting park.⁵⁵ Most parks contained the elements listed by the agronomist, as well as others, not advocated in the Bolognese text. Hesdin park's vast marshes, for example, provided excellent falconry, but were not among de' Crescenzi's preferred landscape requirements.⁵⁶

The two volume *Trattato* uses the building of the ideal city of Sforzinda as its framing device in order to detail the techniques and concepts of architecture. The text is further structured around dialogues between a prince, his young son, and the architect. To be worthy of a prince, such a city, named with obvious reference to the Sforza patron, and modeled on the city of Milan, was to have a hunting park. As opposed to de' Crescenzi, hunting is very prominent in Filarete's park. The problem with the *Trattato* as a direct influence on Lombard parks, is that by the time Filarete wrote it, all Lombard parks had already been established (Pavia in the 1360s, Milano around 1410). Rather than providing inspiration, the architect may be credited with an after the fact idealized endorsement of conditions and ideas that were already part of his society, and that circulated freely. For example, Sienese architect Giorgio Martini included a chapter on the hunting park in his architectural treatise.⁵⁷ This text, as well as Federico da Montefeltro's, duke of Urbino (r. 1475-88) own visits to Milan and Pavia, may have provided Federico with the inspiration for analogues in the Marche region.⁵⁸

Upon inspection, the description of the Sforzinda park has more in common with the known layout of the Pavia park than that of Milan. It was of very large size, walled, it contained an impressive building (the castle), newly established landscapes, lay emphasis on water that ran through its middle section, it was divided in two parts, and, finally, had a beautiful church. These were all features of the Pavia park. As far as the hunts, it is clear that all the animals in the imaginary park were introduced from the outside, as was the case in a real park.

⁵⁵Erba, 1999, 20.

⁵⁶Farmer, 2013, 653.

⁵⁷C. Maltese, ed., *Francesco da Giorgio Martini. Trattati di architettura, ingegneria e arte militare* (Milano: Fabbri Editore, 1966), 107-109.

⁵⁸Azzi Visentini, 2007, 199.

Uncharacteristically for a deer park, however, the emphasis in Filarete's treatise was on a hunt for a very large and aggressive bear that wounded many dogs and required much courage to kill, and a similarly sized and ill-tempered boar. Hunts for other animals, including deer, were mentioned only as a sideline. It is true that some documentary evidence show an aristocratic preference for the hunting of larger, more aggressive and challenging animals. It is similarly true that park hunts were often set up so as to entertain a large audience, centered around the lord of the house and his lady. In Filarete's rendition, however, these aspects are presented to enhance the lord's might, rather than provide a reliable account of park hunts. In both de' Crescenzi's and Filarete's texts, a case may be made for an interactive dialogue taking place between two cultural constructs, the park and the text, but not for a clear-cut case of cause and effect between the two.

As the prince's son and the architect were quick to agree in Filarete's text, a hunting park had to have walls, so that "the animals could not get out."⁵⁹ Outside of fiction, walls were also meant to keep people as well as noxious animals, such as wolves, out. The embracing wall made it possible to step out the front door and almost immediately start hunting. Park hunts were enabled by much altered natural landscapes. While the fictional park shows no explicit concern with the animals' ecological requirements, real-life parks were bound by them. Depending on herd size, if the existing habitats were inadequate to provide the game with food, this had to be introduced from the outside, and running water was paramount (shelters may also be built).⁶⁰ The real life hunts in the Milanese parks share little with Filarete's truculent performances on boar and bear, and most documents speak of deer; while some of the deer may have been born in the park, most of them had no original connection to the park habitats as they had been introduced.⁶¹ There is evidence that the herds of the parks consisted of red and roe deer, both native to Italy. However there is also Milanese documentation that attests that the dukes held fallow deer (*Dama dama*) in the parks, although I have not found any reference to actual hunts on this species. In

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 602.

⁶⁰On the role of landscaping in the creation of "ideal", that is, landscaped, hunting grounds, Cummins, 2002, 46-52; Azzi Visentini, 2007, 191-96; Farmer, 2013, 652.

⁶¹For a discussion of the animals in English parks, Sykes, 2007 throughout.

1458 the master of the hunts general Carlo da Cremona sent six young fallow deer, one male, and five pregnant females, from Pavia to the duke in Milan.⁶² The duke had requested seven specifically young ones. We know not if sending pregnant animals was part of the plan. Perhaps pregnancy was a handy way to provide extra deer for the park, perhaps logistics got in the master's way. In fact, da Cremona said, there were "about fifty more of the species, but hunting them would have caused so much commotion as to ruin future hunts." As the pregnant animals could not be hunted right away, the Milanese must have had the ability to keep them alive and well in their new location.⁶³

The apparently common presence of this animal species in Milan is notable. *Dama* was introduced into England by the Normans after 1066. The animal was present in Sicily in the eleventh century, but there is no evidence for it in France until the thirteenth.⁶⁴ The Norman introduction specifically targeted this species of ungulates to parks, a tradition with which the Normans were already well-acquainted. The reason behind their use in parks lay in the animals' ecology. Smaller size, more gregarious nature, lesser aptitude to run great distances, and lesser requirements of territory, made the fallow deer more suited for the enclosed and relatively smaller acreage of the parks than the red deer. *Dama*'s presence in Milan was another sign of the full participation of the Lombard dukes in the common aristocratic identity: an exclusive hunting culture prevailing in Western Europe was theirs.

All this contributed to making the much idealized hunting conditions in a park look quite like managed predictability, quite the opposite of what we might commonly associate with hunting. Indeed, predictability was the goal. As discussed, out-of bounds hunts could also be prepared. Whether the dukes sent huntsmen out to scout for deer, or to construct platforms in suitable locations, the mark of a successful day lay with the presence of game to be hunted. Park walls and restocking made this a certainty to a degree impossible to achieve on the outside. The

⁶²PS 1457, 22 October, 1458.

⁶³Another instance of a shipment of two fallow deer from an unspecified "park," PS 846, 28 August, 1468.

⁶⁴Sykes, 2004.

hunt at the Cusago park, that introduced this dissertation, presented the hunters with twenty-two deer and is emblematic in this regard. To find such high numbers readily available required stocking. Parks facilitated a developing trend in aristocratic European hunting which equalled good hunting with the availability of vast quantities of game.⁶⁵ Yet parks did not replace out-of-bound hunts in Lombardy. Rather they appear to have been meant to integrate them, by making different hunting diversions available. In the park, the dukes made themselves visible as hunters mostly to their court and visitors enclosed in a private space. Outside the park, the hunting event was geared towards publicly displaying them to their subjects as more aggressively mounted warriors and rulers.

If park hunts were often contrived events in seeming contradiction to some of the aristocrats' own ideals of hunting when practiced in the open country, it may be even more puzzling to modern-day observers to learn that this "wilderness" contained the antithesis of the traditional image of hunting: agriculture.⁶⁶ The status-laden deer were sharing space with humble crops. This apparent contradiction was not a Italian peculiarity. English parks also included economic activities and integrated a variety of uses, from pasturage to agriculture, although current scholarship, in Mileson's words, "suggests no clear conclusion" on the "significance of the agricultural and industrial activities which were carried out inside parks."⁶⁷ It is worth considering, for example, that as for England, so for Pavia, it is impossible to gauge how often the dukes actually used their park for hunting, including when they loaned their parks to others.⁶⁸ Perhaps the hunting pressure was (much) less than contemporary rhetoric leads us to believe. Either way, given proper arrangements pertaining to division of space (deer are voracious eaters),

⁶⁵Vividly depicted in the 1529 painting by Lucas Cranach the older titled "The deer hunt of prince Frederick the Sage" held in Vienna at the Kunsthistorische Museum. Malacarne, 1998, 50.

⁶⁶Two documents pertain to this aspect of the park and its regulations. One is a collection of ducal orders for the *barcho* dated 1447, the other a 47 item long list of "chapters" issued by the ducal chamber on 31 January, 1477. CPv 331 (Pavia).

⁶⁷Mileson, 2009, 45; and also 64-72 for a fuller investigation. I have no evidence for other important parks, such as Hesdin, in this regard.

⁶⁸In 1464 one "count Jacobo" in gratitude, sent the duke "part of his hunt" which took place in the Pavia *barcho*. PS 1483, August 11.

the co-habitation of agriculture and ungulates need not have been contradictory. It may have made good common sense to exploit the large fenced area also with some kind of revenue in mind, as such immobilization of capital may otherwise have been wildly unrealistic. It is possible to see the deer as simply another commodity, or agricultural product. For all its glamour, the Pavia park was a more flexible, and well-organized, type of “special and distinctive land use” than laudatory literature suggests, but one fully aligned with extant European conditions.⁶⁹ Recent studies suggest that climate change may also affect decisions involving emparking.⁷⁰ Despite their peculiar vocation, it may be time to see the park as a dynamically evolving part of local hybrid landscapes, and one fully participating in the current economic contexts.

A zoning was apparently in effect in the Pavia park as the new park, added in 1378, was excluded from agricultural use, likely reserved for the deer, and therefore differently landscaped. Only the old park, or about half the total acreage of the location, was devoted to agriculture. An eight page long document from 1477 carefully outlines the organization and management of the farming estate contained within the Pavia park.⁷¹ The occasion of the compilation was the auction allotting the resources to a manager. Under his care, tenants would live in the park and take its agricultural production upon themselves. While most of the eight page regulation did not pertain to hunting, nor to the deer, the reading of the document makes it clear that tenant holding within the park was not the same as outside of it, and that it was the presence of the wild ungulates that made that difference. The Pavia estate was in part to serve the needs of the deer, especially by producing hay that the tenants had to deliver, free of charge.⁷² As irrigated meadows were otherwise an established Lombard feature, and as the park was crisscrossed with waterways which would have facilitated irrigation, likely some of this hay generated revenue

⁶⁹Milesen, 2009, 10.

⁷⁰MacDonald, 2013.

⁷¹CPv 331, 31 January.

⁷²The amounts consisted of 100 sheaves of “early” (June) hay and 3000 of August hay. The tenants were paid for the latter, but not the former. But things did not always go as planned. An undated letter from an alarmed master of the hunts of Pavia tells the duke that 3000 sheaves of hay are missing to feed the animals, and that he only has enough to go on feeding the deer for another eight to ten more days. Furthermore he informs the duke that hay is obtainable by cash payment only. PS 1483 (marked “155” in pencil at the bottom).

also. Strictures and legislation aiming at protecting the deer population, and enhancing hunting, were put in place. Hunting was prohibited to all except the duke and his friends. The park walls had guards tasked with upkeep and vigilance, with their salaries paid by the tenants. No wood was to be cut, and no dogs kept, except young pups destined for courtly careers as hunting dogs, but fed and cared for by tenants until they reached the age of eight months. Upkeep of all park infrastructures such as roads and waterways was the responsibility of the tenants. Collection of acorns and grazing of pigs required permission, and burning of stubble was prohibited. Despite some diversion of resources away from the tenants, neither of these rules precluded sound agricultural practices. To protect the crops, the deer were fenced off part of the year. In the bargain, the dukes received auxiliary hunting services including dog care, maintenance of grounds and deer herds, and guarding of their territories.

Fifteenth century Lombard dukes did not lack in hunting opportunities, which they practiced in a variety of ways, cognizant of current cultural norms. Turning large areas of the duchy over to their hunting pleasures also ensured a measure of political control over Lombard locales and their landscapes. The practical and material link between power and territory was provided by the duke's hunting staff, whose work made his hunts possible

3.2 LABOR: TRAINING ANIMALS, CONTROLLING TERRITORIES

Personnel was a fundamental aspect of the organization of the Milanese dukes' hunts. The practice of falconry required falconers, huntsmen were necessary to find deer, prepare hunts, and train dogs, and, on the day of the hunt, manpower in various forms was required for a variety of tasks, including driving game. Further afield, buyers were stationed in Venice waiting for shipments of avian raptors, and, occasionally, cheetahs, brought in from the East to keep supplying the Lombard and other European courts.⁷³ But that was not all. The dukes also found it advantageous to create an institutionalized extension of the hunting apparatus and embed it in the

⁷³For example, PS 1483, 16 February, 1494 and 21 January, 1495. It is possible that the buyers of falcons served as general business agents for the dukes, but I cannot presently prove it.

state administration, to task local *podestà* (p. 71) with hunting related tasks, and variously employ local populations.⁷⁴

As detailed, the dukes could hunt areas in territories that spanned a third of Lombardy or more. In these landscapes a single resource, endowed with important cultural meanings, was in essence privatized. Upholding and legitimizing this state of affairs required careful monitoring on part of the state especially given the administrative complexities that riddled Lombard territories and that the increasingly centralized regional state had to negotiate. The Introduction made clear how hegemonic power emanating from Milan had emerged as a consequence of factional infighting within the Lombard cities and territories. The duke's claim to power lay with the institution of safe and peaceful conditions. However, this state of affairs caused endemic friction because it involved the institution of centralized forms of government, the presence of government officials in the countryside, administration of justice on part of the duke, extended fiscal measures, and the maintenance of an army.⁷⁵ Establishing it meant breaking the bond between the individual towns and their *contadi*, weakening the former, and placing the latter under the control of the state all the while centering economic activity around Milan. This was not easy. Some cities, such as Vigevano, were notoriously turbulent, resisting state intervention.⁷⁶ In addition to the cities, some areas in Lombardy were still under feudal rule, while others had the status of *terre separate* (separate lands) and so were in the allegedly privileged position of being under direct ducal control and free of appointed state officials. In reality this aspiration found only partial satisfaction.⁷⁷ In summary, Visconti and Sforza Lombardy was a patchwork of seigneurial and political entities often in conflict with one another.

This complexity has afforded historians the opportunity to discuss just how centralized the Lombard state really was, or, put otherwise, how governed Lombardy really was. For all their

⁷⁴For the help requested for the huntsmen on part of local populations see PS 1483, 2 Feb. 1498.

⁷⁵Giorgio Chittolini, "Alcune note sul ducato di Milano nel Quattrocento," in *Principi e città alla fine del Medioevo*, Sergio Gensini (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1996), 415–16.

⁷⁶Vaglianti, 1997, 197 according to whom, the firmness with which the dukes insisted on their *regalia* rights (the pair of dogs and the raptor) and other hunting related tasks, offerings, and favors, reflected their symbolic control.

⁷⁷Giorgio Chittolini, "Le terre separate nel ducato di Milano in età sforzesca," in *Milano nell'età di Ludovico il Moro* (Milano: Comune di Milano, 1983), 115–28.

desires to establish centralized power, scholarship agrees that the statecraft of the dukes of Milan was less organized and coherently planned than their self-aggrandizing rhetoric suggests. For historians Giorgio Chittolini and Jane Black, for example, constant compromise was the rule of the day at the Milanese courts. Chittolini sees ducal exercise of power, administration of justice, and legal intervention as based on contingencies, rather than a systematically implemented approach.⁷⁸ In the territories of Milan, the Visconti resorted to a rule based on a process of constant adjustments to many independent social agents in their territories, of which the self-reliant cities, suspicious of outside interference, were the strongest ones.⁷⁹ Recent research by Black confirms this position and expands upon the concept of compromise as the basis for Visconti ducal power and its application to the territories. The historian points out that the Visconti's imperial nomination (Gian Galeazzo Visconti in 1395) had not made clear a crucial pivot of centralized rule, the basis and limits on the exercise of ducal power, especially with regard to cities and their territories.⁸⁰ This factor weakened ducal rule. In assessing Lombard ducal rule, it is important to remember also that the rule of both princely families was marred by wars or at least constant apprehension about their borders with ongoing discontinuities and unwelcome fiscal pressures. Lacking impartial *supra partes* administrative institutions, the duke was forced to concentrate power within his own person and that of his hand-picked officials, a situation that was comparatively weak.

This state of affairs connects to the practice of hunting. To ensure efficiency in his hunting legislation, the duke incorporated its management into the framework of the existing state apparatus through its officials, who were noblemen of some rank. On the one hand, upholding venatory legislation became very visibly a matter of state. On the other, its enforcement ensured the additional presence of state officials where control mattered the most, in

⁷⁸Giorgio Chittolini, "Governo ducale e poteri ducali," in *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e il loro rapporti con gli stati italiani ed europei (1450–1535)* (Milano: Cisaplina-Goliardica, 1982), 29.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Jane Black, "The Limits of Ducal Authority: A Fifteenth-Century Treatise on the Visconti and Their Subject Cities," in *Florence and Italy. Renaissance Studies in Honor of Nicolai Rubinstein*, eds. Peter Denly and Caroline Elam, Rubinstein (London: Committee for Medieval Studies, 1988), 153.

the countrysides of Lombardy.⁸¹ To enforce the role of hunting as tool to power emanating directly from his person, and to stress the personal connection between himself and his wild game, the duke made himself the top-most judge and authority of venatory legislation. Only he and, pending ducal permission, his master of the hunts general (*comisario caciarum ducati Mediolani*), could issue hunting permits in designated areas, but only the duke could reduce fines, pardon hunting related infractions, or grant special permission in otherwise prohibited areas.⁸² The importance of such finer distinctions is better appreciated when one realizes that granting (and revoking) hunting permits were used as incentives for local subjects in short term ducal power politics, and represent yet another aspect of the political (and personal) role of hunting for the dukes of Milan.⁸³

The government of hunting and its officials were included in the Magistratura delle Entrate Straordinarie, a centralized fiscal magistracy tasked with liquidation of confiscated goods, tolls on roads and waterways, extraordinary taxes, and collection of fines, including those levied on infractions of hunting regulations. These officials were the institutional arm of the dukes' hunting personnel, career administrators hired on the basis of their expertise in law and justice, not hunting skills.⁸⁴ The highest ranking official, the master of the hunts general for the

⁸¹Vaglianti, 1997, 212, and throughout.

⁸²In 1487, one Ludovico Mombretto and “a friend” were licensed to bird hunting with “net dogs” for their own “pleasure” and “not for the destruction of the countryside.” PS 1483, 6 July 1476; FC 485, 3 July 1487 (folio 39). A pardon from 24 Oct, 1494 is in PS 1496, Grida.

⁸³Galeazzo Maria Sforza, fresh from his election as duke, granted noblemen permission to hunt quail around the towns of Novara and Desio, areas otherwise off limits. PRS 8, 7 Sept. 1467 and f. 91 r. To garner favor during his 1473 conflict with his mother, Bianca Maria Sforza, Galeazzo Maria allowed gentlemen and citizens of Milan to hunt certain areas with raptors. In 1474, having settled things in his favor, he revoked the permission, bemoaning that the privilege had been abused and that if he himself wanted to go hunting now, “there would not even have been a hare to be found.” PRS 9, f.12. Ludovico il Moro was no better. On 21 November, 1494, regretting how permission granted (by himself) to gentlemen to hunt boar with crossbows had resulted in the killing of prized -- and prohibited -- deer, the duke banned all crossbow hunting, only to reverse the decision five days later. PRS 11.

⁸⁴It is possible to piece together the structure of this part of the ducal hunting apparatus reasonably well from various sources, Caterina Santoro, *Gli uffici del dominio sforzesco (1450–1500)* (Milano: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la Storia di Milano, 1948), 183–84; 313; 337–38; 340–41; 355; 373; 411; 456; 460; A.R. Natale, *Formulario Visconteo-Sforzesco* (Milano, 1979), 123–26, and for the year 1477 a partial list is in PS 1483, bilanci (also published in Vaglianti, 1997, 251–53. See also, Caterina Santoro, *Gli uffici del comune di Milano e del dominio visconteo-sforzesco* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1968), for a discussion of their roles and functions see, Franca Leverotti, “Gli ufficiali del ducato sforzesco,” in *Gli ufficiali degli Stati italiani del Quattrocento* (Pisa, 1997), 17–97. Documents pertaining to the appointment of a group of *campari* in 1469 and 1471–72 are cited in Vaglianti, 1997, 231 note 174.

duchy, supervised the activities of the master of the falconers, and of the master of the kennelmen, as well as regional hunting masters. The grassroots part of the administration were the *campari della caccia*, local people employed on one-year tenures as hunting police and answering only to the magistracy.⁸⁵ The master of the hunts general was a powerful man with a varied roster of assignments. For example, Carlo da Cremona, perhaps the most notorious among them, reported to Francesco Sforza on the progress being made in rebuilding the wall of the Milan hunting park and the restocking of the park. In 1476, da Cremona supervised the well-being of the dukes' hunting birds, cared for by others, and discussed matters of money and staff management with the head falconer, nobleman Pietro da Birago.

Another way that the dukes used the state apparatus for venatory purposes was to enlist, or co-opt, the *podestà* of different locations for hunting tasks. The dukes themselves appointed these men, who Black called the “most useful device employed by the Visconti for exerting their authority over their lands.”⁸⁶ In essence the official was to unambiguously enforce the duke's wishes, while trying not to alienate the municipality he was assigned, which could make him the object of anonymous threats and acts of intimidation.⁸⁷ His main hunting-related responsibility was to enforce pertinent legislation and provide *ad hoc* services.⁸⁸ A *podestà* might also find himself tasked with the keeping, care, and even training of courtly hunting animals.⁸⁹ Finally, he, and the municipality in which he worked, were also bound in a feudo-vassalic relationship to the duke, by having to provide him with a hawk and a pair of “good” hounds as a tribute each year on 8 September. The duty of the gift was part of eminent domain rights and noblemen invested with a fief could receive similar requests for tributes from the dukes. The duty was laden with

⁸⁵A similar body existed, tasked with supervision on the use of water for irrigation, they were the *campari delle acque*.

⁸⁶Black, 1988, 154.

⁸⁷Chittolini, 1982, 33-34.

⁸⁸For example, for road upkeep in Vigeveno in 1494, FC 485 (no date). Instructions to give the duke's huntsmen and their mounts “comfortable” housing. PS 1483, 2 July, 1498.

⁸⁹One Scazzoso Anfossi, of Vigeveno, was quite skilled as a falconers and may have enjoyed the responsibility, others less so. SFPv 846, 19 July, 1468. Local communities, members of the court, noblemen and others could be similarly assigned these duties. One Bartolomeo Crivelli, was called upon for help with a un-collaborative falcon, PS 1483, 31 August, 1493.

symbolism and the dukes were intransigent with non-compliance on deliveries. In 1467, after repeated refusals of delivery, the *podestà* of Pavia, Carlo de Reguardati, decided to step down. Failed delivery was seen as an act of defiance, yet Bartolomeo Caccia, in 1468, asserted that he “could not afford it.”⁹⁰

A document datable to the time of Francesco Sforza (1450-66) shows that the duke had a list of locations to which he dispatched as *podestà* individuals who “kept birds for his lordship’s pleasure.”⁹¹ But that was not all. The document also betrays that duke Francesco was pondering how to open that delicate political position for assignment to his “*uccellatori*,” (falconers), which required the current appointee to give up his position. To the duke this multitasking would have been very convenient, as Vaglienti points out. In so doing, the duke placed a trusted individual in a position of control, somebody who was furthermore expert in hunting, and whom he did not have to pay, as this burden belonged to the local municipalities.⁹² Although there is evidence that some falconers were literate, most of them would likely have lacked the training and skills required for the responsibilities. Most of them would also have lacked the significant start-up sum for tenure.⁹³ Having hunting professionals in key locations might have been handy, but locating court officials thus would additionally have taken away from the position the last vestiges of municipal independence, a detail likely not lost on Francesco. His plan never came to fruition entirely.

For all their lack of merit as potential *podestà*, in matters of hunting falconers were skilled and prized huntsmen. Their higher wages confirm their rank above kennelmen more than

⁹⁰SFPv, 846, 14 August, 1468 for the case of count Ludovico Barbiano. Luciano Moroni Stampa and Giuseppe Chiesi, eds., *Ticino Ducale. Il carteggio e gli atti ufficiali. Volume I Francesco Sforza. Tomo II 1456–1461* (Stato del Canton Ticino, 1994). Vaglienti publishes information on the locations that needed to provide the gift, for a grand total of thirty hawks and sixty dogs. Vaglienti, 1997, 255. Original in FC, 485.

⁹¹“*Quelli [che] tenevano uxelli per piacere della prafata signoria.*” The document is published in *Ibid.*, 259-60, the original is in PS 1603.

⁹²Vaglienti, 1997, 195.

⁹³There are several letters pertaining to matters of raptors written by falconers to the duke of Mantova, Malacarne, 1998, 62, 68, 71.

likely justified by the care and training needed by their delicate and valuable charges.⁹⁴ At court, falconers were placed under the duke's direct tutelage and jurisdiction, as were all huntsmen, but an incident from 1472-76 shows that they could hold a special position.⁹⁵ The incident involved a falconer called Pilato, Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza, his employer, and the young Florentine nobleman Lorenzo de' Medici or il Magnifico (1449-1492). The ambitious twenty-year old Lorenzo was only a few years into his leadership of Florence, following his father Pietro's death in 1469, when he asked the Sforza duke to have, or perhaps borrow, one of his falconers. Galeazzo Maria Sforza obligingly sent him the skilled Pilato, whom Lorenzo flattered as best he could in order to keep him in Florence. Lorenzo obtained Pilato again for the following year, and grew to like him. Following repeated requests by Lorenzo, the duke of Milan pretended to agree that the Medici keep Pilato, but, perhaps to humiliate the young Florentine upstart, Galeazzo Maria instead secretly ordered Pilato to return to Milan. The falconer did so, stealing away on 3 September, 1474. Lorenzo was understandably insulted, but unbroken in spirit. A year later, one Boniforte, huntsman to the Sforza, was in Florence to pick up, and bring to Milan, twenty-one red deer, presumably for the restocking of a park. Tongue in cheek, in the letter dated 5 October, 1475 that accompanied the animals, Lorenzo apologized to the duke of Milan that the deer were "so few," but, he wrote, not having "Pilato and his skills" at his disposition any more, this was "the best he can do."⁹⁶ It appears that Galeazzo Maria finally succumbed to Lorenzo's unfaltering insistence on the matter. In 1476 he promised him Pilato back together with some "good" dogs

⁹⁴PS 1603, March, 1478. The primacy of the falconers was common at all European courts. Falconers could become "stars" of the courtly hunting world, and the degree of skill involved often made the position hereditary. Oggins, 2004, 18; Malcolm Vale found a similar situation at the court of Robert of Flanders, Lord of Cassel in 1336. Vale argues that the hunting staff in general was paid some of the highest salaries at court. Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court. Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe 1270-1380* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 182; Beck, 2000, 167.

⁹⁵The members of the court were already members of the dukes' inner circle, but the special rights enjoyed by the huntsmen put them in a position of superiority. Special rights granted to the "duke's men" could similarly cause problems. One Gallo da Verona was sent by Francesco Sforza to Vigevano in 1462, allegedly to monitor the hunts. Vaglianti explains that while, normally, people like him would simply be given access in and out of the castle, Gallo was handed the actual keys, a privilege normally exclusive to the castellan in charge of the fortification. The latter was understandably not amused. Vaglianti, 1997, 198.

⁹⁶The letters pertaining to Pilato are published in Riccardo Fubini, ed., *Lorenzo de Medici, lettere (1460-1479)* (Firenze: Giunti-Barbera, 1977), vol. 2, letters 204, 222, 224, 229.

that the Florentine also wanted. The dogs arrived, but nothing indicates that the falconer ever did.

While the gifting of hunting animals, sometimes accompanied by the caretakers, was common enough between European courts, the Pilato incident shows the degree to which exchanges in matters of hunting, and promises made, kept, or broken, could interpret and manifest carefully calibrated differences of status.⁹⁷ For example, manifestations of benevolence on the part of the powerful duke of Milan to the Medici heir could bolster the latter's position. This was part power politics, part an effort to "self-consciously cultivate an international network of courts," and potential future alliances of which both the Milanese and the Florentine (but also the Burgundian, the Mantuan, the Ferrarese, and the English) were all part.⁹⁸ These alliances were of fundamental importance in case of war, and served the purpose of maintaining and exercising power both in fifteenth century Italy and elsewhere.

Apart from their role as political pawns, Milanese falconers were occupied with tasks more appropriate to their training. According to the payroll of 1477, there were then twenty falconers at the Milan court.⁹⁹ They procured, trained, and hunted the unknown number of falcons in their care. Documents provide evidence for the presence of the whole spectrum of hunting birds dear to the European aristocrats in Milan, and so gyrfalcons, peregrines, sakers, merlins, goshawks, and sparrow hawks.¹⁰⁰ The hunting birds and their handlers traveled with the duke to enhance his status, because they were members of the court, and because an occasion to hunt may always present itself, or actively be sought out.¹⁰¹ Falconers traveled on their own also.

⁹⁷In 1469 Pietro de' Medici had died, leaving twenty-year old Lorenzo to inherit the reins of leadership in Florence. In March of 1471, Galeazzo Maria traveled across the Appennines with a retinue of over 1,000 people to spend part of the Lenten season in Florence, guest of Lorenzo. The duke of Milan's intent with the trip was quite clearly to impress his Florentine counterpart. The early years of Lorenzo's leadership, up his failed murder by hand of the Pazzi in 1478, (his brother, Giuliano, was killed in the coup), was marked by trying to assert himself at home and at other courts. The Pilato incident was part of his networking efforts.

⁹⁸Lubkin, 1994, 246.

⁹⁹PS 1483, *bilanci*, 24 February, 1477.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*; PS 1461, 3 November, 1467; 1483, undated, report from master general Carlo da Cremona to the duke. Vaglianti also has evidence for lanners (*Falco biarmicus*), Vaglianti, 1997, 188.

¹⁰¹Twenty-one falconers traveled with Galeazzo Maria in 1476 (two assigned to his mother Bianca Maria). Sixty horses were assigned to his falconers on his 1471 trip to Mantua. Lubkin, 1994, 269-70, 101. Kennelmen were brought along also on these occasions.

We find them in Venice, when galleys arrived carrying raptors from the East. On those occasions, the falconers were there to inspect the birds, prior purchase by the duke's buyers stationed in the lagoon city.¹⁰² After the purchase the falconers were to travel back to Milan with the animals. We may likely also have found them in the Lombard countryside, searching for suitable birds to procure for the court mews, and carrying a *lettera di libero passo* (a license of free transit) such as the one issued by the duke on 16 November, 1468 to one Giacomo de Buterio and a companion for the "obtainment of falcons and other birds."¹⁰³ The document, which contains no time limitation, was written in a plain clear clerk's hand on sturdy parchment, not paper, as was commonly the norm for Milanese documents. The creases show that it was folded to fit in a saddle bag for prolonged and rough use on the road. When on assignment, ducal huntsmen enjoyed enviable rights, they could carry arms all over the dominions both day and night, they paid no tolls, and were to be housed with their horses, by local communities.¹⁰⁴ Their appellatives show that they were not all native Italians. Individuals called Nicolo, Zonane (Giovanni), and Giorgio all carried the second name "Grego" and thus were of Greek origin. "Franzoso" was French, and Giorgio Albanese from Albania. Apart from national specializations, and as has been documented also in England, in Milan the profession could run in families.¹⁰⁵ Learning within a kin group would have allowed suitable youngsters to hone their craft gradually, as well as being introduced at court at an early age.

Despite the prominence of the birds, dogs and kennelmen were also important, although we know less about them.¹⁰⁶ Good dogs always made a difference on the day of the hunt. Quite apart from the display of wealth and status, many dogs were probably needed to replace those

¹⁰²Several instances in FC 485.

¹⁰³PS 1483, for example 16 February 1494.

¹⁰⁴PS 1483, 11 July, 1498.

¹⁰⁵On 21 January, 1495, the count's buyer in Venice was waiting for the nephew (*nepote*) of falconer Nicolo Greco.

¹⁰⁶Galeazzo Maria, in need of good kennelmen, sent a diplomat to meet with King Louis XI's master of the hunts. He was sent two, Gugliemoto Franzoso and Guglielmino Franzoso, Lubkin, 1994, 90-94. Fine dogs were repeatedly gifted to the dukes, and sought by them, see for example several documents scattered through PS 1483, and FC 485.

that were wounded and maimed, or simply lost. The Milanese dukes had greyhounds (*levrieri*) as well as various breeds of tracking and scenting dogs, *brachi* and *sausì*. No doubt these animals needed good care also, but we may only imagine this along the lines described by the count of Foix, Gaston Phoebus, as nothing is revealed by the Italian documents.¹⁰⁷ What we do know is that the care of younger dogs could be assigned to commoners (apart from the tenants at Pavia) who were paid for their services. We may only guess at the quality of such care.¹⁰⁸

The incident surrounding falconer Pilato shows that the falconer was apparently also a skilled deer hunter. In an instance from 1467, a full contingent of falconers had between them 100 dogs.¹⁰⁹ Frederick II's *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* (p. 60) shows that falcons and dogs could indeed be trained to hunt together. On these occasions, the dog helped the falcon with large and aggressive birds such as herons.¹¹⁰ Falconers, as perhaps all huntsmen of some rank, had more skills than their title indicated. The duke of Milan's hunting personnel was a fundamental part of his daily life, as numerous letters testify to the dukes' constant concern with their animals, their territories, and their hunts. The huntsmen were also part of the image that the duke presented of himself to the outside world, and they were the material link between himself and his many hunting territories, all the while materially facilitating styles of hunting that heightened ducal performance of choice skills. For example, while the duke performed the final kill, it was the huntsmen's work and strategies that allowed the animal to be found and driven to its death. Such a level of proficiency did not come easily and involved the ability to understand hunting beyond just the dynamics of one's own assignment.

¹⁰⁷Tilander, 1971, 113, 141-42.

¹⁰⁸The tenants inside the Pavia hunting park, for example, were supposed to raise ducal hunting pups until they were eight months old and then presumably ready for specialized training by professional kennelmen. A document from 1409 shows a rather down-to-earth facet of this arrangement. The document fines one Francescolo called Malerba (lit. "bad grass") de Bossis a simple *familiare*, (tenant farmer) 100 *lire* because he had failed to buy his wife the "pretty dress" that he had promised her as thanks for her work caring and feeding the duke's many dogs put in her charge. By 1413 the man perhaps had redeemed himself as he is given 4 *florins* a month for the expenses incurred in caring for the dogs. Letters of 25 September, 1409 and letter of 13 August, 1413, published in, Santoro, 1961, 253; 306.

¹⁰⁹PS 1483, 7 June, 1467.

¹¹⁰Wood and Fyfe, 1943, 267-70.

By the fifteenth century, a richly articulated hunting apparatus was a *conditio sine qua non* for the princes in that circuit of European courts and rulers into which the likes of Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Ludovico il Moro liked to cast themselves, princes who had made the display of magnificence at their courts an instrument of power. This power was endorsed by the highest degree of wealth and conspicuous consumption that it could muster. Power, hunting, wealth, and pleasure all came together in the person of the duke of Milan creating a all-encompassing style of life that attempted to reconcile private and public, individual and statecraft.

3.3 WEALTH AND PLEASURE

Wealth and pleasure both served play well at the court of Milan where a strategy of procurement and consumption based on conspicuous use of resources drawn from a large, supra-regional, catchment basin was put into place. Hunting played a prominent role in this portraying the duke as hunter, pursuer, and leader. At the dinner table (Chapter 6), in the field, on the walls of their courtly residences, in public as well as more private exchanges, this pattern was repeated in endless variation.

A cultural characteristic of medieval and early modern nobles was that they did not work for a living.¹¹¹ The pursuit of pleasure was a keystone and overruling concern in aristocratic behavior, and the court was set up as a locus for its public display.¹¹² The hunts of the Lombard dukes were clearly for leisure and pleasure, so much so that in the contemporary Italian, *andare a prendere qualche piacere* (go to take some pleasures), was synonymous with hunting.¹¹³ This personal cultural prerogative could become a matter of state as the dukes became political

¹¹¹The classic exposition of this concept is in Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), for whom the task appointed to the noble order, the fighters of *bellatores*, was to fight, which was not work (for a living), but a duty, a sacrifice, and a privilege.

¹¹²For the various forms of entertainments commonly displayed in the Italian courts see, Giuliana Ferrari, "Giochi e passatempi della società cortese," in *La Lombardia delle Signorie* (Electa, 1986), 255–60; Lucia Ricciardi, *Col senno col tesoro e colla lancia. Riti e giochi cavallereschi nella Firenze del Magnifico Lorenzo* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1992).

¹¹³See for example the copy of a letter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Carlo da Cremona (then master of the hunt general) dated September 18, 1476, PRS 9, f. 101 r.

leaders, in addition to warriors. Both preambles to hunting legislation, and current state rhetoric, as that provided by Filippo Maria Visconti's (1412-47) biographer, Pier Candido Decembrio, present the heavy cares of the state that the ruler had to carry on behalf of the community as a fitting moral justification for the prince's performance of hunting. Decembrio writes, for example, that when Filippo Maria hunted, he clearly found "relief from his worries" and that when he was most intent on hunting was when he was carefully considering the grave matters of the state."¹¹⁴

The identity between the ruler and the hunter was not just a feature of the woods and streams. It was displayed to both visitors and permanent residents of the court on the walls of halls and chambers. Viscontis and Sforzas fully participated in that trademark activity of a Renaissance court that was the patronage of the arts. No less an artist than Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was asked to design a (never executed) pavillion for the duchess of Milan to be located in the park of that city.¹¹⁵ The dukes ordered frescoes and *trompes l'oeil* for public halls and private chambers of Milan, Pavia, and Vigevano castles and which depicted themselves immersed in the world of hunting.¹¹⁶ This visual delight echoed powerfully with the pleasure derived from actual hunting. One of painter Bonifacio Bembo's designs, intended for the arcade outside the duke's bedroom, was to depict "ducal pages and the stablemaster, Spagnolo, holding Galeazzo Maria's horses. Spagnolo may be waiting for his master to proceed to the hunt or returning the horses to the stable after the chase's conclusion."¹¹⁷ The *trompe-l'oeil* must have magnificently appealed to the duke's sense of theater considering that he, and his guests, habitually rode up the staircase of the Pavia castle directly to the door of their rooms. On occasions of hunts, the scene on the wall may have echoed what was taking place directly below

¹¹⁴Comincini, 1987, 140. Introductory remarks to princely legislation on hunting also frame things thus, for example, PRS 11.

¹¹⁵Azzi Visentini, 2007, 194-95.

¹¹⁶Hunting was so visually ingrained in aristocratic identity, that the dukes wanted themselves seen hunting even when they were not, on the walls of their palaces, Welch, 1990; L. Limido, "Il ciclo dei vizi e delle virtù nel castello di Masnago," *Arte Cristiana* LXXIII (1985): 385-94.

¹¹⁷Welch, 1989, 361.

them. In her work on the Pavia castle fresco cycle, Evelyn Samuels Welch comments that “such works appear as a familiar part of court display” not just in Milan. The themes were predictably common, involving chases, falcons and hunting scenes.¹¹⁸ When Galeazzo Maria commissioned Bembo to decorate the grand halls and private rooms of his two principal castles, Pavia and Milan, the duke planned to have himself depicted hunting with different retinues of falconers, personal servants, family members, visiting dignitaries, nobles, and friends. The extraordinarily expensive fresco cycle was never executed.¹¹⁹ Part of the Pavia cycle was actually executed, but nothing of its splendor remains.¹²⁰ Such imagery was not peculiar to the Milanese courts. The Medici of Florence, The Gonzaga of Mantua, and Borso and Ercole d’Este of Ferrara, all contemporaries of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, commissioned famous cycles of frescoes with similar themes.¹²¹

Apart from the public places of the walls of the palaces, the depiction of hunting-related imagery could satisfy a more intimate, but no less expensive, pleasure when it was located in for example prayer books, full of dogs, falcons, rabbits, deer, and natural scenes. A prominent example is Galeazzo Maria Visconti’s *Salterio*, or prayer book, extensively decorated by fourteenth century painters Belbello di Pavia, and Giovannino de Grassi. Other famous examples outside of Lombardy are the *Breviario* of Ferrarese Ercole I (15th and 16th century), the Bible of Borso d’Este (1455-1461), and the splendid *Breviario Grimani* (Venice, 15th and 16th century). The various *taquini sanitatis*, collections of information on the property of natural things and plants, could also contain them. Giovanni Pisanello (1395-1455), and Leonardo da Vinci, both

¹¹⁸For the fresco cycles of the castles of Pavia and Porta Giovia of Milan, see Evelyn Samuels Welch, “Galeazzo Maria Sforza and the Castello di Pavia,” *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 3 (September 1989): 352–75, and Welch, 1990.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 181.

¹²⁰Welch, 1989, 366.

¹²¹For example the mid-fifteenth century *Cappella dei Magi* in the *Palazzo Medici Ricciardi* of Florence, decorated by Benozzo Gozzoli, the 1472 *Camera degli Sposi* and the *Camera Picta*, all by Andrea Mantegna in Mantua, and the fifteenth century Ferrarese Schifanoia cycle, illustrated by Francesco di Cossa. Malacarne, 1988, throughout.

well-versed in the realism of Renaissance art and its emphasis on drawing, delighted in depicting both game animals and domesticated hunting assistants.¹²²

In matters of statecraft, wealth and magnificence came to nought if they were not displayed as well as shared. Munificence and patronage were requirements of nobility and power, an instrument through which a ruler distributed and expressed goodwill and cemented friendship. While gifts did not just involve game, or hunting related items, these were, not surprisingly, popular, both between family members and friends, and between courts. In 1458, Francesco Sforza sent sixty quail to his wife, Bianca Maria.¹²³ On 11 June, 1464 the grateful Giovanni de Caynis sent the duke part of the results of a hunt that took place in the Pavia park.¹²⁴ The dukes likewise sent animals captured by their huntsmen, such as the two pheasants that a young Galeazzo Maria Sforza's huntsmen caught in 1457 and that he had sent to his parents, or the five peregrine falcons that one of Ludovico il Moro's falconers, Francesco, had captured in 1461 and that Ludovico gave his father.¹²⁵ Gifts of hunting animals were much appreciated by the dukes and confirmed their status as upper tier nobility. In 1473 Galeazzo Maria was the recipient of a black greyhound called Falcone, four terriers, and two unnamed greyhounds skilled in hunting deer and boar. Their handler appears to have been part of the gift, sent by the King of Scotland.¹²⁶ Francesco Sforza granted his wife, Bianca Maria, an exotic gift consisting of three cheetahs, then much in vogue as exotic hunting animals at European courts.¹²⁷ The animals came

¹²²The *Salterio* is held at the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence where it is also available in a circulating fac simile. Bianca Maria's is held at the Biblioteca Amobrosiana of Milan. Images from both may be found in Erba, 1999, 44, 58, 72, The *Breviari* are held, respectively, at, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, and Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Examples from *taquini*, and the work of Pisanello and de Grassi's work are in Malacarne, 1988, throughout.

¹²³PS 1457, undated.

¹²⁴Similar scenarios, involving Ludovico il Moro, Isabella and Beatrice d'Este, Bona Sforza, and others may be found in, PS 1483.

¹²⁵PS 1461, letters of 20 August and 5 November.

¹²⁶FC 485, 11 November, 1473.

¹²⁷There is some evidence that these animals (also) arrived to Milan prior purchase in Venice, much like some falcons. See FC 485, 29 November, 1495.

with their caretakers, Bassano dalli Leoni and Antonio Parpaglione, who became part of the court in 1459.¹²⁸ The list could go on.¹²⁹

Entire hunts could be presented as gifts to special visiting individuals and they were an important part of the general celebrations lavished on them. In 1494 Ludovico il Moro had to organize a hunt for his famous brother, Ascanio Sforza, then a cardinal in Rome, and a dedicated hunter.¹³⁰ Ludovico may have been very flattered, or concerned, about the visit of the important prelate. He tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to organize what was a quite laborious (and possibly expensive) high point in medieval cultural construction of hunting. This was the *caccia alle tele*, a technique used in France, which resulted in the same type of hunt that the duke had organized in August of 1492 for Isabella d'Este (pp. 84-85).¹³¹ In this type of hunt, deer and other game animals were driven through previously established corridors of green canvas, stretched between wooden poles, toward a large enclosed area circled with hunters. We know from Domenico Boccamazza, a couple of decades later, that the hunt was then practiced at the papal court of Leo X, who, according to Gnoli, had introduced “the French custom” to Rome.¹³² Perhaps Ludovico wanted to impress his guests, or show the cosmopolitan nature of his hunting establishment. Importantly, he may have wanted such a hunt to ensure that both Ascanio and Isabella, important guests, would see, and perhaps kill, some game and feel they were honored guests. Given the uncertainties always surrounding the ecological behavior of game animals this was especially a crucial point when hunting became a matter of politics. In any case, In Ascanio’s case the hunt came to naught, because in July of 1494, the green canvas fencing apparently had been misplaced. This was unfortunate as the contraptions apparently were part of the standard court

¹²⁸PD 1457, letter of 30 May, 1459.

¹²⁹PS 1483, 12 September, 1492, Ludovico il Moro sends eighteen quail to some “ambassadors;” 16 September, 1493, Ludovico wants that a bear he had killed be distributed as gifts between several individuals.

¹³⁰Kruse, 1993, 245.

¹³¹For a discussion of the French version of the *caccia alle tele*, Claude d'Athénais, “Chasses aux toiles, chasses en parc,” in *Chasses princières dans l'Europe de la Renaissance*, eds. Claude d'Athénais and Monique Chatenet (Paris: Actes Sud, 2007), 73–100. The source for Ascanio’s hunt is a letter exchange between Ludovico il Moro and his son in law, Galeazzo San Severino of 3 and 4 July, 1498 in PS 1140.

¹³²Gnoli, 1893, 458.

hunting equipment. On May 10, 1491, the *tele* had appeared in another letter from Cusago in which a huntsman informed the duke that they were being mended so that they might be ready for hunting red deer. But in 1494 we do not know what kind of hunt Ascanio was offered in exchange.

The entertainment program of the Milanese court lends support to the now established fact that churchmen, and especially higher prelates, were as involved in hunting as were their secular counterparts. Milanese documents speak for example of falcon hunts on herons and cranes organized for “some cardinals.”¹³³ Gian Galeazzo Sforza’s (1476-1494) boar hunt of 1491 was more vigorous. The animal fought its pursuers who included an (unnamed) bishop.¹³⁴ The status of the higher prelates was matched by that of secular representatives of other courts, who were also entertained with hunts. For example, in 1460 Galeazzo Maria Sforza wrote home describing a hunt with cheetahs and greyhounds organized for the ambassador of the king of Castille. More prosaic, but perhaps equally important in terms of visibility and power, was a visit in a rain-soaked Pavia hunting park with some unspecified ambassadors in order to at least impress them with the layout and size of the park as well as its owner’s status, since the weather impeded hunting.¹³⁵ In all cases, it is clear that wealth reinforced play and leisure by allowing almost infinite possibilities within the realm of hunting. With all the socio-cultural obligations and meanings that the dukes of Milan had to negotiate surrounding their hunts, had the activity become an obligation, or did the dukes still have fun at it? Evidence shows that they did.

Pleasure at hunting was readily apparent in the dukes’ letters. The most prominent in this regard were those Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Ludovico il Moro, both avid hunters through their whole lives. The letters testify to the joys of a life of venatory activities.¹³⁶ It is difficult to dismiss their *piacere* as mere political rhetoric. The youthful letters are fresh and personal.¹³⁷ In

¹³³PS 1461, May 22, 1459.

¹³⁴PS 1483, September, 29, 1491.

¹³⁵PS 1461, March 13 and 6, 1460.

¹³⁶These letters are in PS 1461; 1468; 1469; 1483.

¹³⁷PS 1461 for Galeazzo Maria, and PS 1468 and 1469 for Ludovico il Moro contain the letters referred to all through this section.

1452 Galeazzo Maria, then eight years of age, wrote his father that he would do anything in his power to do what was expected of him and do it well, if only he could then have as many dogs, falcons, and horses as he wanted as these were the things that he treasured most in life. In the fall of 1456 Galeazzo described in detail some hunts with sparrow hawks. He appeared to be learning the art and mused over the cause of things going wrong, which caused him displeasure, and other features which piqued his interest and delight when they went well. In the summer of 1457 Galeazzo wrote several letters describing his days. He did not neglect his duties, reading in the morning, and going to mass, but he then might spend three hours just on hunting birds with dogs “until it is time,” he says, to hunt with the raptors, which went on until dinner time. As if this was not enough to make his priorities clear, he clearly stated that, on 11 August that (these days) “he hunted always with the greatest pleasure.” Galeazzo Maria did not disappoint his promising youthful beginnings as a hunter.

The youthful letters of Ludovico il Moro show a similar delight, not the routine of obligation. One afternoon in November of 1464, while the then twelve-year old Ludovico was at the castle of Pavia, two deer were sighted in a section of the hunting park behind the castle. Measures were taken to make sure they did not escape, yet one, “magically” disappeared. The chase was on. Ludovico was quick to jump on a horse but found no deer. In the meantime a strong wind forced the duke home for about half an hour, when the second deer was sighted again. Ludovico was again quick to his horse, and he chased the deer with dogs to some water, running not far from the park wall. He shot arrows at the deer, but some dogs escaped their leashes, and the deer crossed the water and took off alongside the wall. The dogs chased the deer for a long while, and the hunters shot more arrows at it until it decided to cross the water again. At this point Ludovico managed to pierce it through the ribs with an arrow, and the deer died not long after. Upon sending the creature to his father, Ludovico reported that, apart from the venison, he did it so that his father might “see all his progress and pleasure” (*per farla intendere ogni mio progresso e piacere*). Pride in the chase, and in the kill were evident beyond what can be simply attributed to doing one’s duty as an aristocrat. In the fall of 1467, Ludovico “hunted a

lot,” as he detailed in great length, describing all the raptors at his disposition. In 1493, a year before becoming ruler of Milan, an unknown writer, possibly his servant, wrote that he had killed a total of four red deer and two boar with “the greatest pleasure.” In 1497 duke Ludovico repeated this hunting pleasure in a hunt in which he killed three red deer. In fact, the duke was so pleased, his servant wrote, that he had no plans for going home.¹³⁸

It would be wrong to see the letters, illuminated books, and other commissioned art works as only strategies of power and status. While they were that, hunting, and everything around it, genuinely afforded many opportunities for pleasure. The dukes delighted in the results of an activity that they had learned all through their lives, with which they challenged themselves, and in which success was never a given, even for the duke of Milan. The rewards of spending time out of doors involved in an intensive physical activity away from the pressures of every day life were genuine enough, despite the cultural meanings attached to them. When they could not actually hunt, the dukes diverted themselves through the exchange of letters describing hunts such as those just outlined, or perhaps discussing the merits of animal assistants as part of the ongoing exchange of those.¹³⁹ Being recognized by one’s peers as a skilled hunter with great kennels and mews was also pleasurable. All these exchanges offered an important occasion for social bonding and political play. Similarly, the dukes hunted with friends, peers and huntsmen in pleasurable camaraderie, and more or less playful male competitive play, as Ludovico did one afternoon in 1492 when he was out in the Pavia *barcho*, “running some greyhounds.”¹⁴⁰ It is difficult to ascertain if the Visconti and Sforza were ultimately satisfied with the results of all their ostentatious play. What is certain is that their hunting apparatus also created problems.

¹³⁸The latter document is in PS 1483.

¹³⁹For example a letter dated 13 May, 1466, enclosed with two scent dogs called Else and Groto. Upon sending them to the duke the letter author discusses the qualities of the dogs. PS 1483.

¹⁴⁰PS 1469, undated.

3.4 PROBLEMS

3.4.1 Poaching, Stealing

Poaching may be defined as forbidden hunting. Whether practiced out of need or as an act of resistance, poaching it is not limited by social class. Trespass and abuse at the expense of somebody's game and/or hunting territories, while not technically poaching, carried similar meaning. Several scholars have analyzed poaching and status engendered trespass in England, articulating the various meanings it embodied.¹⁴¹ The sources available for Milan to do not permit the same level of analysis, and the actual motivations behind the few available documents on acts of poaching are invisible to us. The illegal procurement of a red deer in 1474 in the area of Vigevano that so incensed Galeazzo Maria Sforza that he increased the normal 100 ducat fine to an exorbitant 1000 ducats, may have been motivated by social revolt in an already rebellious municipality. By killing one of the duke's deer, the Vigevanesi were symbolically attacking the duke's own body. The act may, on the other hand, have been motivated by need, and the duke simply over-reacted.¹⁴²

The parks were, not surprisingly, a desirable target for trespassers, but it is difficult to make the point that this was just for the game they contained and not, rather, out of local resentment for the wood and other resources that they subtracted from the local pool. Duke Filippo Maria Visconti (1412-47) had only just died, when local tenants attacked and dismantled the odious wooden fencing around the Cusago park, while a different kind of rampage was taking place not far from there, in the capital. We know that in 1469, one Balada trespassed on the Pavia park by climbing its wall. We do not know what Balada was after, and whether it was really the deer. All we know is that he was caught and fined by then master of the hunt general, Carlo da Cremona. In 1474 poaching was however ascertained. One Barbirolo was caught inside the

¹⁴¹Hanawalt, 1988; Birrell, 1996; Manning, 1993; Miller, 2010.

¹⁴²Felice Fossati, "Rapporti fra una 'terra' e i suoi signori (Vigevano e i duchi di Milano nel secolo XV)," *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 1 (1914): 145–46.

Cusago park wall intent on poaching boar. At least that was what he admitted to under torture. Unfortunately his further fate is also unknown.¹⁴³

While the motivation behind Balada's and Barbirolo's acts were unclear, those of master of the hunt general, Antonio Tedeschi and the *podestà* of Giovanni Aliprandi were not, at least to Vaglienti.¹⁴⁴ Both men were taking advantage of their position. While they should have protected the duke's game they were also ideally positioned to steal it, and steal they did. Tedeschi repeatedly hunted quail with nets, and in potentially large numbers. Aliprandi was put under trial, and, found guilty, fined 100 ducats for having repeatedly hunted quail in the reserved areas. The small birds were relatively easy to capture and hide, and could perhaps also be unobtrusively and conveniently sold afterwards. The crimes may have also reflected a more widespread dissatisfaction because it appears that stealing on part of the upper echelons of the administration may have been common, not just for game. In 1452 then master of the hunt general Danesio Crivelli was also, as was customary, in charge of the tutelage and occasional cutting of the woods of Cusago. He was dismissed when the duke discovered that he had authorized illegal wood cutting.¹⁴⁵ In 1467 Carlo da Cremona showed himself no better than the thieves he fined. The high-ranking master of the hunt general devised a fine scheme to steal water, which he needed to irrigate his own meadows. Da Cremona was then supervising work in the park of Milan, where he owned some meadows. The park shared its water source with the *Ospedale* (hospital) of Milan. The institution sued the master general for theft of water. He adroitly defended himself by saying that he had not stolen the water. Rather, it was destined for the ducal mews, also located in the park.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³Babirolo was administered the punishment called *tratti*, or *squassi, di corda* a rather common punishment method at the time. PS 1080, 15 January, 1478. In this punishment the victim's arms were tied at the wrist behind his back, the end of the rope was thrown over a rafter or similar, and the victim was abruptly lifted up in the air by a violent tug on the rope. A law from 1477 put the punishment for poachers of fallow or red deer or boar anywhere in the dominion at four *squassi*, unless they could pay the 100 ducat fine. FC 485, undated document. The fine for poaching a hare in the Pavia area in 1469 was of 30 ducats. Vaglienti, 1997, 233, note 198.

¹⁴⁴Vaglienti, 1997, 200-201.

¹⁴⁵Comincini, 1987, 94-95.

¹⁴⁶PC 1483, June 16, 1467.

It is difficult to decipher to what extent the dukes were responsible for this state of affairs. Their intermittent licensing, motivated by obvious political convenience, may have made clear to many how impotent at enforcing their own laws the dukes could be. It may have had the effect of convincing both officials and lesser subjects of the wisdom of doing their own best interest. This seems the case for some noblemen, who were quick to turn an opportunity to hunt legally into one to poach. As discussed, in 1494, for example, Ludovico il Moro had allowed gentlemen to hunt boar in the marginal areas as they were “causing damage” presumably to crops. However, the noblemen trained their crossbows not (only) on the boar, but also on the protected red deer.¹⁴⁷ Such problems and discontent were perhaps endemic for the social elites of a Renaissance court. For the courts of north-western Europe, French historian Elisabeth Lalou argues that “the state of things in such a place was very fluid and organizationally unstable.”¹⁴⁸ Confusion benefited abuses. However, for the likes of Balada, illegal procurement of game may have reflected a very different kind of despair.

3.4.2 Missing animals, missing wages

If those higher up the social scale tried, as did Carlo da Cremona, to take advantage of their position to enrich themselves, some lower down simply tried to manage everyday contingencies, and pay their debts. 1467 was a telling year in this regard for head falconer Pietro da Birago. That year da Birago wrote the duke to the effect that he had no money to pay the poultryman who provided meat for the court hunting birds, and while four falconers had been given time off, they had not been given the means for their subsistence, nor that of their horses. In addition to that, and in connection with a hunt duke Galeazzo Maria wanted organized, falconer Pierino did not have a horse, and falconer Rizo had sold his to pay to cure his “infirmity.” Of course, they could not work without horses. The *uccellatori*, or bird handlers, were refusing to join on this hunt, unless paid at least some of the wages owed them. Finally, did

¹⁴⁷PRS 11.

¹⁴⁸Vale, 2001, 35.

the duke really want Pietro to arrive with all the *uccelatori* and their hounds (100 hounds and 29 horses)? Da Birago could not afford their upkeep. In short, could the duke please advise, and provide?¹⁴⁹

Lack of money also haunted the professional life of a head falconer working under Ludovico il Moro. The falconers were in arrears with wages, riverine birds had to be captured so that the raptors could be trained, and the *uccellatori* tasked with the capture of training birds were threatening to leave the head falconer without birds, unless they received their pay.¹⁵⁰ A particularly dramatic case of how unrewarding the conditions could become, even for lifelong employees of some professional standing, was that of falconer Niccolò Greco. Greco had been at court for thirty-eight years. Francesco Sforza owed him 2,000 *lire* in arrears on wages, against which the falconer had been promised a piece of land. Galeazzo Maria Sforza owed him another 1,000 *lire*, again in wages, against which he had been promised a building permit for that land. But by 1477, and with both dukes now dead, Niccolò had still received neither.¹⁵¹

Nobleman Bartolomeo Crivelli was exemplary in his ingenuity in devising ways to pay off his debt. Crivelli had incurred some debt while keeping raptors for the duke. These amounted to 395 *lire* for 1471, (accruing interest) and 300 *lire* for the previous year. In order to recoup some of the money he developed the idea of building cages for the herons at the Pavia park and stocking them, at his own expense. The birds were in demand because they were constantly used to train the falcons. If cages had been built, and if the lord liked the birds, Crivelli suggested that the duke buy them from him at the cost of one ducat a piece.¹⁵²

Employees on a court salary were victims of the malfunctions of the court, but had less personal resources than those with higher administrative positions and the noblemen to cope with their predicaments. The court “resembled a market, difficult to regulate, with constant comings-and-goings, and with a personnel which lodged itself where it could, to eat or sleep.”¹⁵³ Budgets

¹⁴⁹PS 1483, letters of 7 and 25 June, 1467.

¹⁵⁰PS 1483, 7 June, 1467.

¹⁵¹PS 1483, undated.

¹⁵²ADC 62 (Crivelli), undated document.

¹⁵³Elisabeth Lalou, as cited in Vale, 2001, 34-35. Lalou discusses the French royal household.

may have been full of good intentions and admirable planning, but were in practice subject to ongoing adjustments, for example in the case of war. Milan was not unique. The hunting staff at the court of the duke of Burgundy were similarly in arrears with wages in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁵⁴ Facing financial problems well-known elsewhere, Milanese rulers may have attempted to limit and regulate access to benefits and services to try to curb abuses. A falconer's missing horse may not be replaced promptly as it may just as promptly be sold again.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The Visconti and Sforza dukes of Milan established an exclusive hunting apparatus involving a permanent court staff. The dukes also appropriated functions of state administrations, officials of both center and periphery, and the labor of local populations to serve their pleasures. Through extensive and re-iterated hunting legislation they colonized a rich variety of hunting territories and its game for their specific use and, in the case of the parks, created specific hybrid landscapes. The metabolic footprint of their venery stretched far beyond Lombardy, through gift giving, purchase, and procurement of men and animals

Both in Europe and Milan, there was more to statecraft than hunting. Yet it is difficult to overemphasize the privileged position that hunting held in the highly specific ways in which the aristocrats practiced it. Mingling private pleasure with the exercise of statecraft, chasing, killing, and consuming certain wild animal species went far beyond procuring meat and practicing an outdoor activity. Through hunting, the ruler highlighted his unique and exclusive control over natural environments, wild animals, and society. Through highly visible, exclusive, and magnificent displays of hunting the duke legitimized his rule making both hunting and ruling part of the political rituals, performances which “organized the perceptions of those who repeatedly witnessed them.” Rituals attempted to habituate the Milanese to the duke's rule, because rituals are “ambiguous in their meaning, but direct in their emotional appeal. They present simple

¹⁵⁴Beck, 2000, 166.

absolute truths. They encourage a single course of action.”¹⁵⁵ The “simple” and “emotional” message conveyed was that of fear and awe for the distant, predatory, and self-indulgent hunter, nicely summarized in the image of the dark and moody ghost of Galeazzo Maria Sforza which opened this chapter. No such attitudes, or culturally complex systems of meaning surrounded the efforts of most of the hunters in the next chapter. In Tuscany rich documentation illustrates hunting done for a living, by groups of ecologically astute local inhabitants of hybrid environments, organized by their townships and economies.

¹⁵⁵Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 231, 233.

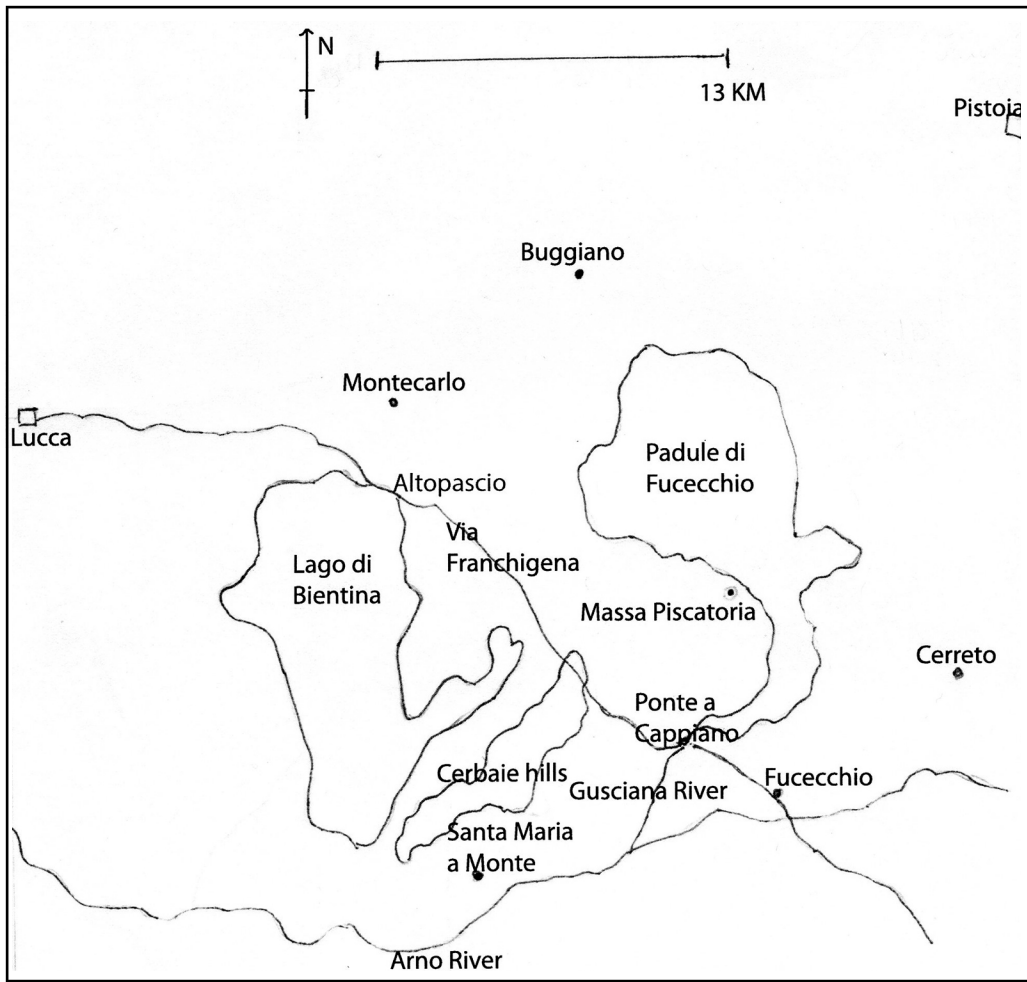


Figure 3.1: Map 3, Padule di Fucecchio area

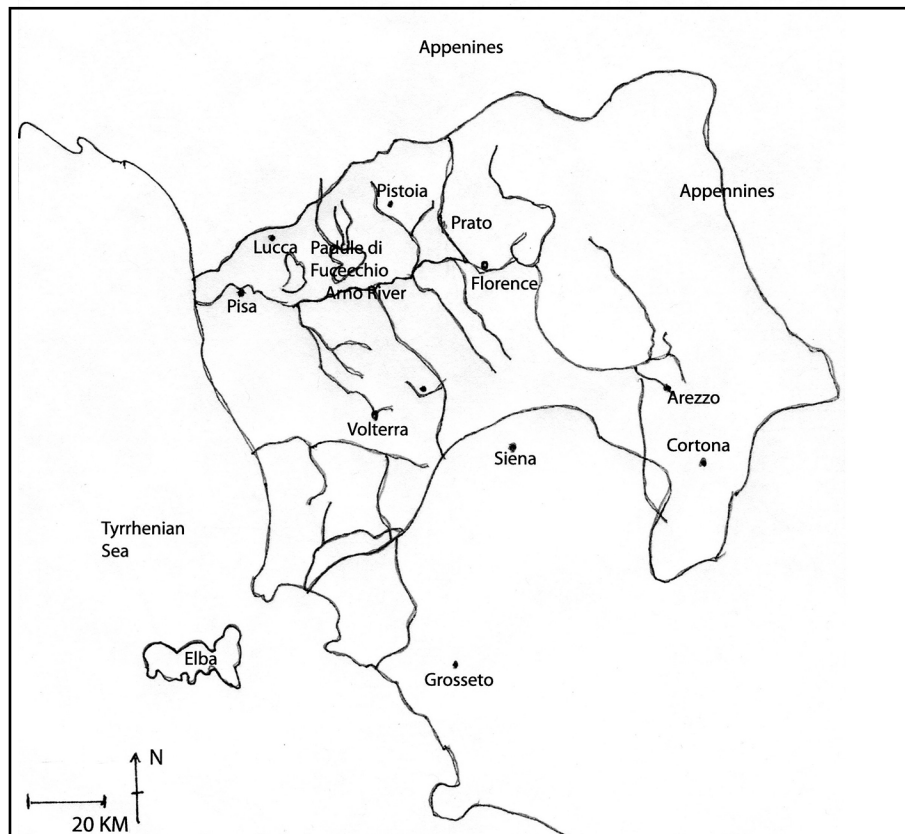


Figure 3.2: Map 4, Tuscany

CHAPTER 4. TUSCAN TRANSACTIONS. THE BUSINESS OF HUNTING IN TUSCAN TERRITORIES

On December 27, 1395, a handful of men gathered outside the town hall of Fucecchio, a small town in central Tuscany. The municipality was holding one of its annual auctions for rights to extract natural resources on town lands. The highest bid determined the licensing fee or *gabella*, payable to the town for each individual right. This 1395 auction specifically licensed its holder to exclusive hunting rights for roe deer in the Cerbaie hills, just west of town, for the duration of the year.¹ Rich in oak (*Quercus*), chestnuts (*Castanea sativa*), and sources of water, these hills represented good deer habitat.

After a few rounds of bidding and some coaxing by the town officials, the final bid was six florins and ten *soldi*, offered by a veteran of these matters, one Francesco di Lotto di Dini. Details of the event, mode of payment, fee, and starting time of the lease were all duly recorded in the municipal account books of Fucecchio to serve as future reference.² The event of the auction would have received little more than cursory interest outside the close circle of those directly involved. Nor would it have turned heads elsewhere in medieval Italy as auctions farming out the use rights for communal resources were also found, for example, in Venice. This situation contrasts with places like Milan where archival documentation overwhelmingly informs on aristocratic hunts, and the fourteenth and fifteenth century Visconti and Sforza dukes exercised political control through exclusive hunting legislation. During that same period Tuscany presents a more complex picture.

It is commercial hunts that extant Tuscan archival material records the best. Tuscan commercial hunting was a well-organized activity of natural resource exploitation, regulated through the institutional framework of Tuscany's urban-based market economy. This system

¹Similarly the distribution of the right to hunt unspecified ducks (probably mallards in and around the nearby Gusciana river.

²Archivio di Stato di Fucecchio (ASFu), Rendite e Proventi (RP) 286.

operated to link the end points of natural resources and city markets and is the main concern of the present chapter. This type of hunting for work was licensed by towns, took place in pre-arranged and fixed locations under the control of the municipality, and was carried out by local people using locally made devices. It seems that hunting's economic weight in society was modest. Not only were game animals relatively scarce and the size of populations virtually impossible to control, their meat was neither vital nor a subsistence good. Furthermore the activity may have been seasonal and complementary, likely to bring only a relatively modest revenue to its practitioners, compared to the revenues obtainable, for example, through pasturage, or fishing.

As elsewhere, game meats carried high status in Tuscany. For some decades there is some Tuscan evidence that the game animals of several locations were not just subject to commercial extraction. While no all-powerful *signore* yet ruled from Florence and no central organ had yet brought hunting under state control, elite fifteenth century Florentines such as Lorenzo de' Medici or il Magnifico and his friends participated in the same cultural and material framework as their Milanese counterparts. Once these men came to power in the sixteenth century ruling hegemonically from Florence, they were both well-groomed and quick to adopt measures of territorial control through hunting that echoed the Milanese practices discussed in the previous chapter.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth century, there is furthermore evidence that political elites such as the Priors of Florence, the eight governors of the Florentine Republic, used their political influence over municipalities under Florentine control to procure game meats for their tables. This expropriation competed to some extent with commercial hunting because it exploited the same animal populations. It shows how non-aristocratic men in power mimicked at least in part the ruling nobles' power strategies of territorial control. Finally some evidence shows that well-off landowners, both lay and secular, provided themselves with game from their estates. All this points to the contemporaneous existence, in Tuscany, of several differently motivated hunts.

4.1 TUSCAN ENVIRONMENTS

There were similarities between the hybrid landscapes of Tuscany and those of Lombardy. Late medieval Tuscany also contained numerous habitats favorable to game animals and birds and which were also exploited for a variety of human needs. The region had some of the most densely populated areas in late medieval Europe concentrated, as in Lombardy, around the most productive agricultural soils, in Tuscany namely those of the Arno River valley and its surrounding hills. Here production was based on share-cropping and organized around *poderi* (farming estates). Tuscany's more densely populated areas were relatively small and typically lay between zones of less dense exploitation. These involved the Apennine mountains, which surround the region, but also forested hilly areas such as the *colline metallifere* (mineral hills) located inland south of the Arno in the Volterra area. Different difficulties for human uses were present in the inhospitable malarial coastal marshes of the Maremma.³ More extensive land use such as pasturage, woodcutting, and hunting took place in these locations. Where available water was suitable for transportation, timber was extracted from the forests. The forests of Vallombrosa, dominated by their homonymous monastery, as well as those in the Casentino, Pratomagno, and Pistoia areas, all floated firewood and timber on the Arno to the shipyards of Pisa and the city of Florence.⁴

As recent scholarship is discovering, the secret behind both environmental and political resilience in Tuscany may have been in a reasonably wise use of a multiplicity of small-scale

³The term "wild" here denotes areas that were not just marginal in terms of agricultural production, but in which human settlement was less pronounced due to the presence of malaria, or objective difficulty of land reclamation. It is commonly believed, for example, that the *selva oscura*, the 'dark forest,' and its wild animals that provides the opening setting for Dante's *Inferno*, was inspired by the landscape of the Maremma, a vast area of coastal Tuscany. Both the "wild" and the "marginal" were equally good potential reservoirs for game animals. For some Italian studies of such areas, see for example, Gabriella Garzella, "Paesaggio dell'incolto lungo il litorale pisano," in *Incolti, fiumi, paludi. Utilizzazione delle risorse naturali nella Toscana medievale e moderna*, eds. Alberto Malvolti and Giuliano Pinto (Firenze: Olschki, 2003), 143–57 and Pinto, 1996. Marginal land, note 78 in the present chapter.

⁴Salvatore Muzzi, "Vallombrosa e la selvicoltura," in *L'abbazia di Vallombrosa nel pensiero contemporaneo* (1953), 143–69; F. Salvestrini, *Santa Maria di Vallombrosa. Patrimonio e vita economica di un grande monastero medievale* (Firenze: Olschki, 1988).

locally managed resources.⁵ Wherever possible even modestly sized chestnut forests, olive groves, and vineyards were cultivated.⁶ This biodiversity would have ensured more complex ecological webs with higher species densities, a situation that may have favored various populations of game animals, as well as stronger local economies. The town of Fucecchio, the location of the auction at the beginning of this chapter, is a good example of such a hybrid between natural landscapes and cultural programs. Just west of town, the Cerbaie hills rise a modest 600 meters. In the Middle Ages they were exploited for wood and timber, pasturage, charcoal making, and collection of chestnuts, as well as roe deer hunting. Just below them the Gusciana River drained the Padule (“shallow lake”) of Fucecchio into the Arno River. Its water provided the opportunity for fishing and fowling while its willow and alder lined banks offered good locations for grazing of stock. The outlet of the Padule at Ponte a Cappiano (Cappiano bridge) was a site for eel fishing. Sources show the presence of agriculture, olive groves, vineyards, and orchards on Fucecchiese territories. High on a knoll, Fucecchio’s location was strategically close to one of the Arno crossings, as well as the important pilgrim road Franchigena.

The diverse habitats of Tuscany allowed game animals to become part of the local market economy. They did so by being brought to towns to be sold. The *gabella alle (or delle) porte* was the duty or tax levied on all goods entering towns and cities both for personal consumption and for resale. Extant lists from several different Tuscan locations inform as to what municipal authorities expected to be presented at their gates as well as the duty on it. Apparently, the offerings could be rich and game species were amply represented. The 1391 *gabella* for the location of Santa Maria a Monte, not far from Fucecchio, is one of the richest in game. It lists boar, bear, and roe deer among the quadrupeds, “wild birds,” and quail, partridge, pheasant,

⁵Daniel R. Curtis, “Florence and Its Hinterlands in the Late Middle Ages: Contrasting Fortunes in the Tuscan Countryside, 1300–1500,” *Journal of Medieval History* 38, no. 4 (2012): 488–90.

⁶A fine, albeit idealized, depiction of such neatly compartmentalized and intensely productive landscape is the fresco *Allegoria del Buon Governo* (allegory of good government) painted on the walls of the *Sala dei Nove*, (room of the nine) in the municipal palace in Siena. The fresco was painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (c. 1290-1348).

“ducks,” and mallards, thrushes, blackbirds and starlings among the birds.⁷ We may not know exactly which animals actually went through the gates, nor in what quantities, but the diversity of game anticipated was significant. From the Apennines to the coastal marshes and from forested hills to river banks Tuscan environments supported many species of game animals and fowl in quantities sufficient for remunerative commercial extraction.

There is no denying the status and cultural weight of game meats in medieval Italy. As Chapter 6 will illustrate, individuals from all walks of life aspired to consume the gamey goods, even if, in some cases, they had to be content with the lesser and smaller species. The next section will illustrate the hunts of the Tuscan elites and establish their similarities with those of the Milanese dukes. It will also show how non-aristocratic political elites took it upon themselves to copy this behavior through clout, rather than blood, and finally turn to the main concern of this chapter, the well-documented commercial hunts of the Tuscans.

4.2 ELITE HUNTS IN TUSCANY

The rise of the Medici to rule, eventually replacing the Florentine Republic with a duchy, was accompanied by a rising interest in the hunt and its products. As discussed in Chapter 3, in the 1470s, Lorenzo de' Medici requested dogs and a falconer from his social better in Milan, the duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza while in those same years, and perhaps in an exchange of favors, the Milanese acquired Tuscan deer. The aristocratic game of hunting for play was on, and Lorenzo was a notorious participant. A poem entitled *Uccellagione di Starne* ('Partridge hunt') written by Lorenzo himself or someone in his circle in or before 1476, illustrates in vivid hunting imagery and vernacular intercalations a fictional warm day spent hunting for partridges with dogs and falcons, friends and huntsmen.⁸ Amongst the sounds of the raptors' bells and the dogs' barks, the group sets out early in the morning. The poem illustrates both high and low points of such a day including disobedient dogs and escapee partridges. Similarly the spontaneous and immediate

⁷Bruno Casini, ed., *Statuto del comune di Santa Maria a Monte (1391)* (Firenze: Olschki, 1963), 247–48.

⁸Paolo Orvieto, ed., *Lorenzo de' Medici. Tutte le opere* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 1992), 651–70.

reactions of the human hunters are rendered with all their ever-changing nuances. Fights erupt and are resolved among some, while others rejoice in their hunting success. It is the great merit of the poem not to idealize the hunt, nor its participants despite their high social status.

But long before the fifteenth century, Tuscan literary materials are rich in imagery and informative on the cultural assumptions underlying upper class hunts. As the *Proem* to Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313-1375) *Decameron* (1350-52) makes plainly clear, elite males routinely engaged in recreational riding, hunting, falconry, fishing, and gambling as a remedy for melancholy and as a distraction from painful thoughts.⁹ The documented activities of the Milanese, and Boccaccio's matter of fact statement, all lend credibility to a commonality of shared cultural assumptions between Italian aristocrats. However, there is more hunting in Boccaccio than the *Proem*. The stories told by the group of aristocrats seeking shelter from the Great Death in a villa outside of Florence included three tales that revolve around aristocratic hunting.¹⁰ In one tale, nobleman Federigo degli Alberighi is reduced to poverty by the stubbornness of his beloved. Despite these dire straits, his noble status allows him to retain his falcon, by which he can procure food for himself, and the bird, and survive.¹¹ To finally secure the heart of his beloved, one day he cooks up the raptor and serves it to her for dinner, thus, symbolically, committing suicide. The second story portrays nobleman Nastagio degli Onesti,

⁹Amedeo Quondam, Maurizio Fiorilla, and Giancarlo Alfano, eds., *Giovanni Boccaccio Decameron* (Milano: BUR Classici, 2013), 131. The attitude in the *Proem* is echoed by French attitudes. The French term *deduit* "includes the notion of both pleasure and distraction to the point that it becomes the word for hunting." Strubel and Saulnier, 1994, 127.

¹⁰Federico degli Alberighi's story is the ninth of the fifth day, and Nastagio degli Onesti's is the eight story of day five, Currado Gianfigliuzzi's is the fifth story of day six. 995-99. Quondam, 2013, 919-29, 910-18, 995-99. Mentions of hunting and falconry may be found throughout the book.

¹¹The falcon "is almost a physiological extension of its master: an image, conscious or unconscious, of the knight, helmeted [falcons wore hoods when at rest] and armored [with his powerful talons]," Cummins, 1988, 190. David Salter has argued how romances and from the fourteenth century "at least hint at the possibility of friendships between the human and animal world." In this case the bond is cemented and made possible by the mutual sympathy that arise in both falcon and knight because they both possess and recognize in the other party "innately noble, aristocratic characteristics," Salter, 2001, 95. Finally, in one version of *Legend of the Holy Greyhound*, the moment the knight discovers his mistake after killing the greyhound that saved his child from the snake, "in his fury" he also kills his horse and his hawk, thus to all effects committing social suicide. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound. Guinefort, Healer of Children Since the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 54.

who kills himself because he is not loved by the woman of his choice. As a consequence of this unnatural act, he was, much like Galeazzo Maria Sforza in Chapter 3, condemned to hunt as a ghost in perpetuity. For both noblemen, what in life had been the greatest pleasure is turned into eternal torment. As a further reminder of this shift in his status, Nastagio was to hunt not game animals, but his beloved lady, only to witness her being repeatedly ravished by his own hunting dogs. The third story, centered around Florentine nobleman Currado Gianfigliuzzi and his ingenious cook, Chichibio, will serve as the introduction to Chapter 6 and will be discussed in that context. It eloquently confirms the aristocratic status attributed by the medieval contemporaries to falconry and the consumption of the game birds it procured.

The *Sonetti dei Mesi* ('Sonnets of the Months') of late fourteenth century Umbrian poet Folgore da San Gimignano offer a lighter alternative to the darker repercussions of hunting found in Boccaccio.¹² The sonnets illustrate the pleasures of a youthful and joyful brigade of young idle aristocrats out to enjoy themselves. To do so, they hunt, and then banquet on the meats. According to Folgore's poem, February is the time to hunt deer and boar, July to eat partridge and young pheasants in jelly while September is the month traditionally dedicated to falconry. In October it is time to go hunt birds on foot or on horseback, and cold and damp November is perfect for sitting by the roaring fire eating pheasants and partridges, hares and roe deer. The group's outings and their happy camaraderie presage the account of Beatrice d'Este's outing to the Cusago park a generation or so later as they do those of Lorenzo and his huntsmen. The literary trope of the gay brigade reflected real activities and their practice. The darker visions of Boccaccio illustrate cultural understandings of the privileges, and the damnations, of the higher elites. Both signify to the paramount importance and pervasiveness of the hunting activity in medieval Italian aristocratic lives.

¹²Ubaldo Morandi, ed., *Folgore da San Gimignano. I sonetti dei mesi ed i componenti della brigata in una cronaca perugina del Trecento* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 1991). I use Folgore here, despite his non-Tuscan origins, because what he depicts reflects social practice elsewhere reported by documentary sources. Aristocrats engaged in hunting was part of depictions illustrating the range of activities that took place in the countryside. For example, see the fresco cycle of Torre Aquila, in Trentino. Enrico Castelnuovo, *Il ciclo dei mesi di Torre Aquila a Trento* (Trento: Provincia Autonoma di Trento, 2002).

Firmer historical sources on aristocratic Tuscan hunts await the mid-sixteenth century, when the Medici gained hereditary rule of Florence (1529). The Medici had learned well from their northern Italian predecessors. Almost as soon as they could lord it over Florence and its dominions, this power, and the lessons it brought, became apparent in the organization of their hunts and hunting territories. The boundary between exercise of power, hunting, and control of territory was indiscernible in Tuscany when in 1549, Duke Cosimo I de Medici instituted the first of their trademark hunting preserves, the *bandita* (pl. *bandite*).¹³ A *bandita* was constituted by a large tract of land put under specific legislation that reserved hunting only for the duke or those he allowed. Unlike a park, the *bandita* was not fenced, but were more like a medieval English forest.

Restrictions on woodcutting, prohibitions on fishing, and other resource uses were part of the special management over *bandite* lands. Any previous rights to commercial hunting and fishing were abolished.¹⁴ Echoing Lombard conditions, regulation of these hunting areas and its enforcement were integrated into the bureaucratic apparatus of the state already in place before the Medici came to power. The areas were policed by officials working for the magistracy of the Otto di Guardia e Balìa, and abusers were subject to heavy fines, as newcomers to power simply emulated those who had come before them.¹⁵ In the period covered here, however Tuscany remained different from Lombardy.

¹³Fauzia Farneti, “La legislazione medicea sulle bandite, la caccia e la pesca,” in *La legislazione medicea sull’ambiente. IV, scritti per un commento*, eds. Giovanni Cascio Pratilli and Luigi Zangheri (Firenze: Olschki, 1998), 95–117; D. Barsanti, “Tre secoli di caccia in Toscana attraverso la legislazione da ‘privativa’ signorile sotto i Medici a ‘oggetto di pubblica economia’ sotto i Lorena,” *Rivista di storia dell’agricoltura* 26, no. 2 (1986): 105–50.

¹⁴The *bandita* was an area in which *il cacciare, il pescare, l’uccellare* (hunting, fishing and fowling/birding) is prohibited or limited *per pubblico bando* (by public announcement). It was the *bando* that created the *bandita*. Farneti, 1998, 95. 1537 legislation by Cosimo I de’ Medici had already prohibited the use of nets and snares as well as crossbows and pellets in some of the areas that were later to become *bandite*. On pages 112–17, Farneti, 1998, maps the impressive extent and boundaries of all the Medici *bandite* for the duration of their existence. Kovesi, 2010.

¹⁵This magistracy had been created already in 1353. Originally tasked with the punishment of violent criminal incidents, it developed into being the Florentine magistracy attending to criminal acts and the policing force of first the Republic and later the *Granducato* of the Medici. No records of their proceedings remain for the sixteenth century, Andrea Zagli, personal communication.

Chapter 3 made abundantly clear the pivotal role aristocrats assigned to hunting and the status attached to consuming game meats. For the social elites, control of power and territory, including appropriation of coveted game meat products, were inseparable. As representatives of the governing guilds in the Florentine Republic, the Priors (p. 28) were the highest Florentine political elite. They were not aristocrats, yet the confidentiality of their delicate political tasks was so great that they were not to leave the municipal palace of Florence for the duration of their two month mandate. During this time, their high political rank put them under the cultural obligation to consume vastly of foods of equivalent standing. In order to deck their tables and nourish their bodies as was proper the Priors resorted not just to the markets, they demanded subject communes such as Fucecchio to send them what they required from municipal territories. Such compulsory extraction on demand is documented in the territories of Fucecchio, at least in the period from 1374 to 1443, and sometimes around festivities and special occasions when the need to entertain increased demand.¹⁶ Occasionally, and for causes invisible to us, the Priors paid for their game. So while in 1442 the comune of Fucecchio sent as gifts to Florence “roe deer and quarters of boar” (*cavrioli e quarti di cinghiale*), a year later, on 27 Jan. 1443, a payment of three *lire* were paid for one (roe?) deer. Monetary compensation notwithstanding, the Priors’ demands still pressured otherwise commercially hunted animal populations. Justified by political power, but restricted from hunting, the Priors expropriated local labor as well as municipal game animals to furnish the dinner tables in an attempt to mimic some of the behaviors and political patterns of the high aristocrats.

4.3 COMMERCIAL HUNTS

Commercial hunting was altogether different from its aristocratic counterpart. It was a market-oriented process of resource extraction, often municipally sponsored, and there was

¹⁶For example, on 20 September, 1379/80 the vicar of Fucecchio, upon prompting from Florence, orders the town to go birding, or *uccellare*, and send the fresh game to Florence. ACFu, Deliberazioni (D) 184. A “solemn” occasion prompted the request for quail, doves, and partridges with “as much abundance of them as possible.”ASFu, Statuti e Riformagioni (ST) 176, 6 September, 1389.

nothing culturally special about the hunting activity when it was part of the regular economy. The encounters between the hunters and the game took place in hybrid landscapes shared with other activities and users, and regulated accordingly. Within these organizational frameworks, successful hunting practice had to negotiate the behavioral ecology of species like ducks and deer within their native habitats thus affecting capturing devices, organization of labor, and compliance with current regulations on resource use.

4.3.1 The Right to Use

The auction from Fucecchio of 1395 which opens this chapter, was one of the earliest documented ones regulating roe deer hunting through the imposition of a municipal licensing fee, the *gabella*. In that municipality, similar auctions were also in place for fowling.¹⁷ But things had not always been thus organized in Fucecchio. As elsewhere, earlier arrangements for resource allocation were differently conceptualized, although equally binding. Ownership whether by an individual, or a lay or secular institution, as well as the right to use, which did not involve ownership, granted medieval individuals the right to extract natural resources.

Ownership and use right in the European Middle Ages were legally protected as separate entities although they could take place on the same piece of land. The distinction was between true private ownership as understood in Roman law, the *dominium directum* (direct dominion) reserved for example to kings and private landowners and the *dominium utile* (useful dominion) or the right of use, granted by the landowner, of a locale-specific resource such as pasturage, woodcutting, or fishing. Fief-holders also had *dominium utile*. As became increasingly the case in the later centuries of the Middle Ages, several individuals could hold use rights to different resources within a same area. This right was acquired and maintained through use, or by specific agreement with the owner. Holding such rights could be crucial, because they gave non-owners access to vital non-agricultural resources, wood, for example, and/or sources of income such as hunting.

¹⁷For example, ST 287, 19 March 1414; undated (license granted to Bernardo Miocini).

While prolonged usufruct could be upheld in court as an inalienable right, ownership rights might supercede it on occasion. Such matters underlay a dispute from 1215, involving the abbot of Buggiano, located on the north-east side of the Padule di Fucecchio, and five citizens of the nearby settlement of Montevettolini over the hunting rights on an island in the northern part of the Padule.¹⁸ There the men held a long-standing use-right to hunting, fishing, and cutting of wood. This state of things proves that this was an established way of distributing such resources on private lands in that time period, and that the resources were coveted. In fact, in the reported incident, the abbot was struggling to get back his hunting rights from five use-right holders. The prelate claimed he had papers to prove his ownership of the island. But the five from Montevettolini did not care about ownership. They only wanted keep their probably lucrative rights. The resolution of this dispute is unfortunately unknown, but it illustrates both the relative difficulties of the land owner and those of the legitimate users, who could see the investment of years of work evaporate in a moment.

A dispute from about sixty years later illustrates similar frustration. It shows how a little over a century before the Fucecchiese municipality's imposition of a licensing fee on fowling this activity was free and based on customary use-rights of certain locations.¹⁹ In 1276, it was exactly against an encroachment upon use-right that Alberto and Bandinello Lese defended themselves against Cursus and Natus. All four men were fishermen from the village of Massa Piscatoria on the Gusciana river. Here, as was common elsewhere, it was the fishermen who worked as fowlers, due to the similarity of the equipment, proximity of viable habitats, and matching seasonality of the two activities. In the 1276 incident, Cursus and Natus decided to encroach on the other two's apparently long held claims, claiming that anybody could use the location, provided nobody was already there. We don't know who was actually right. We do know that Alberto and Bandinello reacted vehemently, and with good reason. They claimed that they "and

¹⁸The incident is transcribed and discussed in, Amleto Spicciani, "Un testimoniale del 1215 sul Padule di Fucecchio," in *Atti del Convegno su l'identità geografico-storica della Valdinievole. Buggiano Castello, 24 Giugno, 1995* (Buggiano Castello: Comune di Buggiano, 1996), 183–202.

¹⁹2 December, 1276, in ACFu, *Liber Causarum*, (LC) 1958, c. 42 r.

their elders” had captured unspecified “birds” (given the location these were very likely ducks) at a location called Ponte Nueve (new bridge?) on the Gusciana for over twenty years. To their defense, Alberto and Bandinello also said that their right to this possession amounted to an “almost ownership” of it, because it had been earned over such a prolonged time.²⁰ Commercial interest in the animals was not stated in the document, but the prolonged use of the particular riverine site, as well as the strong response upon the threat of losing it, both point in this direction.

The name of the location suggests that the site was limited in size, perhaps a cove or reed bed or beach particularly favored by the ducks. Small size need not affect positive hunting results if the area was well-liked by animals. The right may have been defended simply on principle: a small area was better than no area. In Santa Maria a Monte, a *comune* on the Gusciana opposite Fucecchio, each citizen was allowed one “position” (*stato*) for fowling. As stated in the 1391 statutory regulations, the “positions” of the fowlers using the municipal river banks had to be at least 300 *braccia* (fathoms) apart, and so 400-600 metres.²¹ While this was a goodly distance it by no means represented exclusive access, especially since one could only hold one single position. Other hunters were sure to be nearby. This was more than likely a way for the municipality to reduce pressure on the duck populations and avoid monopolistic practices of a commercially viable resource. Regrettably, we do not know how many such positions the municipal river bank could fit, nor the bank’s actual size in that period, or that of local duck populations. Ponte Nueve may have been something akin to such a “position.” This may have been all that Alberto and Bandinello were entitled to, and losing it spelled the end of any duck hunting, perhaps even for their lifetime.

The decades after the Great Death brought environmental and administrative adjustments to hunting and other forms of resource extraction. The change was momentous. What an

²⁰The Latin reads, *ad ipsum* [Alberto and Bandinello] *pertinet the jure possessionis et quasi proprietatio*. LC 1958, c. 42 r.

²¹Casini, 1963, 212-13.

individual or group used to obtain and retain through a state of “almost ownership” simply by prolonged and customary use, had now to be paid for. On town lands at least, the ability to pay replaced continuous work in matters of resource allocation. An indirect tax, a *gabella*, distributed along the lines we saw at the beginning of this chapter, became the price to be paid for exclusive license to use the resource. Hunting licences normally expired after one year and could be held by a different person each year. In the process, the town became the landlord of its own resources towards its citizens. By demanding and accepting payment for the use right, the *comune* was also demonstrating its claim to superior ownership and lordship. This in turn seems to have prompted an entrepreneurial response on the part of the resource users who became a group more closely connected to the municipal ruling class. The process is visible both generally and in specific cases.

4.3.2 The *Gabella* and the Fiscal Policies of the Tuscan Towns

The historic *gabella* was an indirect tax introduced slowly starting already around 1200 in substitution first for the direct hearth tax, the *focatico*, and later for the *estimo*, which was a personal tax based on wealth.²² The system of fees payable to the commune soon became extensive. Municipal revenue served for things like roads, defense, and civic buildings which, with the brisk pre-1348 business and growing population, were only increasing. The big municipal money makers were the duties levied at the gates (*gabella alle porte*, p. 121), those on butchering, and taxes on wine and salt, which all relied on a large consumer base.²³ As a tax on consumption, the *gabella* spread the fiscal burden over the whole population whereas the *estimo* had been laid mostly on the shoulders of the richer citizens. For those at the lower end of the

²²For a detailed analysis of the developments of fiscal strategies on the part of Tuscan municipalities, see for example Maria Ginatempo, *Prima del debito. Finanziamento della spesa pubblica e gestione del deficit delle grandi città toscane (1200–1350 ca.)* (Firenze: Olschki, 2000); Roberto Castiglione, “Le gabelle nella Toscana del XIV secolo,” *Bollettino storico pisano* 73 (2004): 49–104.

²³In 1321, 1342, and 1352 this *gabella* represented 34,5%, 53,1%, and 48,3% of the total income deriving from *gabelle* for Fucecchio. From 1361 and for the next one hundred years, it dropped to between ca. 30% (highest) and 17,3% (lowest). Malvolti, 2003b.

social scale, the increase in prices due to the taxes and duties was likely an unwelcome addition to the economic difficulties of life.²⁴

In the development of the *gabella*, Fucecchio was probably typical. The town introduced the *gabella* system in 1315, the same year that Florence abandoned the *estimo*. From the latter half of that century, *gabelle* start being more systematically recorded in the municipal account books, although the documents are difficult to interpret and individual items are difficult to discern. Up to 1348, municipalities wanting to generate revenue from a more complete population base looked at consumption. After 1348, with a reduced population base, this became less attractive. Alberto Malvolti has tentatively established that the share of income from the use of natural resources increased conspicuously in the fourteenth century.²⁵ Not only was hunting now also subject to a fee, but probably to further augment municipal income, Fucecchiese town authorities disaggregated activities of resource extraction that previously were allotted together. In the fifteenth century, for example, the fowling right was separated from fishing.²⁶

No doubt, hunting was a marginal element in the fiscal balance sheet of Fucecchio. In fact, in 1395 the income from the *gabelle* on deer hunting accounted for a mere 1.4% of the total fiscal revenue.²⁷ In the post-1348 economy, with a reduced consumer base and a marked drop in fiscal revenue from direct consumption, this may however still have represented attractive revenue to the town. The traditional post-Great Death historical narrative involves a rebound of uncultivated habitats as a consequence of human mortalities and consequently lessened pressure on the natural environments. With a smaller population, natural resources, rather than people, may have now seemed attractive sources for economic revenue. Incidentally, the rebound may have given *Natura* a respite, and favored the growth and health of game animal populations.

It is possible to see the *gabella* on the use of natural resources as part of a larger strategy of protection of its citizenry and its livelihood also present in the *statuti*. Threatened from the

²⁴Malanima, 1983.

²⁵Malvolti, 2003b, 252-54.

²⁶From 1340, when such documentation starts, the right to waterfowling was simply part of the *gabella* for fishing. The first document pertaining to a separate *gabella* on waterfowl is in RP 287, 9 April, 1413.

²⁷Malvolti, 2003b, 254.

outside by the political schemes of larger cities and municipal neighbors, and from the inside by a falling population base, towns became more defensive of their resources and alert to their value as economic resources and bulwark against encroachment. Malvoti finds evidence for exactly this type of thinking surrounding the pasturage rights in the Cerbaie hills. The *gabella* on pasturage was put in place as early as 1355 as a direct consequence of increasing conflicts between the town of Fucecchio and those of neighboring Santa Croce and Castelfranco over public rights in those territories.²⁸ To the world outside of a town, instituting a *gabella* over a resource was a clear claim of lordship and distributed control over those same resources to the town's own citizens.²⁹ In Fucecchio's case things did not go that smoothly, the conflict went on until 1418, when new boundaries were finally set. Whether these strategies of increased vigilance ultimately had positive environmental consequences, must have depended on a host of factors, obedience to the law being one of them. It is difficult to argue for the town tax collectors being broadly and explicitly conscious of environmental matters.

4.3.3 The *Gabella* on Hunting in Fucecchio

The Fucecchiesi authorities instituted two different *gabelle* on hunting, one on exclusive roe deer hunting in the Cerbaie hills, the other for the fowling for ducks in and around the Gusciana. No records concerning hunts for bear and boar, quail or partridge survive, despite the fact that these high status animals were commercially hunted in nearby areas, and nearby towns levied the *gabella alle porte* on them. The town of Santa Maria a Monte, for example, located across the Gusciana from Fucecchio, and presumably including somewhat similar habitats, issued articulate statutory legislation in 1391 regulating hunting. Apart from ducks and roe deer hunts, Santa Maria's *statuto* regulated hunts on quail, partridge, and pheasants.³⁰ Yet on the Fucecchio

²⁸*Ibid.*, 257.

²⁹It was standard practice for municipal statuti to prohibit the use of its natural resources to foreigners. Such was the case, for example, in Volterra, Fiumi, 1951, and Lucca, Giorgio Tori, "Statuti, cacciatori, selvaggina e strumenti venatori in Lucchesia e in Valdinievole nei documenti di archivio (sec. XIV-XIX). 31a Giornata di Studi Storici sulla Valdinievole 'Enrico Coturri'" (Buggiano Castello, 2009).

³⁰Casini, 1963, p. 214.

side of the stream, the evidence for the hunts on these upland species consists only of one laconic document dated 21 August, 1395, in which one Drusus Johannis, from Santa Croce Val d'Arno put in a request to the town notary to "capture birds in Fucecchio territory with nets." The capturing device strongly suggests that Drusus' intent was commercial. Being a foreigner, he had to ask the town for permission, but the document does not indicate payment of fees of any kind.³¹ The inconsistencies are puzzling, but so far I cannot explain them.

Fucecchiesi ducks and roe deer were commercially distributed after their capture. Professional commercial fishermen doubled as fowlers in duck season. For them, such hunts were likely a seasonal source of income. As we shall see, this will also be the case in Venice. For the deer, the commercial intent behind the hunts was clearly stated. As the documents say, the *gabella* bought one the right to "use" the deer as well as the nets and snares to capture them with, or to "profit from the [deer] meat," or, in another instance, to profit from the "sale" of the meat.³² People exercising common rights were often forbidden to sell their take outside of the commune. For example, Tuscan towns of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries posed trade restrictions on grain cultivated within their territories. These restrictions were intended to guarantee an adequate supply of staple foodstuffs at reasonable prices for their own citizens.³³ Post Black Death, a reduced municipal income base and increased outside pressure would similarly have warranted measures protective of town resources.

The apparently small change in the way resources were allocated, from use-right to license, had an effect on the internal organization of those who labored around them, including the hunters. While the actual practitioners did not change substantially, their social organization did. Being the practitioner in a certain field was a lifelong vocation, and it is likely that certain

³¹RP 286, 31 August, 1395.

³²See for example, RP 287, 19 February, 1400, *usus et proventus capriolorum et sepium* (also in DA 357 in the vernacular); RP 287, 9 April 1414, *usufructus et prouentes dicte gabelle et venationes*; RP 287, no date (but between 1422 and 1430), *venditio carne capriolorum*.

³³W. R. Day Jr., "The Population of Florence Before the Black Death: Survey and Synthesis," *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 109.

trades continued to run in families.³⁴ The entry fee, and the annual tenure, were based on the ability to invest money ahead of profits. The requirement of the *gabella* added a new risk as well as expenses. The investor needed some guarantee of pecuniary returns and attempted to organize labor and production. Those who were not competitive in procuring the fee, but who still needed to work, had to put themselves under the investor. The resulting operational dynamics relied less on kin solidarity and more on notarized written arrangements articulated along the lines of *societas*-type contracts (discussed below). Although these were flexible, this system created much different working conditions and apparently resulted in some breakdown of social ties. Alberto Malvolti has argued that the “corporate solidarity” evident in the Fucecchiese fishermen’s trade in the first half of the 1300s increasingly gave way to a more individualized way of allocation of the *gabella* for fishing in its second part. While he did not observe an abrupt change in the groups or families that fished, he argues for what he calls a “loosening” of the “collective and corporative tradition” that had characterized them up to the second part of the Trecento.³⁵ In watching the Tuscan hunters at work, it is possible to suggest a similar scenario.

4.4 TUSCAN HUNTERS AT WORK

The restrictions and conditions so far outlined involving the commercial hunts of Francesco di Lotto di Dini, winner of the 1395 auction (p. 118), and his colleagues, put these in sharp relief against both the hunts for play and power of the Milanese dukes, and those of their professional huntsmen. The Fucecchiesi operated in an system increasingly regulated by their local municipalities. These hunters had to operate within commercial, fiscal, and political frameworks over which they had little control. In the process, they had to capture elusive game, always in the same areas, and, hopefully, earn a profit. None of these aspects were a concern for the dukes, who placed their hunts as far as possible away from exactly these limiting commercial

³⁴The document pertaining to the quarrel between the abbot of Buggiano and the men of Montevettolini makes perfectly clear that the fishing trade then was passed down from father to son, Spicciani, 1996, 198.

³⁵Malvolti, 2003b, 263.

frameworks as their power allowed them, and who established their hunting experiences and activities on a very selective and exclusive basis. Their professional huntsmen were limited in the range and scope of their activities by ducal imperatives and whims, but not by the strategies of local municipal councils. As members of the court, they enjoyed its privileges and suffered its problems, in a world in which everything, at least ideally, eventually led back to the person of the duke. Framed by their institutional context and the moral and social imperatives of their local economies, the Fucecchiesi were at least free from such personal bondage. It is time to see how they carried out their trade in the dynamic balance between game animal behavior and socio-economic frameworks.

4.4.1 Hunting Procedures, Birds and Ducks

Although comparatively less than what we know for mammals, the information on Tuscan bird hunts is important for two reasons. First it provides a sense of the scope of commercial medieval Italian hunting and insight into its procedures and mentalities. Second, since ducks were also hunted in the Venetian lagoon, topic of the next chapter, it provides a benchmark for comparing the approach to hunting similar species in two vastly different environmental contexts.

The gate duties levied on game birds show a roster of upland bird species similar to that of Milan, plus ducks (mallards most likely) and small-size species such as thrushes, larks, starlings, and blackbirds. Tuscan territories lay on a large European migratory flyway which provided these territories with the bulk of these smaller game items for consumption. More than likely due to their abundance and lower status, the evidence shows that there were no limitation on the hunts of these birds. In Lucca, the *statuto* explicitly allows even peasants (*contadini*) to hunt for them, provided they used their own nets.³⁶ Apart from with nets, the small birds may also be captured with bird lime, a viscous substance created by mixing the juice of berries of -----

³⁶ Tori, 2009. Those same *statuti* excluded the peasants from all other hunts.

mistletoe, (*Viscum album*) with water and olive or nut oil (in freezing conditions) into a spreadable paste. This may subsequently be smeared on twigs and branches concealed within larger stretches of vegetation in *ad hoc* setups. When the birds landed, the tackiness on feet or wings was strong enough to prevent them from flying away. The technique, which oftentimes involved a “call” in the form of a live caged bird, or a similarly caged predator (an owl, the Italian *allocco*, for example) was carefully outlined by de’ Crescenzi, although I have found no contemporary Tuscan evidence for the use of lime.³⁷ These methods would have been very accessible to those lowest on the social ladder. This would not have been the case for the *uccelliere* (sing. *uccelliera*, from the Italian word for bird, *uccello*) for which Tuscany became famous. The umbrella term comprises variously designed and sometimes very elaborate systems of large nets strung from trees in carefully landscaped areas and variously named *roccolo*, *paretaio*, *brescianella*, *ragna*.³⁸ Because of their technical complexities and requirements of land and time for the trees to grow, the systems became permanent landmarks, and, not surprisingly, they required good-size investments capital, time, and labor to organize and maintain them.³⁹ Despite differences of bird species and location, the general mechanisms of the various nets were similar. When unsuspecting birds flew into the attractively designed vegetation to feed or roost, they were captured in the nets that were strung out in the green thickets, and invisible from the outside. If placed in a favorable location, the system allowed for vast amounts of birds to be

³⁷Richter, 1995, vol. 3, 191-93 (lime), 194 (owl).

³⁸Paolo Casanova, Anna Memoli, and Lorenzo Pini, “I principali sistemi di uccellagione con le reti fisse: storia, tecnica e paesaggio,” in *Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Forest Management: The Role of Traditional Knowledge. Proceedings from the Conference*, vol. 1, eds. John Parrotta, Mauro Agnoletti, and Elizabeth Jordan (Firenze: Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 2006), 170–76; Richter, 1995, vol. 3, 187 contains a description of a version of a *ragna*. For use of nets in the gardens of the Florentine Renaissance and in the sixteenth and seventeenth century gardens of Lazio, Edward D.R. Wright, “Some Medici Gardens of the Florentine Renaissance: An Essay in Post-Aesthetic Interpretation,” in *The Italian Garden. Art, Design and Culture*, in *The Italian Garden. Art, Design and Culture*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43, 51-52; Desideria Pasolini Dall’Onda, “La Ragnaia Come Parte del Giardino Storico Nel Territorio,” *Informatore Botanico Italiano* 21 (1989): 54-55.

³⁹Between 1580 and 1590, prompted by military and political concerns, the *Capitani di Parte Guelfa* had wonderfully detailed maps drawn of the Florentine *distretto* with all its features. The maps are published in *Archivio di Stato di Firenze, ed., Piante di popoli e strade. Capitani di parte Guelfa 1580–1590* (Firenze: Olschki, 1989), map 577 covers Fucecchio where there were five *uccelliere*.

taken as many of the species thus captured, for example the starlings, live and move in very large, cloud-like formations. This Tuscan tradition would be developed, exported, and expanded upon in later centuries also outside of Tuscany.⁴⁰

The evidence of upland bird hunts and the environmental conditions suggest that these varieties enjoyed good habitats in hills of the Padule area. In Santa Maria a Monte, upland bird hunts were the object of statutory interest. Such hunts required registration with the town notary and a later payment to the municipal office consisting of “four fat quail.”⁴¹ There was no indication in the statute as to how the birds were to be captured. However, hunting could only take place in September, probably because it was after the harvest. The birds would have enjoyed the kernels fallen into the stubble, and no crops would have been damaged in the hunt. Quail migrate south in the fall. It is therefore also possible that September was a month with high concentration of these creatures in Tuscan environs, making hunting them very productive.

The conflict between Alberto and Bandinello Lese and Cursus and Natus detailed above (p. 128) offers a good example of Tuscan riverside fowling.⁴² The two, at their location at Ponte Nueve, worked the banks and both “in” and “under” the water. In that location, they “laid out nets to capture birds” (*retia tetendere per aves capere*) in conjunction with *escata facere* (make *escata*). Alberto Malvolti interpreted the latter as involving food bait, and indeed, Du Cange’s entry for *esca* interprets it as mast (*glandatio*), and so some form of food albeit for pigs. If we change the ingredients to grains such as spelt, attractive to birds, but retain the concept that the *esca* was food, the set-up, and its name, make practical sense.⁴³ Indeed, grain in very modest amounts was the fee due to the town of Fucecchio for the licence to the duck hunt.⁴⁴ Olina’s seventeenth century manual on birds and their capture unites the idea of bait with both water and nets, illustrating a system of nets operated from a distance, placed in a cleared location adjacent

⁴⁰David R. Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁴¹Casini, 1963, 214.

⁴²LC 1958, c. 42 r.

⁴³<http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camenaref/ducange/bd1/jpg/s0753.html>

⁴⁴RP 287, 19 March 1414.

to water, and provided with food and lures consisting live birds.⁴⁵ Once attracted to the spot, the unsuspecting birds may be captured by nets, operated from afar. Either way, such a set-up may have required some space around it to be productive, and so different users would not adversely affect one another's hunts. If this was the technique used in Santa Maria a Monte, it may have contributed to the 300 fathom rule imposed on their fowlers. Assuming Olina's version as the baseline, it is difficult to ascertain if a device was established on each hunting occasion or, rather, as seems more reasonable, left semi-permanently in place and only baited again before use. Theft of nets may have been a risk although statutory regulations sometimes specifically stated that it was illegal to take animals and birds out of other people's nets and snares.⁴⁶ Leaving the nets on location would have allowed the notoriously suspicious ducks to get accustomed to them and greatly reduced noise, landscape change, and disturbance at the time of set-up. The degree to which de' Crescenzi at least considered camouflaging an inescapable part of duck hunting was outlined on page 62.⁴⁷ At least at times, the *escata* set-ups would have created a veritable landscape of their own on the municipal banks of the Gusciana marking it off as a specific duck hunting environment.

In marked contrast with aristocratic hunting, the commercial techniques for ducks (and deer, below) were unobtrusive. While the contraptions altered the landscape, their location, permanence, and the ways they could be camouflaged, were designed so to the beasts' eyes they were all but not there. Exploiting the animal's naturally curious, but cautious, disposition, the various systems were designed to capture the birds without frightening them. For game animals and birds, fright resulted in immediate flight which in turn meant that the animal could no longer be captured, and might not return to the same area for that day. Unable to use hunting birds or projectile (or other) arms, and free of the aristocratic cultural baggage, commercial hunters had to engage the birds productively. This they did minimizing their own presence and that of their

⁴⁵Lacking any other contemporary references justifies resorting to this much later source. Olina, 2000, 165-66.

⁴⁶For example, Casini, 1963, 144.

⁴⁷Although de' Crescenzi in this case makes clear that the nets are to be set up afresh on each hunting occasion.

contraptions and attracting their quarry with various offerings of food, or apparently safe-looking locations.

4.4.2 Deer and Other Mammals

A hunter's first and paramount problem was to find his quarry. The difficulty of the task depended on the species. While ducks congregate in noisy flocks, easy to spot, finding the much more elusive deer may involve, among other things, the ability to read and navigate a landscape, detect animal signs, and follow a track. The Milanese aristocrats may have had the skills, but perhaps considered tracking and scouting tedious work or, simply, too time consuming. They employed huntsmen for this task, (pp. 2-3) or they enclosed the game (p. 85) for ease and predictability of access. Tuscan hunters had to do all the work themselves. Locating game is not the same as capturing it. Aristocratic strategies for hunting deer, once it had been found, involved chasing the chosen quarry with dogs towards its death by a hunter's hand at close or medium range. Aristocratic hunts were set up to be conducive exactly for this type of activity, which represented a large part of the pleasure of the aristocratic hunters. No such set-up would have functioned for a commercial hunter. Quite apart from the cost of horses and dogs, and the ability to carry arms, the fast and furious chase of a single (mostly) male animal for a prolonged period would have ruined any opportunity for future hunts in that area for at least a little while. It may also have ruined the meat. Finally, it certainly would have made poor economic sense, given that there were ways to capture multiple deer at once using nets or snares. Causing disturbance was no concern of the aristocrats who could hunt a different area the next day. It is clear that motivation played a large role in how different hunters approached environments and game through all the phases of a hunt.

To be economically justifiable, commercial hunting had to be repeatable, day after day, in the same general location which one had been variously assigned. Here success had to be at least highly probable, and involve a sufficient ration of animals to hours of work and size of investment to yield acceptable returns. When the *gabella* was introduced, it assigned a large

hunting area. In Fucecchio it specifically consisted of the municipally owned areas of the Cerbaie hills and the Gusciana and its banks. This may have reflected the municipality's recognition of the fact that commercial hunting for certain game animal species required territories of a reasonable size in order for the venture to be economically viable, especially in view of the fact that the exclusive right was subject to a fee.⁴⁸ By contrast, Alberto and Bandinello Lese only held the "location at Ponte Nueve," a more circumscribed area, while in Santa Maria a Monte, fellow fowlers could be as close as 300 fathoms from one single "position," (p.129) and in Sambuca (pp. 143-47), all deer hunters were mandated to organize themselves in such ways that they could all share a large territory.⁴⁹ At a price, the *gabella* allowed the distinct advantage of granting exclusive access to good size hunting grounds.

If the commercial hunters were to repeatedly find and capture their quarry, they needed not only a good supply of habitat, but also ways to limit contact between themselves and the creatures pursued. The aristocrats implied a not so subtle negative moral connotation in their definition of commercial techniques as "treacherous:" a duck or a deer may have agreed with the definition. The commercial hunters' techniques were morally neutral, but they did exploit animal trust, rather than animal flight and fear. When successful, these stealthy techniques blended into the surroundings and captured the animals with no hue and cry while they were busy carrying on their business (p. 62). The hunters' interference with the beasts could be further limited by enforcing repetitive human behavior in hunting locations which would have contributed to habituating animals to human presences. Contemporary Tuscan sources uniformly anticipate the capture of larger game mammals with nets and snares (*lacious* or *laqueores*). The individual contraptions would have varied in size and weight, heavier for the stronger animals.⁵⁰ The animal

⁴⁸For deer, for example, the *gabella* of 9 April 1414 allows *venationem capriolos et usus faciendi sepeo et laqueores ponendi in quacumque parte cerbaie*, that is hunting on roe deer and making use of hedges and placing snares in any part of the Cerbaie. RP 287.

⁴⁹LC 1958, f. 42 r.; Casini, 1963, 212-13; Spicciani, 1996, 197-99.

⁵⁰Nets, snares, and the hedges are indicated as the technique used in the *gabelle* of Fucecchio. RP 287, 15 May 1413; 9 April 1414. Nets are also mentioned in the documents establishing hunting societies in Lucca in the fourteenth century (pp. 160-61). For nets used for bear, Giovanni Sforza, "La caccia all'orso in Garfagnana nel secolo XVI," in *Ricordi e biografie Lucchesi* (Lucca: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1918). Count Gaston Phoebus discusses the making and use of a variety of nets, Tilander, 1971, 143-44.

was caught alive by getting entangled in the fixed device, or by moving something that caused the net to fall.⁵¹ Animals probably had to be driven towards the site where the nets or snares were positioned. Likely these were connected to places that the beast habitually visited, for sleeping, feeding, or drinking. Deer exhibit very consistent behavioral patterns outside the rut, making hard-packed trails through their territories for ease of travel. The hunters could have driven the ungulates down such trails, and/or set up snares in or around them. In stark opposition to aristocratic chases, this hunting procedure avoided direct confrontation, did not need to kill the animal, and was quiet. After capture, the animal may simply have been led away alive.⁵²

One reference to “snares and lanyards” in reference to the hunts of boar and deer comes from Nicolao degli Onesti, vicar of Montecarlo, near Lucca, who in 1408 corresponded with, and procured game for, the then *magnifico Signore* of Lucca, Paolo Guinigi (r.1400-1430).⁵³ As the hunting-happy vicar was simply supplying Guinigi’s table upon the latter’s request, he was likely less interested in large amounts of game all captured at once, and more in individual animals. His set-up would have been less extensive, but, in principle, worked just like the larger commercial ones.

There were several suggestions as to how the animals were driven to their capture. Here some of the commercial techniques intersected with aristocratic practices directly, and also with those of aristocratic employees. Occasionally the *gabell*e of Fucecchio licensed its holder to hunt with snares but also to make hedges (*sepos*).⁵⁴ Such temporary landscape altering impediments likely required licensing because the municipal lands of the Cerbaie were used by people other than the hunters. The hedges were reminiscent of the *tele* of the aristocrats (p. 109), types of fencing used to lead the animals towards a designated spot, sometimes perhaps fenced in. Where

⁵¹Falling nets, d’Athenaise, 2007, 74.

⁵²This was likely the way in which the Milanese huntsmen procured their Tuscan deer, which they then had to take back to Milan.

⁵³Giorgio Tori, “Carteggio di Nicolao degli Onesti,” *Actum Luce. Rivista di studi lucchesi* IV, no. 1–2 (April-October 1975), p. 55, 2 February; p. 77-78, 7 May; p. 79, 20 May; p. 80, 1 August.

⁵⁴RP 286, 25 April, 1395; RP 287, 15 May 1413, 9 April, 1414.

the aristocrats would have laid in wait with bows, the Fucecchiesi had snares ready to trap the unsuspecting ungulates.⁵⁵

The vicar Nicolao speaks of using his dogs. Finding and tracking deer (and other animals) with the aid of dogs was a technique also carefully described by Gaston Phoebus.⁵⁶ Hunting dogs were not necessarily an exclusive aristocratic prerogative although the Milanese aristocrats did try to make them so. Certainly their huntsmen used them, for example in boar hunts.⁵⁷ In Tuscany there is some evidence that even the lesser sort, for example the citizen hunters of Sambuca, near Pistoia, could employ dogs in local hunts on municipal territories.⁵⁸

These hunts required a good knowledge of the environment, good timing, good tracking skills, and much work. The conditions of habitats and animal population had to be ascertained, as well as the animals' habits within those environment. Once the route to their capture had been laid out, it had to be established by setting up snares and perhaps hedges. In the latter case, this created a temporarily constructed landscape, designed for hunting. During the hunt excessive noise was to be avoided as the game could be nearby. On the day of the hunt, it was furthermore necessary to move in with sufficient manpower to drive the animals efficiently to their capturing destination. It was a delicate process. Mistakes would be paid for with a missed hunt, wasted time and effort, and frightened game. The coordinated commitment of all involved was important, for once the hunt was underway, it had to be completed for the final result to take place.

⁵⁵Neither Boccamazza nor de' Crescenzi concern themselves with nets and snares for larger mammals. For the Bolognese such game was simply not within reach, and not part of the hunts required or permitted within the context of an agricultural estate. Boccamazza's hunters were noblemen and fully entitled to large game mammals which they hunted on horseback with dogs everywhere they liked in the open countryside. The only containing device that the master hunter describes are the *tele*. Innamorati, 1965, 420-24.

⁵⁶Tilander, 1971, 162-176, for a vivid rendition of catching deer (and hares and boar) with snares and nets, 252.

⁵⁷Archivio di Stato di Milano, (ASMi), Potenze Sovrane (PS) 1483, undated, 1497.

⁵⁸Manila Soffici, ed., *Lo Statuto della Sambuca (1291-1340)* (Pisa: Pacini, 1996), 98.

4.4.3 Socio-Economic Frameworks

Medieval hunting and medieval commerce had one thing in common, risk. Hunting was uncertain business in which animal behavior had to be negotiated by a carefully laid out and executed human plan, adapted to local conditions. For all that, things could still go wrong. In commerce and trade, almost anything from marauding pirates to untrustworthy investment partners could ruin a deal. Commercial hunting minimized risk by the employment of organizational strategies some of which were modeled upon an understanding of animal, as well as human, behavior, and some modeled upon those of commerce and trade. This section outlines risks and the ways in which medieval hunters negotiated them.

The *Statuto della Sambuca*, a location near the larger town of Pistoia, north-west of Florence, is a good place to find Tuscan hunters' ecological understanding in matters of hunting.⁵⁹ The town's geographical location, and the amount of information on hunting contained in the *statuto* indicate that its territories may have contained good hunting grounds and that this was a fairly widespread activity among the town's citizens. Chapters 166, 167, and 168 of the Sambuchese municipal regulations pertain to hunting.⁶⁰ The first one simply states that the bishop was entitled to receive *regalia* rights on the first roe deer, boar, and bear of the year. All three species were apparently proficiently hunted in the area's habitats. The other two chapters outline the municipal framework for hunting. Geared towards optimizing the hunting result, the regulations were concerned with reducing risk, providing and organizing sufficient labor supply, enforcing social cohesiveness, and avoiding wasted time and game.

Sambuca's hunts were apparently citizen hunts, not subject to fees, although likely practiced for some profit. Those who wanted to hunt, had to join together in a society (*societas*) and elect one or two captains who were to supervise the hunting activities, and make sure that the society's internal regulations were respected by all members. No Sambuchese citizen under the legal age of fourteen could participate, but the *societas* had to accept anybody above that age.⁶¹

⁵⁹Maps 3 and 4, Padule di Fucecchio area and Tuscany.

⁶⁰Soffici, 1996, 98-99.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 98.

With this, the *comune* was exercising social control. While the contemporaneous existence of several collectives does not appear to have been problematic, hunting without being included in one was. The idea seems to have been that if everybody operated within one such collective agreement, the different groups, or the individuals one such group, could co-ordinate. Less mutual interference would limit the chances for unnecessarily frightened game, ruined hunts and hunting equipment, and perhaps, even, causing harm to other hunters. Compulsory participation ensured that no individual out hunting on his own could unwittingly, or not, ruin the success of everybody else. Protection of the animal population from over-hunting and limiting poaching may also have been part of the motivations behind the statutory chapter.

Chapter 166 lists boar, bear, and roe deer as anticipated *regalia* to the bishop thus suggesting (but not stating) the employment of nets and snares. Presumably these were owned, and maybe made, by the hunters themselves. This situation was common among fishermen. In contrast with acknowledged practice in Fucecchio, there is no mention of hedges or other types of fencing anywhere in the Sambuchese *statuto*. As part of social control, the *comune* organized the labor around the hunt, ensuring participation and commitment of all, pending distribution of game meat, the “hunter’s share” (*partem pro cacciatorem*).⁶² Anyone who “found” an animal “and chased it” had a right to that animal alongside the other members of his collective. Even somebody who joined the hunt after the formation of the *societas* had a right to his share “if he was present when the animal was killed” or “before the animal was moved from its place of capture.”⁶³ Apparently the formation of the *societas* could be an impromptu affair. In view of that possibility, the aim of this rule was to ensure that even those stepping in at the last minute, only received a part if they worked for it. We don’t know whether the Sambuchese game was field dressed and/or butchered in place, or whether it was brought out on the hoof. Aristocratic practice, which involved killing the animal in the field, would of course have needed to dress it

⁶²I have not been able to ascertain what the hunter’s share involved. Animals were divided according to pre-established rules in English aristocratic hunts, but it is impossible to determine how much of these criteria carried over into commercially motivated hunts, Sykes, 2007b.

⁶³Soffici, 1996, 99.

immediately afterwards so the meat would not spoil, but not so commercial hunters who took animals in nets and snares. That field dressing (and so actual killing) may have been involved, and which would have reduced the total weight of the animal to be carried out, is suggested from the last rule of chapter 167. It mandates that whoever “raised” a deer, boar, or bear had a right to its viscera.⁶⁴ “Raising,” whether unintentional or not, was useful enough in a hunt, and so deemed worthy of at least a small recompense. The choice of the viscera as such a recompense may suggest that Sambuchese acts of “raising” involved dogs. In the aristocratic hunts described in the manuals, the viscera were served up with bread on the game animal’s skin as a recompense to the hunting dogs. The shorter shelf life of the viscera compared to that of the meat may have made it impractical to sell on the markets unless the animals were slaughtered right there. If the deer were field dressed and/or butchered in the woods the entrails may have been eaten by the hunters themselves (or their dogs) and only the meat sold at market.⁶⁵ Both butchering and subsequent field dressing, and the walking out of the deer involved unpopular, strenuous, and dirty work at the end of a long day of activity when the hunters may have been wet, hungry, and tired. The rule clearly is targeted to ensure the presence of necessary labor through all the phases of the hunt.

It is not possible to know with certainty when any of the Tuscan hunts took place. There is evidence for English deer being hunted in the summer, when they were fattest, although late fall and winter temperatures may have helped preserve the meat, which otherwise had to be either quickly eaten or salted. There is currently no Tuscan evidence of the latter practice. Tracking of live or wounded animals would be facilitated by a snow covered ground, not unlikely on the foothills of the Appennine range, but would create more difficult conditions for the hunters and it remains questionable much this type of activity really mattered in a hunt with nets and snares. We know from Chapter 168 that at least winter hunting took place around Sambuca, because in

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ For preparation of innards, although not of wild animals, Enrico Carnevale Scianca, *La cucina medievale. Lessico, storia, preparazioni* (Firenze: Olschki, 2011), 314-15.

winter, hunters were mandated to wear boots. As another safety measure, somebody who went home before the captain of his *societas* had declared the hunt over, would receive no part of the spoils.⁶⁶ Early returns could disturb or divert the game and may leave insufficient manpower on the ground. Getting lost going home alone might have been a possibility, and a worse proposition in inclement cold weather.

In winter the Sambuchesi hunters were prohibited from using dogs other than mastiffs, greyhounds and “hare dogs.” It is admittedly difficult to interpret this part of the regulation. The use of the “hare-dogs” is the most clear-cut. The canines were used to chase hares presumably towards some fixed capturing devices. Greyhounds run prey down by eyesight. The heavy mastiffs were attack dogs, used to keep animals at bay before the arrival of the hunters. The conspicuously missing breed were the medium- to large-sized hounds, or lymers, (*limieri*) normally used for tracking and finding deer by scent. These dogs were very visible in aristocratic kennels because the dynamic of the *chasse par force* mandated that the trophy stag be located early in the day and tracked and driven with dogs all through the day to its death. Such scenting capabilities may or may not have been necessary for deer hunts that used nets. A good hunter, knowledgeable of the territory, can indeed find the deer quietly, and without the aid of dogs. Once found, it would have been a matter of driving the animals, slowly so as to control their direction of travel, towards the nets. Dogs, unless leashed, would not have been slow, nor quiet, drivers. In fact, in aristocratic hunts, hue and cry was part of a hunting procedure. Present-day trackers of game with dogs inform that when leashed and on a scent trail, large dogs would have been very taxing for a person to follow through vegetation and/or snow. The absence of the lymers and hounds may simply be due to the fact that the Sambuchesi simply had no use for them. The rule, and the dogs it allowed, then suggest that what the townspeople hunted in the winter were boar (and hares, bear would have been hibernating). In these hunts, unleashed greyhounds would run the boar down as did the hare dogs with hares and the heavy mastiffs

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

would have kept the boar at bay until the arrival of the hunters. Not allowing deer hunting in winter may have helped the ungulate populations. Deer's pointed hooves at the end of long, spindly legs, make the animals sink in snow, and depending on snow depth, the animals may end up helplessly caught. In any case, movement in snow requires much expenditure of energy when food is already scarce. Letting the animals (and hunter) rest, and hunting them when they were healthily fat in the summer, may have benefited everyone.

The chapters on hunting of the *Statuto della Sambuca* clearly recognize the technical and ecological requirements of the hunt for large mammals. They match these by organizing human strategies so as to maximize the hunting success and create social cohesion and safe conditions amongst the hunters. Undue pressure on the animals was limited while sufficient manpower for the work at hand was ensured all through the hunt through incentives in the form of game meat. Overall, the chapters reduce as much as possible the risks of hunting of individuals on communal lands.

Fucecchio's records for the hunting *gabella* help uncover some of the social implications and frameworks of these hunts. One trend was the recurrence of certain names among those obtaining the licence. For example, Nanni Blasi, or Blaxi, was relatively prominent among the license holders. He obtained it three times between 1405 and 1422, or four, if he was that Nanni di Biagio who held it in 1412. Nanni participated in auctions for other resources as well. A handful of surnames occur in the records, not always attached to the same first name: Lotti and Lotti Dini, Michaelis, Guiduccini, and Mani. Some of these surnames recur amongst the fishermen/fowlers also, mostly before the institution of the (separate) *gabella* on fowling, and, in the case of Simon Mani, also twice after.⁶⁷ The same trend is observable among the fishermen. Meucci and Orlandini, for example, are recurrent surnames among the fishermen of the first half of the fifteenth century.⁶⁸ In both trades it seems clear that certain clans, or families,

⁶⁷PR 287. Mani paid for he deer *gabella* on 6 January, 1409 and in an undated instance in the early 1400s, and for waterfowling in 1413 and on 19 March, 1414. Guiduccini paid the tax to hunt deer in 1410 and on 9 April, 1413.

⁶⁸Malvolti, 2003b, 265.

monopolized the activity passing down generations the knowledge, practice, and use of local territories involved or what environmental historians call traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).⁶⁹ This type of knowledge relies on locale-specific experiential learning over time and acquired through work. It is transmitted orally within the group, and not through a self-conscious written tradition, and it is fostered by practice within a kin group as well as continuous practice within a given location. The individuals listed as *gabeller*-holders may have been better-off members of families already involved in the trade before the institution of the *gabeller* and who were able to bear the additional cost. For example, the text of the deer hunting *gabeller* assigned in 1414 stated that the licence was given to Nanni Guiduccini *per se et alios*, “for himself and others.”⁷⁰ Those “others” were likely other hunters part of existing (kin) groups associated with Nanni but who remain invisible in the sources. A more remote possibility involved that the licence could be sublet, although I have found no evidence of this anywhere. In this case, Nanni Guiduccini would have made his money as a kind of tax farmer.

The *gabeller* record also makes visible the involvement of some individuals with several different activities of resource extraction, consisting of a veritable “portfolio.” For example, Simon Mani held the licence for hunting and waterfowling. Nanni Blasi shared his 1412 hunting license with a member of the fishing clan of the Orlandini. Blasi, here as in 1412 nicknamed “Boldrino,” and Antonio di Meuccio di Guiduccini (Meucci clan, also recorded as fishermen), obtained the license for pasturage in the Cerbaie hills. Antonio also obtained the license for pasturage in 1418.⁷¹ This recurrence in the tax-records confirms that a small group of men had consistently tied their fortunes to diversified investing in non-agricultural resource extraction in

⁶⁹Charles R. Menzies, ed., *Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Natural Resource Management* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Zsolt Molnár, Bartha Sándor, and Dániel Babai, eds, “Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a Concept and Data Source for Historical Ecology, Vegetation Science and Conservation Biology: A Hungarian Perspective,” in *Human Nature. Studies in Historical Ecology and Environmental History*, eds Péter Szabó and Radim Hédl (Brno, Czech Republic: Institute of Botany of the ASCR v.v.i., 2008), 14–27.

⁷⁰RP 287, 9 April, 1414.

⁷¹The examples for the Boldrino, Antonio and the Meucci family are discussed in Malvolti, 2003a, 265.

contiguous environments. This is confirmed by the fact that they sometimes acted as warrant (*fides*) for one another as when, on 6 January, 1409, Michele Meucci did for Simon Mani.⁷²

The strategy of continuous use among members of a close group was practical, it prevented access to outsiders to precious resources, and insured that local knowledge stayed local. It allowed these men to know one another over a period of time, develop trust in each other, and fully utilize a common pool of ecological and material knowledge. An individual familiar with the Cerbaie as a hunter, would likely have enough local knowledge to be able to manage the pasturage in that same area. In fact, in this specific case it may have been an advantage, especially if hedges were to be involved because the two activities could be coordinated in ways that were not detrimental to either deer or cows.⁷³ Complementary seasonality between some activities such as fishing and fowling, would also have helped efficient management of the extraction of different resources as well as time and equipment. Nets, albeit differently designed and used, served to capture fish as well as ducks. Italian historian Andrea Zagli perceptively noted that in the early modern period, knowledge of seasonal variation within specific environments, for instance wet areas, allowed local practitioners to develop what he calls *multiprofessionalità* (multi-professionals skills) in their work environments. As a consequence, these practitioners were aware of all the possible resources of those environments, whether they extracted them or not.⁷⁴ And so, for example, fishermen would know about the presence and habits of the fowl as shepherds would the habits of the local deer, both would know about the presence of certain plants, weather patterns and and much more. It may well be that none of the individual activities were profitable enough to grant the practitioner a livelihood, but their sum total may be. For example, the documented collection of the “serretta” (*Serratula tinctoria*) an herb used for yellow dye for wool was subject to a municipal license, and was just such an item.⁷⁵ Zagli argues for the presence of individuals who made their living through the successful

⁷²RP 287.

⁷³Stock and deer may have competed for browse, especially in coppiced areas, but we remain ignorant as to Tuscan (or other) strategies to coordinate or monitor the two sets of ungulate browsing.

⁷⁴Zagli, 2003, 185.

⁷⁵Information on the *serretta* is in Malvolti, 2003b, 267.

practice of several oftentimes seasonal activities within the same marginal and non-agricultural environments.⁷⁶ The evidence suggests this may have been a possible scenario for medieval Tuscan hunters also.

While the documents show consistencies in user groups and individuals in time, it is impossible to pinpoint specific social relationship. However, as hunting became regulated by payment of a licence, it is possible to hypothesize that access to the *gabella* (notwithstanding local resource knowledge) may have hinged upon influences with the local notables and the more affluent investors, who likely had a lot in common. What is visible in the documents pertaining to the more culturally and materially prominent fishing activity, which also extracted larger amount of animal protein, is that local knowledge of people, family alliances, and traditions of office-holding may have had something to do with who did, and didn't, get to participate in the auctions. For example in the first two decades of the fifteenth century, several fishermen were both recipients of the *gabella* for fishing, and listed among Fucecchio's public officials.⁷⁷ These men owned lands and houses, and obtained also other lucrative licenses. Increasing costs involved with the right to fish pushed out less financially endowed participants and created a clan of almost professional investors in municipal licences. For the less lucrative hunting, the recurrence of names such as Locti Dini, Simon Mani, or Nanni Guiduccini suggest a similar pattern.

4.4.4 Commercialization

By the tenth century, commerce had become a common characteristic of medieval life. By the thirteenth, increasing volumes of trade all over Latin Christendom had led to a

⁷⁶The classic outlook on the concept of marginal land is Mark Bailey, "The Concept of the Margin in the Medieval English Economy," *The Economic History Review* 42, no. 1 (February 1989): 1–17. See also G.M. Peterson and J.K. Galbraith, "The Concept of Marginal Land," *Journal of Farm Economics* 14, no. 2 (1932): 295–310. For a positive outlook on the use of marginal lands in Tuscany see Curtis, 2012, 472-99, and for a more traditional view which based the construction of a successful regional economy upon the integration of an agricultural countryside with the economic and political demands of the city, Malanima, 1983. Finally, for considerations on Fucecchio as a marginal area but with heavy political and strategic weight, Malvolti, 2004.

⁷⁷Malvolti, 1995, 60.

commercialization of society, and Italy was an active and notorious participant in this trend. As another characteristic, the fifteenth century saw an extension of the scope of commercial exchange.⁷⁸ The practice of commercial hunting participated in these wider dynamics. Fucecchio's *gabelle* help establish the dynamics of the new license based distribution system of hunting, while the duties paid by game animals at the city gates show their destination and status of commercial goods and matter-of-factly recognized as part of the local economies. Coupling this information with the dynamics of extant hunting procedures, and the organizational risk management tools of the commercial medieval world will finally provide a fuller understanding of how Tuscan hunters participated in both the natural and cultural aspects of the hybrid environments where they found their game.

To cope with ever-present risk, raise capital, and organize increasing volumes of commerce and trade, medieval Italians had developed a body of mercantile law (*lex mercatoria*) and a variety of financial instruments.⁷⁹ Different types of business partnerships (*societas*) were part of established commercial practices.⁸⁰ The organization of commercial hunting adopted two of these types of partnerships, namely the *commenda* and *compagnia* contracts. They regulated short term (annual) joint ventures between individuals who variously shared the, risk, labour, and capital investment of a specific enterprise. On the basis of his input, be it work, capital, or both,

⁷⁸Richard W. Unger, "Commerce, Communication, and Empire: Economy, Technology, and Cultural Encounters," *Speculum* 90, no. 1 (January 2015): 11, 24. As this author argues, England is the best studied case in, Richard H. Britnell, *The Commercialization of English Society 1000–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Richard H. Britnell and Bruce M.S. Campbell, eds, *A Commercializing Economy. England 1086 To c. 1300* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995); Robert S. Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages 950–1300* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971).

⁷⁹Solidarity and reliable behavior between members of an enterprise were the crux of medieval business behavior, and merchants and businessmen who could not travel with their goods tended to employ trusted relations and close kin as their collaborators, Edwin Hunt, S. and James M. Murray, *A History of Business in Medieval Europe 1200–1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56.

⁸⁰On mercantile trade and its tools, see Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961), and Lopez, 1971, for mercantile law in general, Berman, 1983, 333-56, and contracts, 352-54. On medieval merchants and trade see, Hunt and Murray, 1999, and Peter Spufford, *Power and Profit. The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003).

each participant received a share in the return.⁸¹ In small communities it is likely that social pressure may have worked the best to ensure ethical practice as was reflected, specifically for hunting, in the stipulations the Sambuca *statuto*, but brisk business practice as the one developing in Italy already in the eleventh century needed stronger tools. The commercial contracts, which emerged already in that century, were just such a tool. Legal historian Harold Berman writes that, “[T]hese business associations depended on each partner’s confidence that the other partner’s promises would be kept.”⁸² Legally sanctioned control mechanisms, such as joint and several liability for the debts of the partnership, were in place to help confidence along.

While the *compagnia and commenda* shared conceptual similarities, they were importantly different.⁸³ In the first case, all partners were equal in the contract and bound together by joint and unlimited liability. In the basic configuration of the second type of contract, which originated in the maritime trade, a stay at home partner (*stans*) was responsible for the capital investment, while a travelling partner (*tractator*) did the work. Returns were not shared equally, as the investor received three quarters of profit and the traveler the rest. According to Lopez “the expansion of trade was made possible chiefly by the *commenda* and *compagnia* contracts. These were the basic legal instruments to pool capital and bring together investors and managers.”⁸⁴ From at least the late fourteenth century hunting on municipal Tuscan lands made use of just such contractual arrangements. These contracts established participatory shares of various kinds for each hunter, provided information on the organization of hunts, and regulated hunters’ behavior. They both reflected the general medieval attitude that capital carried more weight than labor.

⁸¹Solidarity and reliable behavior between members of an enterprise were the crux of medieval business behavior, and merchants and businessmen who could not travel with their goods tended to employ trusted relations and close kin as their collaborators, Hunt and Murray, 1999, 56.

⁸²Berman, 1985, 354,

⁸³Lopez and Raymond, 1961, 186 (*compagnia*); 182 (*commenda*).

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 1961, 174.

Two notarized legal instruments, dated 1370 and 1375, survive from two different small villages in the environs of Lucca.⁸⁵ The 1370 document laid out the conditions under which the members of the *societas* come together for the purpose of commercially hunting boar and other *bestias silvestres* (wild animals). By placing a higher value, reflected in the returns, on the partner(s) investing capital rather than work, this *societas* reflected important characteristics of the *commenda* contract. The later 1375 *societas*, clearly formed for reasons similar to that of 1370, however illustrated a situation of equal partners, a *compagnia*.

In the *societas* formed in 1370 before a notary in the village of Pieve di Santo Stefano, only five of the twelve participants partook in the purchase of the one net required for the operation. The major investor alone, Simone del fu Guercio, took upon himself almost half of the total amount, investing seven gold florins. The net was deemed to be worth (*extimationis et valoris*) sixteen gold florins, a not insignificant amount. Indeed, it appears that the recent acquisition of the expensive net had motivated the five to come together, establish a *societas*, and reap what revenue they could from it.⁸⁶ In recognition of his position as major investor, del fu Guercio was the only partner exempted from participating in any of the labor involved in the hunt. We can safely view him as the equivalent of the stay at home partner in the standard *commenda* contract. The other four investors invested different amounts, (3 and 2 gold florins respectively). One of the great strengths of the format of the *commenda* contract was its adaptability. It was capable of accommodating different financial endowments.⁸⁷ These lesser investors, although ranked lower than del fu Guercio, still ranked higher than those who provided labour alone for the venture. The lesser investors were to participate in the pro-rated division of one quarter of the total spoils of game meats of each individual hunt even if they had not

⁸⁵Antonio Romiti, "Due 'societates in exercitio venandi' del secolo XIV," *Actum Luce* 2 (1973): 217–24.

⁸⁶The original reads, *In qua societate dicti Simon, Johannes Bendinelli, Stefanellus et Bertus et Johannes Nuccori nuper contulerunt unam retem actam ad venandi*. My emphasis, (recently had paid for, or collected money for etc.), Romiti, 1973, 222.

⁸⁷With regards to flexible terms in these contracts, see the *commenda* of the "humble people," in Lopez, 1961, 182.

participated in that specific hunt.⁸⁸ The remaining three quarters of the spoils went to those who had actually participated, which could be as few as four people, apparently still enough to successfully execute the hunt. Lesser investors could therefore choose if they wanted to engage in the manual work. Finally, leadership of the society was assigned on a two-month rotation between all members, except *del fu Guercio*.⁸⁹ These leaders had to make sure the rules outlined in the contract were followed, and so had to participate in the hunts. The arrangement was rather sophisticated and meritocratic, but also flexible enough to accommodate the capabilities, financial and manual, of different individuals.

The *societas* from 1375, formed in the *curia* of the priest of the village of Pieve di Arliano, near Lucca, was shaped around a different model of investment pattern, that of the *compagnia*, a “company,” reflecting its more egalitarian nature. In this case all five participants carried equal status as partners. The document says nothing of the individual investment, the cost of nets, or who procured them. But following the logic of the joint and unlimited liability clause present in *compagnia*-type contracts, all members invested in the nets, and were tied to their commitment until the *societas* was dissolved at the end of the year. The five were forbidden to sell their share in the nets, unless given specific permission, and all members had to pay their share in the nets at once. No indication was provided as to how the products of the hunt were to be divided, but the contract stated that all members were required to pick up “their part” of the animals after each hunt.⁹⁰ It was made clear that all the partners must help with the heavy work, which involved bringing the nets into the woods. That done, however, the text provided no indication as to participatory requirements during the actual hunts. A behavioral requirement was nonetheless involved in the contract: nobody was allowed to swear during the set up of the nets.

⁸⁸*Et quod omnis venatio et omnes porci et bestie quos in huiusmodi venatione ceperit debeant sic dividi et sortiri.* The text is clear that it was the meat and not the profit derived from its sale that represented the return on the investment. Romiti, 1973, 223. The contract does not make clear how that one quarter of the spoils was determined, as all animals were obviously sized differently and not all cuts of an animal were of the same quality.

⁸⁹The attitude is that *del fu Guercio*’s “labor” consisted in making his money work for him. It is likely that the main investor, and people like him, had many different investments established at the same time.

⁹⁰Romiti, 1973, 224.

Loud noises frighten wild animals, but in a business as dubious as hunting, it was also worth thinking about not offending supernatural powers.

The presence in the environs of Lucca of *societas* type contracts does not prove that they were used to organize hunting all over Tuscany. Nor is there any evidence of a connection between the *gabella*-type licensing system and those contracts. Yet we may reasonably speculate whether the flexibly risk-sharing quality of these contracts, their inclusive nature, and their application to hunting may have enabled the creation of diversifying investors such as of Nanni Blasi and the Meuccis. As major investors, these men may not have worked at hunting, but rather organized Fucecchiesi hunters according to the rules of these contracts. It may have been worth it. If one could pay the *gabella*, one obtained the exclusive rights of hunting in larger territories which guaranteed better hunting, free of outside interference, as well as a better pool of animals. For a fee, and given the presence of game, almost ideal hunting conditions could be had in reserved areas. In the process, the towns had turned their territories into rentable preserves of different resources. Commercialized hunters faced a very different scenario from that of Alberto and Bandinello Lese in the thirteenth century (p.128). Formal legal tools had substituted for customary behavior and hunting was fully participant materially and conceptually in current economic and market practices.

4.5 CONCLUSION

We may finally imagine a fifteenth century Tuscan hunting scenario in which local commercial hunters, individuals with “multi-professional skills” and possessing dynamic ecological skills acquired through practice, observation, and oral transmission, went hunting in hybrid environments close to home that they knew experientially through work. They were continuing a tradition and sharing a knowledge of animals, habitats, and techniques that had accumulated through generations and transmitted orally. Yet their organizational framework may not have been that of their parents. In some instances, they may have bought the municipally sponsored right to hunt. In so doing, they would have had to pay for what their forebears obtained

through personal arrangements and continuous use, but they would also have obtained the exclusive right to hunt perhaps larger areas, which held the potential of a more profitable commercial enterprise. If the buyer of the *gabella* was a sort of stay at home partner, he would have reaped the benefits from his investment, and others' labor, without having to work himself. Whether organized through a municipally mandated collective, or through a formal, written, commercial contract, all participating hunters shared the workload, and if they could, also the investment, and were rewarded according to their specific input. They operated with a degree of security that those working with them would similarly do their share. Doing so did not interfere with the practice of successful commercial hunting based on unobtrusively infiltrating game animal habitats with camouflaged human presence. By guaranteeing labor, as well as capital, the design of the hunting *societas* negotiated risks (pp. 151-52). Commercialization and the integration of hunting in current economic practice was not detrimental to the activity. We may observe that for close to fifty years, in the hybrid landscapes of Fucecchio and Santa Maria a Monte, and between the Padule di Fucecchio and the Cerbaie hills, hunting along the lines described here continued to take place with no known reported evidence of scarcities. We may not know how, or indeed how consciously, this was obtained, but clearly some kind of balance was struck between extraction and animal reproduction and likely aided by favorable conditions for the animals' habitat.

These hunts were not the only ones taking place in Florentine Tuscany in the fifteenth century. The Priors of Florence did not hunt but requisitioned game meats and fowl at local level for their dinner table. Less visibly, landowners provisioned themselves from their estates. The aristocrats of Florence, also hunted in ways similar to those of the dukes of Milan, and sometimes with their loaned huntsmen, such as falconer Pilato, (pp. 101-102). In so doing they participated in the aristocratic hunting culture that was gaining prominence in various Italian courts. Until the middle of the sixteenth century, however, these Florentine hunts are mostly invisible in known historical record, although visible in the literary and artistic production of the time. After the sixteenth century, the institution of the Medici *bandite*, and almost immediate

consequence of the Medici coming to power in Florence, these vast and exclusive hunting (and fishing) preserves, to all effect obliterated in those areas the commercial hunting that has been the concern of most of this chapter.

As we turn our attention to Venice and its lagoon, we turn to very different and differently articulated hybrid landscapes consisting of water, more than soil, and subject to different conceptualization and material organizational from Tuscany or Milan. For one thing, the main quarry was ducks.

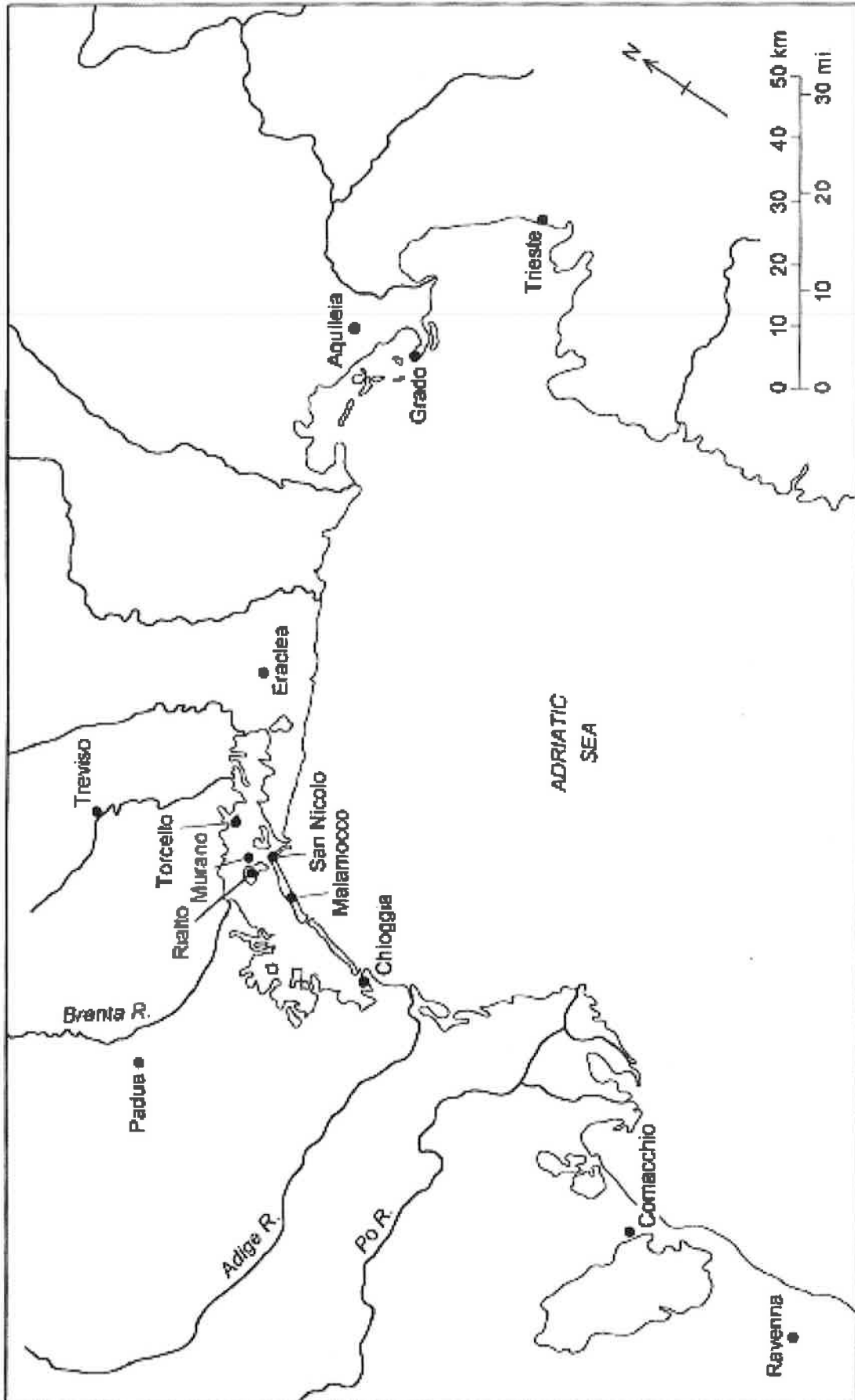


Figure 4.1: Venice © Richard C. Hoffmann, 2014

CHAPTER 5. MOST SERENE HUNTS? THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURY
FOWLING IN THE VENETIAN LAGOON

One legend about the origins of early Venice includes the story of Magno, bishop of Eraclea. What was to become the city of Venice then consisted of then just of a small conglomerate around the island of Rialto, barely emerging in the monotonous flatness of the lagoon. For all these unpromising beginnings, the holy man was still bid by godly intervention to build seven churches. The second church was located according to instructions provided to Magno in an apparition of the angel Raphael. Raphael ordered the bishop to build his church in an area where many “birds” could be found.¹ Fowl obviously prefer watery environments, and Venice furthermore lay on a major flyway.² To be used as a landmark, these angelic flocks must have been impressive. From a contractor’s point of view, the choice of location was sound. The area the angel had in mind was the western end of Osso Duro, (hard bone), present day Dorsoduro. While the lagoon presumably hosted many flocks of birds large enough to be used as landmarks, the location of the long narrow island of Osso Duro had the advantage of being well above the high water mark. Raphael’s church would have suffered no harm from the waters, even in the event of abnormally high tides. The choice of location and of landmark was momentous and prescient, as one would expect from an angel. Around the church of St. Raphael (San Raffaele dei Mendicoli) aptly named after the angel and located in the present day Venetian area of St. Martha (Santa Marta), grew the community of the Nicolotti, the largest corporation of fishermen in Venice. In Venice, as in Tuscany, it was the fishermen who captured waterfowl as a

¹A. Caracciolo Aricò, *M. Sanudo. De origine, situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae, ovvero la città di Venetia (1493–1530)* (Milano: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1980), 16.

²The available sources for establishing medieval habitats and animal populations are mostly antiquarian and uncritical in their approach and only marginally useful. Among them, for example, B. Cecchetti, “Il vitto dei veneziani,” *Archivio Veneto* tome XXX (1885), 52-58; Fabio Mutinelli, “Del costume veneziano sino al secolo decimoterzo” (Venezia: Filippi Editore, 1831), 107–10. For a contemporary illustration of plants and animal and birds species in the lagoon, Giovanni Caniato, Eugenio Turri, and Michele Zanetti, eds., *La laguna di Venezia* (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 1995), 79-98; 115-136. We do not know what species of ducks the angel had in mind. Later Venetian sources cite mallards (*Anas platyrhincos*) and widgeons (*Anas penelope*) as the preferred waterfowl for commercial capture. Both species winter over and breed in the lagoon.

secondary activity when the fishing season closed.³ To these men, Raphael's ducks likely were a good larder.

Fowling partook in the natural environments of Venice alongside other forms of resource extraction. It likely had marginal economic value, especially when compared to fishing. Yet in the winter months, the season for fowling, capture of the mallard ducks and widgeons appears to have been ubiquitous. Although we can not ascertain the size nor presence of flocks the size of those identified by the angel Raphael in the lagoon, through the centuries the creatures carried high status and were considered good to eat. So much so in fact, that in recognition of the doge's political rank as leader of the Republic, the fowlers followed suit in an established tradition. According to thirteenth-century Venetian historian Martin da Canal, each year before Christmas all corporations of Venice presented the doge with a gift that reflected their craft or commercial activity. "Those who capture the birds of the rivers" and so the fowlers, presented him with 2,000 pairs of mallards, the *oselle* which he later redistributed to those Venetian patricians who had the right of vote in the *Maggior Consiglio*, the Venetian Senate.⁴ The fowlers had captured these with techniques which, much like those of their Tuscan counterparts, meshed animal behavior with the characteristics of the birds' preferred microhabitats along rivers and in the lagoon. This chapter's focus is how the Venetians exploited such complex waterscapes for commercial fowling.

³All recognized Venetian corporations were organized through a *Mariiegola*, or self-imposed statute. The one for the Nicolotti states clearly at its very beginning, that the fishermen also fowled. The *Mariiegola dei Nicolotti* exists in two versions which both are incomplete and have been mutilated over the years. The first is called *Mariiegola Vecchia della Comunità di S. Nicolò al Angelo Raffael de Mendicoli*, while the second *Mariiegola* is merely a copy of the first up to the end of the seventeenth century. They originals are located at, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, *Mariiegola Vecchia della Comunità di S. Nicolò al Angelo Rafael de Mendicoli*, Ms. Cic. 2789 or Ms. IV. 100; and Biblioteca del Museo Correr, *Mariiegola della Comunità di S. Nicolò al Angelo Rafael de Mendicoli*, Ms. Cic. 2790 or Ms. IV. 112. The Nicolotti have been studied by Roberto Zago, *I Nicolotti. Storia di una comunità di pescatori a Venezia nell'età moderna* (Padova: Francischi Editore, 1982), who briefly mentions the Nicolotti as fowlers on page 27. Venetian *Arti* (guilds) were regulated by specific *statuti* approved by the Venetian state by the magistracy of the *Giustizia Vecchia*. The first of these pertaining to fishermen is dated October, 1227. In several of its chapters it is made clear that those who fished likewise captured fowl (*volatilia*). Edited *statuto* in, Giovanni Monticolo, *I Capitolari delle Arti Veneziane sottoposte alla Giustizia e poi alla Giustizia Vecchia dalle origini al MCCXXX* (Roma: Forzani e C. tipografi del Senato, 1896), fowlers in chapters I-II, V, VII-VIII pp. 59-63.

⁴Alberto Limentani, ed., *Martin da Canal. Les estoires de Venise. Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275* (Firenze: Olschki, 1973), 253.

5.1 LAGOON ENVIRONMENTS

In the Middle Ages, and well beyond, the day of the Ascension marked a uniquely important Venetian celebration, called the *Festa della Sensa*.⁵ On this day, the doge stepped on board the Bucintoro, the richly decorated state galley reserved for his personal use. Followed by a multitude of other vessels, he was sailed to one of the passages between the barrier islands that divided the lagoon from the open Adriatic, that of St. Nicholas (San Nicolò del Lido). Here he took a large gold ring and tossed it into the waves of the open sea. In so doing, the doge, personifying Venice, married the sea, in gratitude for the bounty that she provided for the city, making it one of the richest in the Western world. A local fisherman promptly dove into the water, retrieved the ring and returned it to the doge.

The Venetians built a commercial empire, and a gorgeous city, from modest autarchy and marginal beginnings as salt makers and fishermen.⁶ The *Sensa* celebration displays their gratitude to that sea that fed them, but the act also involved a desire to appease the watery elements. The *Sensa*'s marriage ritual obtained the balance between gratitude and appeasement through a complex symbolism that borrowed from both the Christian and the pagan worlds.⁷ The ritual was complex, echoing Venetian attitudes to the environment based on an environmentally sensitive pragmatism. They knew that their controlling action on the natural environments was neither permanent, nor unilateral, and rife with unintended consequences. Their existence had to be constantly negotiated with the natural elements. In the self-aggrandizing myth-based literature that haunts Venetian historiography, this negotiation is rather viewed as an anthropocentric "battle" in which, naturally, the humans "win."⁸ The difficulty of the lagoon environments

⁵The *Ascensione* marks the final ascension to Heaven of Jesus Christ. It is a movable feast, connected to Easter, and always five weeks after it. *Sensa* is the Venetian dialect version of the Italian *Ascensione* or Ascension.

⁶The scope of the change may be best appreciated by comparing a modern day map of Venice with map 1 (no page) in, Crouzet-Pavan, 1992, which illustrates the few emerging lands, amid waters and swamps, of the early lagoon settlements.

⁷Matteo Casini, *I gesti del principe. La festa politica a Firenze e Venezia in età Rinascimentale* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1996), 168-175.

⁸For a discussion of this aspect, see James S. Grubb, "When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography," *Journal of Modern History* 58 (March 1986): 43-94, throughout.

contributed also to a constant search for better practical solutions.⁹ No doubt the Venetians were attached to their sea, but their love was not blind to material reality; after all they did retrieve the ring.

It did not require an angel to understand that if the Venetians wanted to prosper, proficient use of water was to become a fundamental part of their existence. Before the mid-1400s, Venice had no landed territories to speak of. All economic and defensive activities took place via its lagoon.¹⁰ There, water in constant motion remodeled lagoon landscapes and altered hydrological balances. This took place with twice-daily regularity as the tides moved in and out of the lagoon space. Water movement downstream caused the slow infilling of the lagoon from river discharge. Finally, violent wave and wind activity moving up the Adriatic caused storm-induced erosion. For all these reasons, the lagoon landscapes were subject to constant change. This mutability affected the Venetians' conceptual and material strategies in making these landscapes liveable, productive, but also consistently legible to themselves. The one word that best summed up the local inhabitants' perhaps most prevailing fear, was erasure. They were not exaggerating. We know today that any lagoon naturally tends towards infilling leading to its own eventual disappearance.¹¹ Although mostly unable to permanently fix the environmental problems with which they lived, the medieval Venetians were well aware of them and their causes.

The lagoon basin that bishop Magno and his contemporaries experienced, would have been much larger than what is today associated with the Venetian lagoon. For example, in the sixth century, when Ostrogothic king Theodoric's chief minister Cassiodorus (d. 575CE) saw it, the Venetian lagoon space comprised a series of interconnected estuaries stretching from Comacchio in the south to Grado in the north-east. The estuaries were formed by the discharge of

⁹For example, Karl Appuhn, "Friend or Flood? The Dilemmas of Water Management in Early Modern Venice," in *The Nature of Cities: Culture, Landscape and Urban Space*, ed. Andrew Isenberg (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 79–102.

¹⁰Locations in the lagoon are detailed in Map 5.

¹¹Marcello Zunica, "La formazione dell'ambiente lagunare," *Ateneo Veneto, rivista di scienze, lettere ed arti*. 10 (1972): 121–22.

eight different riverine deltas, the outflow point of most of which (i.e. the Brenta), has by now been redirected.¹² This larger lagoon basin may conceptually be subdivided into three areas, of which the central one, between the Brenta and the Piave rivers, contained the city of Venice and its nearby islands. The different basins suffered different developmental destinies through the centuries due to varying levels of riverine discharge. French historian Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan argues that by the fifteenth century the medieval Venetian authorities, unable to effectively bring the problem of siltation (and corollary malaria) under control, “sacrificed” the northern area, containing the important islands of Torcello, early site of an important *emporium*, as well as those of Costanziaca and Ammiana, in order better to concentrate conservation efforts in the central basin, closest to the city. The results were mixed.¹³ It is clear that the Venetians were not only dealing with mutability, they were also contending with a very vast area and interconnected ecosystems.

The two factors that weighed heaviest on lagoon change were the accumulation of silt into the lagoon, what the Venetian termed *interramento*, and erosion. Silty discharge was in part a natural occurrence, and in part a consequence of human activity up stream, especially deforestation. At least from the twelfth century, cutting of wood upstream exacerbated silt content and deposition, but the Venetians were helpless to control it, at least until the mid-fifteenth century when their political control expanded inland from the lagoon. Siltation changed the overall hydrological balance. The silt raised the lagoon bottom. Here the water got shallower. As a result, stagnant brackish or sweet water marshes developed near the deltas of the rivers and in locations with already reduced water circulation. These filled in with reed vegetation and ultimately became land. Furthermore, swamp vegetation limited the access and beneficial

¹²For Cassiodorus’ comments, Lane, 3-4 where Lane also provides a map of the lagoon around 600CE. From south to north the rivers are the Po (in several places), Caverzere, **Brenta**, **Sile**, **Piave**, **Livenza**, Tagliamento, and Isonzo (in bold are those closest to the city).

¹³Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *La mort lente de Torcello: Histoire d’une cité disparue* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 394. A very detailed discussion regarding the infilling of this northern part of the lagoon, Roberto Cessi, “Lo sviluppo dell’interramento nella laguna settentrionale e il problema del Piave e del Sile fino al secolo XV,” in *La laguna di Venezia*, ed. Gustavo Brunelli (1943), 79–108.

flushing effect of the salty tides, only worsening the situation. All this made excellent habitats for one or more of the three mosquito species thought to be the vectors for the malaria parasite protozoa (*Plasmodium falciparum*). The three are *Anopheles atroparvus*, *A. labranchia*, and *A. sacharovus*.¹⁴ “Bad airs” and miasmas were the reasons behind the abandonment of several increasingly swampy and malaria infested locations in the northern part of the lagoon. The changes could be relatively quick. Witnesses could report how in the space of just one generation the mouth of the Brenta River had descended towards Venice due to the growth of reed beds (although they could not say how much).¹⁵ Also a consequence of lowered water levels were changes in overall lagoon salinity which could adversely affect the lucrative Venetian activity of fishing. Finally, shallower water levels threatened the passage for the vessels of the Venetian mercantile and military fleets. Starting in the Middle Ages, the courses of the rivers that emptied into the lagoon space were subjected to manipulations and diversions, but the problems remained.¹⁶ Inability to concentrate legislative, financial, and practical efforts made most of the *ad hoc* solutions fail. It is likely that various cycles of natural marine transgression and regression, or the raising and lowering of the lagoon floor, exacerbated the problem and contributed to the imbalance, but the topic currently remains unresolved.¹⁷

Normal, present-day Venetian tides rise between 30 and 60 centimeters twice a day.

According to the Venetians, they were beneficial to the lagoon in that they washed the silt away,

¹⁴Tim Newfield, personal communication and forthcoming. Also, R. Sallares, “Role of Environmental Changes in the Spread of Malaria in Europe During the Holocene,” *Quaternary International* 150 (2006): 23–24.

¹⁵*Codex Publicorum* Vol. II (CP2), sent. 72, (1327), 553 .

¹⁶The research done by mid-fifteenth century nobleman Marco Cornaro pertaining to a possible diversion of the Brenta River in order that its silty discharge could flow in to the Adriatic directly, rather than into the lagoon, are well studied in, Karl Appuhn, “Politics, Perception, and the Meaning of Landscape in Late Medieval Venice: Marco Cornaro’s 1442 Inspection of Firewood Supplies,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, eds. John Howe and Michael Wolfe (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), 70–90.

¹⁷Unresolved disagreement exists especially between Hocquet and Dorigo as to the various cycles of marine regression and transgression and marine subsidence and the role of these factors in the environmental developments of the lagoon. These are summarized in, Jean-Claude Hocquet, “Métrologie, cartographie et écologie de la lagune de Venise. Les salines et l’oeuvre ‘contrastée’ de Wladimiro Dorigo,” in *Castrum 7: Zones côtières littorales dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Âge: défense, peuplement, mise en valeur*, ed. Jean-Claude Martin (2001), 547; Jean-Claude Hocquet, *Le saline dei veneziani e la crisi del tramonto del medioevo* (Roma: Il Veltrò Editrice, 2003), 47–48. For a general and useful overview, see Caniato, 1995, 41-78.

brought a fresh supply of salt water, and prevented the formation of stagnant marshes. They also marked the limit of the lagoon proper, understood as the highest point the salt water reached up the rivers at medium high tide. Yet, ironically, it was the salty Adriatic that was the harbinger of the other great Venetian threat of erasure in the form of storms. In spring and fall, storm force easterly and south-easterly winds could rush up the narrow corridor of the Adriatic. Pushed by the wind, the result was *aqua alta* (high water) which flooded the city and surrounding islands. If the storm combined with high tides and perhaps rain, the results could be devastating. When the full force of a gale hit the barrier islands of the lagoon, it caused massive and sudden erosion. As a result the city of Venice would be left open to the force of the waves. The risk of the islands' partial disappearance was genuine. In the twelfth century such obliteration was the fate suffered by the island of the Lido di Malamocco. In 1308 witnesses involved in a deposition described how the south-easterly wind, the Scirocco, had caused a heavy storm involving *mare fractum*, or broken sea, with white caps, which had obliterated a whole beach.¹⁸ Until the building of the Murazzi in cement in the eighteenth century, the barriers were at best rudimentary structures which ate up materials and resources because of the need for repeated rebuilding.

Between the rivers and the sea, the lagoon was mostly shallow, and carved into its bottom was a network of canals of varying size which were originally old river beds. The current course of the Grand Canal through the city is now very visible as it is lined by *palazzi*. Most other lagoon channels were only discernible above water through paths of wooden markers, *bricole*, planted in the lagoon floor, still the system used today. Steering outside of these canals could mean grounding one's boat.

Venetian jurists were faced with having to regulate landscapes that even under normal and quiet conditions could look very different between early morning and noon. The traditional attitude of the Venetian state in matters of resources use had consistently been to conserve (productive) natural resources, or "the quality of the soil," or "common good," (*qualitas soli*), for

¹⁸CP2, sent. 53, (1308), 407.

the public use, with private interests always coming second.¹⁹ In recognition of the difficulties and peculiarities of lagoon environments, the government always viewed private interest as potentially damaging to the public good, which depended closely on the careful maintenance and open access to public areas. Venetian legal ideas on these matters were based on positivist Roman law, which assigned status on the basis of function (implying “utility” or “possible use”). For the Venetians, the solution adopted to stabilize, at least on paper, the intrinsic mutability of their natural environments, was to assign legal status to geomorphological formations on the basis of two environmental factors. A detailed vernacular vocabulary developed to define these different formations.²⁰ One factor was how much an individual entity emerged (or not) from the waters at medium high tide, considered normal median conditions. The other factor was whether the water in a certain location was running or stagnant.²¹ The Venetian jurists displayed a sound pragmatic approach to the natural world. Their work was based on careful observation of natural conditions, understood as a material place in which human beings had to live and work. Legal status, once assigned, organized human behavior in and around the natural world. Once assigned, that status remained in place even under more extreme or changed conditions, for example storms. Despite visible change, permanency and continuity was ensured for the users of the waterscapes.

Venetian lagoon users, and fowlers among them, moved between established human centers such as Venice and the villages on islands like Burano, Murano, Malamocco, Torcello, Lio Mazor or Chioggia, and semipermanent work places locations scattered in the lagoon. They consisted of island orchards and gardens, and places established for the extraction of salt or fish. Between these fixed points lay sandbars and clam flats, minuscule islands, beaches, and shallows. With some caution, it is possible to imagine a vegetation of tall stands of softwoods and hardwoods crowning the lagoon, and on some of its larger islands.²² Those working and

¹⁹Avanzi, 1993, 18 and throughout.

²⁰For example, *velma*, *tomba*, *canneto*, *ghebbo*, *lido*, *barena*, *palude* etc. present in the documents in variable spelling. Avanzi, 1993, defines the characteristics of some of them on pp. 27-28, as do Caniato et al., 1995, 58-59.

²¹Avanzi, 1993, 26-27.

²²Mutinelli, 1831, 103-4. For a contemporary view, Caniato et al., 1995, 79-98.

using these complex environments possessed uniquely adapted skills and a broad understanding of environmental dynamics informed by solving the problems posed by daily work through the calendar year.

5.2 VENETIAN BIRDS AND THEIR CAPTURE

5.2.1 Avifauna

The Venetian lagoon supported a variety of bird species ranging from mergansers, curlews, pigeons, larks, coots, waders, lapwings, to different types of sea ducks, and herons, cranes, swans, storks, falcons, and more.²³ The roster of commercial prey emerging from the documents was much more modest. Mallards (*Anas platyrhincos*) and widgeons (*Anas penelope*) were consistently indicated because they provided good meat in good quantities and probably were relatively easy to capture. Additionally I have found one isolated mention of a species of wading bird, perhaps the (Common) Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), called *toltano* in the contemporary sources.²⁴ The small creature was captured, we know not how, on sandy beaches where it would have been busy picking small mollusks and insects out of the sand. Coots may also have been a regular prey, although I have found no medieval evidence of this, nor recipes that detail how they would be cooked. There is, however, early modern evidence for its capture both in Venice and in Tuscany.²⁵ Finally, different falcons such as the peregrine, destined to be used as hunting birds were captured on the beaches and islands of the lagoon, one of which, *Falconara* island, was aptly named after them (*falco* is Italian for falcon).²⁶

²³See appendix 1, p. 281.

²⁴CP2, sent. 71, (1327), 538.

²⁵In Venice the early modern coot hunt was a driven hunt, involving firearms. Caniato et al., 1995, 327. In Tuscany, in the seventeenth century, the hunt was done with nets, Zagli, 2003, 188. Ducks that feed on fish taste like their favorite food. This should rule out consumption of sea ducks, although coots (which are not ducks) eat fish, and were eaten anyway. Waterhens, on the other hand, are delicious, but very small and fast. As far as the sandpiper, it had similar dietary habits as the woodcock (*Scopolax rusticola*). Presumably the sandpiper tasted much like woodcock, that is, “like liver” or “like duck” according to modern day consumers.

²⁶CP2, sent. 71 (1327), 538. The falcons likely to have been found in and around the lagoon were the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and merlin (*Falco columbarius*) in winter; kestrels (*Falco tinnuculus*) and hobby, (*Falco subbuteo*) were present all year, Benny Génsbøl, *Birds of Prey of Britain & Europe North Africa and the Middle East* (London: Harper Collins, 1992). All these species were used in hunting, with a preference for the higher status peregrine.

The mallards were known in the document as the “ducks with red feet,” *oselle* or “major” ducks due to their size. The smaller widgeon was known as the *ciosso*, or “minor” duck. In commercial transactions, ducks were counted out in pairs. In some rental agreements an exchange rate was in place between the two species: two mallards to three widgeons.²⁷ Both species belong to the family of dabbling ducks, so called from the characteristic way by which they procure their mostly vegetarian food. The ducks “dabble” the water by filtering it through their beaks, thus extracting small suspended plant and animal food. Otherwise they eat bottom growing vegetation which they reach by tipping up their hind end and reaching as deep into the water as the length of their shoulders, neck, head, and beak allows. Their vegetarian diet makes the meat of mallards sweet and good to eat. Duck meat is also notoriously rich in fat, and the Venetian exemplars were apparently no exception. When due as payment, for example as rents, the ducks were sometimes to be specifically, *bonos*, (fat or good) or even *protobonos*, (supergood, or, super-fat).²⁸ Ducks have the highest protein to fat ratio in the bird kingdom (100 grams of meat contains 19.6 grams of protein to 29 grams of fat). According at least to modern day nutritional theory, this ratio makes them excellent human nutrition.²⁹

5.2.2 Hunting Procedures

Hunting is uncertain business and birds present unique challenges for all hunters. As keen observers of the natural world, Venetian commercial hunters knew as well as their Tuscan counterparts that ducks were suspicious, gregarious, and that they liked to return to favorite spots. They knew about the speed at which ducks could be on the wing. The Venetians could hunt the riverbanks as did their Tuscan counterparts. But additionally, the inhabitants of the lagoon had the opportunity of hunting the vast and, at times, inhospitable lagoon, approachable only by boat, poor in landmarks, and subject to dampness and thick winter fogs. In order to

²⁷In all the rents that I have found, birds due as rents are indicated in pairs. The exchange rate is in Zug Tucci, 1992, 502 who also explains the Venetian terms.

²⁸Archivio di Stato di Venezia, (ASVe), Podestà di Torcello e Contrade (PT) 106, (1466-67), no date.

²⁹Dale Serjeantson, *Birds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 230–38.

capture the birds under such environmental conditions, these fowlers developed different techniques. Sometimes the rent contracts and other documents mandate the use of one technique in particular, but this is not consistently the case.³⁰ Much like in Tuscany, Venetian bird hunting techniques took advantage of animal behavior in ways that were efficient, but not invasive. As long as the ducks did not feel threatened by the humans, the two species could be quite close. Sometimes at least, the hunters operated in close proximity to other people and perhaps not far from urban centers and arteries of communication. For example, in 1318 or 1319 one fowler called Franciscus was placing a trap for capturing ducks so close to other people that he could hear them call out.³¹

5.2.3 *Panthera*

The two most frequently mentioned Venetian devices for commercial hunting found in the documentary evidence were the *panthera* (pl. *panthere*) and the *lignola* (always used in singular form), developed for different hunting conditions. The *panthera* was more or less permanently located on the bank next to a stream or a similar location and involved nets.³² Pietro de' Crescenzi includes a lengthy description of one possible version of the contraption in his *Ruralia Commoda*.³³ The Venetian version may have been different from the Bolognese model, which is valuable in providing a general frameworks to which local variation may apply. According to the Bolognese agronomist, the technique involved digging a hollow, concave pit, ca. 20-25 *brachia* long and 10-12 wide (ca. 12-15 meters by 6-7 meters), located next to a swamp,

³⁰The discussion of the individual techniques to follow will illustrate several documents which impose technical requirements on the user. For an example of a contract from 1277 in which, however, the tenant could use any technique he wished (*cum omnibus artis*), CP2, sent. 42 (1302), 289. It has not been possible to ascertain the underlying logic behind such differences.

³¹PT 6, (1318-19), no date.

³²A clear reference to the *panthera* being a device to capture ducks is in PT 21 (1342-43), 25 June. According to the document one Fredo who rented a *panthera*, *debeat vendere dictas aucellas que capierint in ipsis panthera*. He was to sell the birds he captured with the *panthera*. Another document speaks of *retia pertinentia panthera* (nets for use in a *panthera*). This is in PT 102 (1460-61), unreadable day in January.

³³Richter, 1995, vol. 3, 182-83.

stream or similar wetland area attractive to ducks.³⁴ The pit was furnished with hedges or panels to protect the ducks from predators, it had a small hut at one end for the fowler. A system of poles and ropes held nets suspended over the pit which was filled with a few inches of water and decoyed with domestic ducks and provided with food. When, overnight, a sufficient number of wild ducks were in the pit, the nets could be closed. Then, by gently hitting the net with a stick the fowler could guide the wild ducks towards one funnel-like end of the net from where they could be extracted. The tame ducks knew they suffered no harm. De' Crescenzi claims that they could then easily be killed by biting them in the head. "A thousand may be caught in one hour thus," the author boasted.³⁵

Whether the success rate of de' Crescenzi was matched by the Venetians or not, the *panthera* was widely employed and was the capturing device most frequently mentioned in the documents. It is not difficult to understand why the *panthera* was popular, no matter the finer points of its construction. The set-up was permanent.³⁶ The length of some rents suggests that, if properly maintained, the device could function well for years. Once a good location had been found and the laborious set-up work and monetary investment was completed, it was a relatively comfortable way to capture ducks perhaps from the cover of a building or blind. Once the day's work was done, the fowler could simply go home. Further confirmation to the attractiveness of the *panthera*, and what must have been its reasonable return on investment, lay in the flexibility of terms through which use of such a device could be obtained. The device could be rented independently from the land upon which it sat, on which the tenant was only granted right of access.³⁷ The device could furthermore be sublet, or included in a larger rent. Finally it could be

³⁴In Bologna the mercantile *brachia* (used for measuring out cloth) was between 50 and 60 cm. Ronald Edward Zupko, *Italian Weights and Measures from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, 1981), 42.

³⁵*Una hora milla quandoque capiuntur. Ibid.*, 183.

³⁶Some rental agreements suggest prolonged permanency, such as PT 34,(1360-61), 22 October. In fact, de' Crescenzi's version has "hedges" around them to protect the ducks from predators. Digging the pit involved some work also and warranted some permanency, once the set-up was ready. The *panthere* could be so permanent that they were used as landmarks. Those of the location of *Cona Memo* were used by the magistrates of the Piovego in 1294 in the description of the boundaries of the perambulation that preceded the setting of their boundary markers. CP1, sent. 27, (1294), 202-206.

³⁷PT 34, (1360-61), 22 October; 55, (1381-82), 10 April; 61, (1391-92), 12 April.

excluded from a rental agreement altogether and be used only by the landlord.³⁸ That the *panthera* was considered an infrastructure for commercial use, like a mill, or a building, is also apparent from the frequent rental clause *ad meliorandum* included in the agreements.³⁹

The Venetian lagoon had no scarcity of locations suitable for a *panthera*. Where location is mentioned, the devices are sited near water. They were also used in connection with the fisheries, which, as we shall see, would have included landscape features conducive to the setting up of the *pantherae* as well as practical proximity to moorings, shelters, storage facilities, and shallower waters. For the ducks all these locations would have been welcome because they offered some shelter, protection, and food. The *panthera* meshed the characteristics of lagoon landscapes and duck behavior with a degree of adaptability and cost effectiveness that made it attractive to commercial fowlers.

5.2.4 *Lignola*

The *lignola* required a different type of investment, the use of a boat.⁴⁰ Its functioning is somewhat unclear. Made of wood, as the root of its name indicates, it was probably a sort of portable spring-operated frame net and placed from a boat, in relatively open waters.⁴¹ The motion of the ducks activated the trap, which would catch and hold them alive until the fowlers

³⁸ Manuela Baroni, ed., *Notaio di Venezia del sec. XIII (1290–1292)* (Venezia: Il Comitato Editore, 1977), 68. The rental agreement is from June 30, 1291. In it the landlord states: “*Quam aquam concedo vobis ad piscandum et aucelandum, salvo quod non licitum est vobis ire ad meas pantheras, nec circe et non offendatis eas, que panthere mee sunt intus hos composite confines.*” The owner thus rents fishing and hunting rights, except for the *panthere* and the bounded area that contained them.

³⁹PT 21, (1342-43) no date; 29, (1354-55), 19 February. The common medieval *ad meliorandum* clause, often included in rental agreements, obligated a tenant to return existing infrastructures not just the way they were at the beginning of the rental agreement, but indeed “improved.” The clause may also be worded as *meliorandum et non peiorandum*. (improved and not worsened). Landlords were obviously trying to protect their investment.

⁴⁰A rent from 26 April, 1349 specifies that the tenant is to go *aucupando ad lignola cum sua barcha*, or go fowling with the *lignola* with his own boat. While the agreement may be more concerned with the fact that it is the tenant’s own boat (and so not included in the rent), the agreement still illustrates that *lignola* and boats went together. PT 25, (1348-49).

⁴¹There is reference to a *lignola* being used to capture fish which makes this supposition plausible in CP1, setn. 17 (1288), 113. The sources refer to *calare* of a *lignola* from a boat. According to Du Cange, *calare* = *demittere*, *laxare*, *descendere*, *ponere*, and so “lowering” something (e.g. a draw bridge) into place. <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camenaref/ducange/bd1/jpg/s0753.html>.

returned to take them. The specific requirement to use this technique may have been due to environmental conditions. For example, a rent from 1207 grants fowling rights in a (navigable) swamp (*palude*) *solummodo* (only) *ad lignola*. Perhaps prescribing this moveable device was also to ensure that tenants would not set up permanent structures which could affect access to other activities. This may be the case with a rent from 1289, which gave permission to fowl both day and night, specifically *ad lignola*.⁴² Clearly the device also offered an open-water alternative technique for capturing ducks allowing fowlers to productively exploit a wider range of habitats.

The *lignola* was constructed locally.⁴³ It is plausible that the fowlers made, owned, and maintained their own movable equipment such as boats and nets, as was common for fishermen. In 1326, one Salvatore, living on the island of Burano Mare, was given permission to *fare artem suam lignola sub porta a domus*, (practice his craft of making *lignola* by his front door).⁴⁴ We do not know if Salvatore also used the *lignola* himself, as was likely, or was just the builder. The fact that some kind of public supervision was exercised upon the construction of such devices suggests a professional standing for the craftsman and the commonality of the device.

5.2.5 *Formas facere, Escaduria*

Ducks are gregarious birds, usually found in groups and attracted by creatures that look and sound like them because the birds deem a location safe by the presence there of others of their species. Fowlers employed this characteristic in various ways. The *panthera* held tame ducks that attracted their wild counterparts. Another, quite efficient, way to employ the ducks' flocking instinct was by using decoys, floating shapes made in to the form of ducks.⁴⁵ In modern day duck hunting, several of these are placed on a stretch of water before dawn or before dusk, to lure in

⁴²CP1, sent. 3, (1283), 228; CP2, sent. 43, (1301), 305. The use of the device appears frequently in the papers of *Podestà*. For example PT, 6, (1318-19), undated; 12, (1326-27), unknown day in January; 25, (1348-49), 26 April.

⁴³The trellises made of reeds that were used as underwater fencing in the fishers (*grisolas*) were similarly made locally by recognized craftsmen. PT 35, (1361-62), undated.

⁴⁴PT 35, (1361-62), no date.

⁴⁵For examples of twentieth century handmade decoys, Horst Fuhrman, *Europäische Lockenten* (Stuttgart: HENKELdruck, 1987).

ducks, and subsequently shoot them as they fly in. Although the fine details of the practice were unclear, and no guns were involved, the general concept of decoying was known to the medieval Venetians.

First the name. Zug Tucci interprets two fowling devices, *formas facere* and *escaduria*, (pl. *escadurie*) as referring to variously made decoys of which the *escadurie* were anchored to the bottom of the water.⁴⁶ *The formas* are etymologically convincing as being decoys. *Formas facere* may be translated as “making shapes,” specifically in the shape of a duck.

The right to use *formas* appears, for example, in a 1157 rental agreements pertaining to a private fishery. The agreement specifies that fowling is to take place *videlicet ad formas* (namely with decoys).⁴⁷ However, if the *formas* indeed operated similarly to their modern counterparts, it is difficult to understand how the fowlers would have captured the ducks, once these were in proximity of the floating decoys. Any attempt at moving in on the ducks would likely have sent them flying, once boats were close enough to throw a net over the ducks. Venetian hunters could have shot the creatures, sitting on the water, with bows and arrows, or crossbows, if they had access to them. But if the motivation to hunt was commercial, aiming with a bow over shimmering water, or in the wind, even at a sitting duck, was an inefficient way of making a living. Finally, even though crossbows were very accurate, the commotion of a wounded duck would have sent its companions flying. Perhaps the two pairs of ducks due for the rental were not to ensure a commercial activity, but rather in order to hunt for pleasure. If so, difficult shooting was part of the play. A famous painting by Vittore Carpaccio, titled *Caccia in laguna* (‘Hunting in the lagoon,’ 1490-1495) illustrates a duck hunt near a lagoon fishery. While no decoys are visible, the hunters are depicted shooting from a boat at sitting waterfowl.⁴⁸ The clothing and the amount of personnel involved marks this as an elite type hunt, and so likely recreational. We may

⁴⁶ Zug Tucci, 1992, 503-504.

⁴⁷ *CPI*, sent. 27, (1294), 200.

⁴⁸ Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Another depiction of such a hunt, this time employing crossbows, is a *tondo* by Giuliano Romano from 1530, entitled *Scena di caccia sul lago* (‘Hunting scene on a lake’) and painted on the walls of the Palazzo Te in Mantua. Malcarne, 1998, 24.

imagine this scenario involving decoys allowing the hunters to silently glide into range. In this case the rent was a token for the sporting use of the location (perhaps the owner of the fishery was a friend), not payment for what amounted to a commercial-type extraction of a resource.

The word *escaduria* contains the root *esca* (food, or bait). The Venetian name echoes the Fucecchiese *escato* (p. 128), which involved a baited location near water where the birds were trapped with nets. The *escato*'s mechanisms of operation were close to that of the *panthera*, at least the way Olina depicted it.⁴⁹ But why would the Venetians employ very similar techniques and call them different things? Perhaps then the *escadurie* were anchored platforms with food. If Zug Tucci is right about anchoring, and the etymology is correct, the *esca* may have consisted of live or wooden ducks (decoys) rather than food, or perhaps both. The wild ducks may have been captured by a spring-loaded net. As permanent or semi-permanent locations, set in the water, the device would have allowed a different exploitation of open waters from both the portable *lignola*, and the decoys, and made good practical and ecological sense. The semi-permanent (anchored) and watery location of the *escadurie* was confirmed by an 1152 agreement between the Benedictine houses of St. Zachary (San Zaccaria) and St. Ciprian (San Cipriano), both located on the island of Murano, in the division of an *aqua*. The nuns of the former reserved for themselves that part of the area that held their *escadurie ad volucres capiendum*, (*escadurie* for the capture of birds).⁵⁰ Like for the *panthera*, the clearly recognizable, and permanent, location of the *escadurie*, could be alienated from the landscape that held it. It appears to have been coveted efficient, and, perhaps, capital intensive. In this case it would have allowed the nuns a free-of-cost and reliable supply of a high status food, procured by their own fowlers.⁵¹ The value of the set-up is confirmed by a donation of 1134, in which various people bequeath the church of Beata Fusca Virgine with all their *aque* and *escadurie* “for the capture of mallards.” But the evidence

⁴⁹Olina, 2000, 165-66.

⁵⁰CP1, sent. 23, (1152), 164. A different location in CP1, sent. 35, (1298), 244.

⁵¹Self-procurement was a common strategy for monastic houses. Specifically for fowl, hunted in marshy areas, Carpentier, 2006, 181-202, outlines the procurement strategies of a Benedictine eleventh century house in north-western France.

does not allow a clear cut decision as to whether the device was efficient enough to be used commercially. The priest of the locality of the island of Ammiana, not far from Torcello also held some *escadurie* in 1173. Did he hunt those for his own leisure, or did he rent them out for commercial hunting? The document does not say. In 1196 the noblemen of the island of Ammiana “made” (*faciebant*) *escadurias* in the winter in certain locations.⁵² Maybe the noblemen also fabricated their own decoys, but certainly they hunted over them, and the hunt would not have been commercially motivated. Perhaps the *escadurias* were suitable for both types of hunt with a version allowing for the use of projectile weapons. Indeed, if the birds were attracted to platforms or perches of some sort, by either bait and/or their wooden effigies, they could well have been shot from a boat or from shore with a crossbow. Returning to the rent from 1157, described above, it may be that the two terms, *formas* and *escaduria* could be used interchangeably, or that there is a scribal error. The 1157 agreement did involve decoys, but in the form of *escadurie*, and it was then commercially motivated.

5.2.6 Projectile weapons.

Traditionally, bows, arrows, and crossbows were used in war as well as in hunting. Although there were restrictions as to what constituted legal weapons, projectile weapons were not rarities in Venice.⁵³ A citizen militia existed, enlisted from the shooting lanes on the island of the Lido. It was to practice regularly in order to be ready to defend the city.⁵⁴ In 1474, for example, the island of Torcello was to provide 50 crossbowmen.⁵⁵ Some of the shooters may have been very dedicated. A Senate decree of November 28, 1386, prohibited shooting clay pellets against windows, chickens, and doves in the city.⁵⁶ Even in peacetime the Venetians

⁵²Luigi Lanfranchi, ed., *S. Lorenzo di Ammiana*, in *Comitato per la pubblicazione delle fonti relative alla storia di Venezia* (Venezia: Alfieri Editore, 1956), 104.

⁵³For example, the chapter *De Armis non portandis* (regarding weapons that may not be carried) of the 1462 *statuto* of Torcello indicates that certain weapons (possibly with a sharp blade) could be “oversized” (*oltre misura*) and illegal to carry, Battaglini, 1874, 69.

⁵⁴Crossbow makers was part of the *Arti*, the Venetian guilds. Their *capitolare* or statute is published in Monticolo, 1896, 171-180; Lane, 1973, 356.

⁵⁵Battaglini, 1874, 72.

⁵⁶Cecchetti, 1885, 54.

would have employed crossbowmen on their commercial ships. There was no guild organization in Venetian shipping, as mariners came from varied backgrounds and may have worked, for example, as fishermen, or coopers, when not on the sea.⁵⁷ Documents from the fifteenth century show bows and arrows (but not, so far, crossbows) stashed away in working boats from which they were readily used in confrontations amongst fishermen and other lagoon workers and so obviously not noblemen.⁵⁸ The amount of weapons in circulation must have been difficult, if not impossible to control in a large port city. Sometimes used to hunt, the ubiquitous projectile weapons were a recognized part of Venetian life.

5.2.7 *Pertegaris, Peticam*

The lagoon islands afforded quite different hunts for the avian raptors. This was likely a seasonal activity that coincided with the fall migration. This would create some “semblance of concentration along flight paths” of animals otherwise scattered far and wide.⁵⁹ Confirming this are testimonies to a fight over the rights to capture the hunting birds on the beach of the island Sagagnana which took place in the month of November.⁶⁰ As the name of the technique implies, *peticam* (from Latin *pertica* or wooden pole, and *pertega* which means pole in vernacular Venetian) took advantage of the raptors’ preference for high perches from which they could safely peruse their surroundings. A modern day (illegal) device to capture these birds is called a pole trap. It involves setting spring traps on top of long poles, when the bird lands, the trap snaps, capturing the bird’s feet.⁶¹

There is no reason the Venetians could not have used such a device. De’ Crescenzi’s suggestion was to place some type of bait (chickens or doves but also mice or grain) under three

⁵⁷Lane, 1973, 166-67.

⁵⁸PT 75, (1420-21), 1 July; 98, (1455-56), 6 July. Confrontations between fisherfolk were not unique to the lagoon, but rather commonplace between groups competing for the lucrative fishy resource. The confrontations over such matters in England and Wales could be “violent” and even amount to “armed assault,” Maryanne Kowaleski, “Commercialization of the Sea. Fishing in Medieval England and Wales,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 180–81.

⁵⁹Wood and Fyfe, 1943, 433.

⁶⁰CP2, sent. 71, (1327), 537-38.

⁶¹Wood and Fyfe, 1943, 443.

lime smeared young trees, which may be replaced by poles. Again according to de' Crescenzi, falcons could also be captured with the *ragne* which involved a slack net, sandwiched between two taut ones and all vertically held in place by a wooden frame (and so the poles).⁶² There are several factors weighing against these techniques. According to Baudoin Van den Abeele, lime would not have been used as it damages the bird's feathers for a long time after the capture. While this is not a problem if the bird is to be eaten, it prevents training.⁶³ Regrettably, emperor Frederick II did not indicate any techniques for the safe and appropriate capture of raptors.⁶⁴ While there is no evidence on the use of lime on part of the Venetians, the open beaches of the islands favored by the falcons, would have been suitable for planting and then removing the poles that held the traps. Similarly, Venetian documents never mention nets in the context of falcon capture and it is unlikely that the Venetian documents would have omitted mention of such an extensive set-up by its proper name. Furthermore, the *ragne* were fixed, and part of a landscaped environment which was suitable also in the eyes of the law. According to Roman law, which the Venetians applied in these matters, all beaches were public because they provided access to the sea, which was for everyone to use. It would have been very unlikely that the Venetian state would have allowed permanent structures in such a place.

The Venetian fowling devices reflect a keen understanding of animal behavior exploited in the unobtrusive ways productive, here as elsewhere to a commercial process of resource extraction. The fowlers' capturing procedures, and the steps leading up to the capture, similarly reflect the demands of a commercial activity, adapted to the unique characteristics of their moody environments. The next section will illustrate the larger context of Venetian fowling.

5.3 HYBRID LANDSCAPES

The Venetians faced a material and a conceptual problem in order to use their environments proficiently. On the one hand, they had to devise ways in which to make a living

⁶²In fishing this is known as a "trammel net."

⁶³Personal communication.

⁶⁴Wood and Fyfe, 1943, 433.

from the resources available in their waters. On the other hand, they had to articulate the mutability of their environments in ways consistent with legal and societal requirements. This presented them with quite different challenges from those to their landlocked neighbors. Meeting the challenge in Venice led to the creation of a legal landscape. It was of course common for medieval municipalities to create bodies of legislation to organize their territories. The Venetians, however, had to make discontinuity continually legible by systematizing an environment which could change from solid to liquid in the span of an incoming tide, and could suffer sudden, or gradual, erasure. As discussed, the lagoon dwellers anchored such mutability in the permanence of the law, by establishing parameters for the legal status of the lagoon's geomorphological features on the basis of two common environmental characteristics. One was their status at mean high tide, the other, water movement. In further recognition of the practical, social, and economic problems created by their environments, they created an *ad hoc* magistracy, called the Magistratura del Piovego (pp. 69-70), tasked with identifying permanent boundaries between lagoon areas of different legal standing, public, (belonging to the Venetian state), and private. This ensured a common framework for continuous and peaceful co-existence amongst different categories of users. To understand work practices in the lagoon in general, and those of the fowlers in particular, it is useful to imagine the material and infrastructural framework for resource extraction, and the conceptual one of the law, as two distinct anthropogenic landscapes, superimposed upon the existing natural lagoon environments.

5.3.1 Material Landscapes. Salteries and Fisheries

The two natural resources of the lagoon that made the fortune of Venice were salt and fish. Before the city became a commercial empire, these goods, supplemented with the produce and fruit cultivated on the islands, formed the city's economic foundation.⁶⁵ Salt was an

⁶⁵This was remarked upon as early as the sixth century by Cassiodorus, who compared salt to a currency in food (*moneta victualis*). Maria Francesca Tiepolo, et. al., eds., *Ambiente e risorse nella politica veneziana. Mostra documentaria. 5 agosto-8 ottobre 1989* (Venezia: Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, 1989), 10.

ubiquitous need in the Middle Ages and exported widely. The market for fish was large and growing under the impulse of demographic increase coupled with the dietary dictates of the Church. The productive potential of both activities was facilitated by the presence of permanent infrastructures which, in turn, became veritable centers of production with docks, moorings, sheds, repositories for tools, shelters, and other amenities that aided the work. In turn, they created economies of scale for production, transport, and in the case of salt, storage and colonized stretches of otherwise unexploited marginal landscapes. Salteries and fisheries required a heavy investment of capital, and, in turn, built the fortune of some aristocrats. Crouzet-Pavan argues that these families could be “massively” represented as private owners of productive stretches of water in the northern lagoon as was the Zane family in the thirteenth to fifteenth century, for example, while the Memmo became prominent in such activities in the fifteenth.⁶⁶ Among other large owners may be counted the powerful Benedictine monasteries, variously endowed by private and state donations.⁶⁷ The French historian further discusses how, apart from the rich dynasties, smaller scale owners and investors, sometimes lesser notables, owned simpler structures, and how the fishermen, who were among the primary users of these facilities, rarely, if ever, owned large establishments.⁶⁸ For them, the initial investment was probably prohibitive, as it involved the purchase of the water, and the building of facilities.

Salteries consisted of large level areas in which sea water was allowed to evaporate, leaving behind a layer of salt. Rehearsing the basic structure of salteries reveals how it’s design could also support other forms of production, specifically fowling.⁶⁹ Salteries were located in areas that were naturally shallow, level and often not far from the coast, as for example in the area of Chioggia.⁷⁰ Salt making was seasonal business, relying on plenty of sunshine and low humidity and inclement winter weather caused them to be shut down during the cold season.

⁶⁶The incident reported at the end of this chapter took place at a locality owned by the Zane dynasty.

⁶⁷Tiepolo, 1989, 21, 23.

⁶⁸Crouzet-Pavan, 1995, 186.

⁶⁹Most of the information is derived from Hocquet, 2003, 524, and throughout.

⁷⁰Jean-Claude Hocquet, “Histoire et cartographie: les salines de Venise et Chioggia au Moyen Age,” *Atti dell’Istituto di scienze, lettere e arti* 128 (1970): 567–74.

Making salt was labor intensive, not the least because of the repair work that was necessary after the storms of each winter.⁷¹ The term *salina* (pl. *saline*) refers to the individual bed or salt pan, a trapezoid or rectangular part of a larger whole, also, confusingly, called *salina*. The larger area was cordoned off from the sea by a high, embankment, the *fondamento* (pl. *fondamenti*) which was built first and required much material. The structure, with the same name, (i.e. modern day Fondamenta Nuova) was also used in urban settings to describe a rather wide and high walkway facing a canal on the one side, and buildings on the other, suitable for loading and unloading cargo. In the salt-works the *fondamento* had a protective function, but it also served as a platform to moor boats at and do work from. It may also have served as a location for waterfowling and then likely with the *panthera*.

Within the perimeter of the *fondamento*, and cordoned off by smaller, but walkable earthen banks, lay the individual beds. Through a sluice called the *callio* the sea water was let into a first set of large salt pans where the water heated up and initial evaporation took place. From there, the water was led into increasingly smaller beds from which the salt was raked up and collected for further purification. To be remunerative, a salt work has to be relatively large. Historian Jean-Claude Hocquet calculated that the *Fondamenta Laguna* had a total surface area for making salt of approximately 25-30 hectares, a substantial size no doubt. The acreage of the lagoon devoted to the activity comes into better focus when the author further states that between the tenth and fifteenth century, 119 salteries that he knows of would have been operating at one time or other in the lagoon.⁷²

The *saline* produced more than just salt. It made good sense to concentrate different activities in one place in the watery lagoon expanses and for their owners to capture as much income as possible from their infrastructures. Tidal mills with wheels activated by the tidal flux could be attached to the outer perimeter of the saltery, the *fondamento*.⁷³ When salt making shut

⁷¹Hocquet, 2003, 36.

⁷²Jean-Claude Hocquet, "Le Saline," in *Storia di Venezia, vol. I*, eds. Gino Benzoni and Antonio Meniti Ippolito (Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1992), 519.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 517 and throughout.

down in the winter, tenants were allowed to fish there, and the existing infrastructures would have offered welcome shelter and spaces to work from.⁷⁴ The slow season for salt was when waterfowling also occurred in these sites as it neatly coincided with the best season to hunt ducks.⁷⁵ The shallow waters in and around the salteries and their proximity to the coastline were both good characteristics for duck habitat. An 1159 deposition shows three men, Aurius Steno, Domenicus Bosio, and Domenicus Steno, all residents in the northern Venetian area of *Canareglo* (today Cannareggio) paying a rent that consisted of fish in the summer, but ducks in winter.⁷⁶ Done on a seasonal basis, fowling likely complemented other means of resource extraction from fishing to the collection of mollusks and reeds and the capture of falcons.⁷⁷ Much like the Tuscans, the Venetians also clearly had “multi-professionals skills” (p. 149) when it came to using their natural environments.

Waterfowlers in the salteries paid their rent either in pairs of ducks or in cash.⁷⁸ Early documents pertaining to monasteries indicated that waterfowling rights were routinely part of the general rent of the *salina*. Evidence for this comes to us, for example, from the 1074 sale of one *salina* to the monastery of St. George of Fossone (San Giorgio di Fossone) and that, in 1083, of three *saline* to the monastery of St. John Evangelist (San Giovanni Evangelista).⁷⁹ This reflects the general format of early medieval Italian rent agreements in which the individual use rights are listed as being an integral part of the rental. Arrangements changed from the mid-thirteenth century, when Venetian rents become shorter in duration, and more specific, following the general medieval Italian trend. For example, several mid thirteenth-century rents exist for the *aque* (unspecified use) which were part of a *fondamento* in a location near Pupilia. These rents

⁷⁴Zug Tucci, 1992, 495.

⁷⁵Luigi Lanfranchi, ed., *S. Giovanni Evangelista di Torcello* (Venezia: Alfieri Editore, 1957), 11.

⁷⁶CP2, sent. 70 (1324), 524.

⁷⁷Mollusks, in this case oysters, (*ostrege* in Venetian), PT 94 (1449-50), 2 Dec. 1449, cutting of reeds (*canasegando* in Venetian), PT 29 (1354-55), no date.

⁷⁸See for example a *instrumentum locationis et promissionis* of 1302 which assigned individual salt beds within a *salina* to fifteen individuals. This *salina* was part of a larger area owned by the monastery of St. Peter (Sancti Petri). CP1, sent. 38, (1298), 255-56.

⁷⁹For the sale of 1074, Bianca Strina, ed., *S. Giorgio di Fossone*, in *Comitato per la pubblicazione delle fonti relative alla storia di Venezia* (Venezia: Il Comitato Editore, 1957), 5-6. For that of 1083, Lanfranchi, 1957, 11.

were very modest consisting of between five and even just one pair of ducks per year, suggesting that what was rented was only the fowling right.⁸⁰ The trend indicating that the extent of what was considered rentable and economically viable was shrinking is confirmed fully by rental agreements of a century later. In 1342 two women rent a single *panthera* and nothing else, to Marco of Mazzorbo. Similarly, in 1360, a *panthera* in the Torcello area is rented to another Marco, Marco Naresso and his daughter, Franceschina.⁸¹

Multifunctional arrangements for resource extraction and distribution of fowling rights similarly grew up around the *valli da pesca*, the Venetian fisheries. Considering that for the city of Venice alone, the pre-Black Death population may have reached 100.000 individuals, and that strict adherence to Church dictates demanded 150 meatless days, it is clear that efficient fishing practice was highly desirable. Fisheries made fishing easier and more reliable by creating semi-permanent enclosures in areas of the lagoon where the fish could be kept, grown larger, and fished with ease. Much like for the salteries, fisheries had moorings, docks, sheds, shelters, access canals, and other infrastructures. While fisheries had been a lagoon feature all through the Middle Ages, it is not possible to ascertain standard size or total number of *valli* before the first known official census, done by Cristoforo Sabbadino in 1540, which enumerates a total of 60 *valli* in the lagoon.⁸²

The Venetian *valle* took advantage of the natural tendency of certain fish species to migrate, spring and fall, towards warmer waters. In the spring, the shallower lagoon was warmer, attracting quantities of fish, while in the winter, these same creatures sought out the relative warmth of the depths of the Adriatic sea. Among the fish displaying such behavior were gray mullet (*Mugil cefalus*), goby (*Gobiu*), and golden mullett (*Mugil auratus*), the prized Italian *cefalo*. The *valle* created enclosed areas, or fish traps, into which the fish could be led in the spring, but from which it could not depart in the fall, and be left to grow to the desired size.

⁸⁰CP1, sent. 15, (1287), 102-104.

⁸¹PT 21, (1342-43), unreadable date; 34, (1360-61), October 22.

⁸²Paolo Rosa Salva and Sergio Sartori, *Laguna e pesca. Storia, tradizioni e prospettive*, Quaderni M.V. (Venezia: Arsenale Cooperativa Editore, 1979), 12.

Between these enclosures, boats could circulate freely. In medieval Venice, the enclosures were bound by variously sized panels, consisting of wooden poles tightly interwoven with reeds, rushes, and similar materials and planted in the lagoon mud. We know that these *grisolas* were made locally of materials available in the lagoon, and by local craftsmen, or as a side line by fishermen. For example, in 1362, Michele Nigro was to make two sets of fifty *grisolas* of different dimensions and deliver them to Nicolau Mancus Grotus of Torcello.⁸³

What was good for fishing was not necessarily so for the lagoon. While the water circulated freely through the *grisolas*, they did slow the flow of the tides significantly. The *valli* impeded the normal flushing of the salty water and may have affected local salinity levels, as well as navigation. In locations already threatened by infilling, there was no denying their impact, clear to the contemporaries. In the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, the Maggior Consiglio issued prohibitions twice against the use of *grisolas*. The vehement reactions of fishers and *valli* owners alike, and the avalanche of requests for special dispensations all testify to the importance of fishing, and the clout of the fishing economy and its lobby, even in the face of infilling so severe that it eventually brought the abandonment of entire areas in the northern lagoon.⁸⁴

Much like the *saline*, the *valli* had a primary purpose, but facilitated other activities. Mills could be part of the *valle* complex, and they likely also facilitated activities such as reed cutting, and collection of oysters and mollusks from the poles that supported the docks. Testimony to waterfowling in the *valli* may be tracked through the centuries, for example through documents or depositions presented as evidence to the Piovego magistrates. In a written agreement from 997 Marco Barbalongolo (Mark longbeard?) of Pupilia, gave his three sons Ursus (Bear), Johannes, and Martinus, a twenty-nine year right to fish and bird hunt in the canals and swamps pertaining to a *valle* called *Ursina*, as well as other locations not far from Chioggia. The rent was 1000 gray mullets, twelve pairs of mallard ducks, and one hundred eel.⁸⁵ In 1157 Dominicus and Johannes

⁸³PT 35, (1361-62), no date (winter).

⁸⁴Crouzet-Pavan, 1995, 191-93.

⁸⁵CP1, sent. 13, (1286), 83.

Vitalis could obtain the fowling rights using decoys in a structure called *pescaria Memo* (Memo's fishery), for merely two pairs of unidentified ducks.⁸⁶ The monastery of St. George (San Giorgio Maggiore) issued a seven year rent involving ducks for a *piscaria* in the twelfth century.⁸⁷ In a contract from 1360-61 a *valle* was rented for three years with the rent consisting of ducks but no fish.⁸⁸

Gaining functional locations for work was only one of the problems for people operating in the lagoon. The other involved establishing and maintaining the legal status of the landscapes, whether public or private which had implications for strategies of resource allocation and access by different sets of users. The problems involved, and how the Venetian state solved them, are the topic of the next section.

5.3.2 Legal Landscapes. Public and Private Waters

In 1327 Simon and Angel Marcello, backed by their two wives, thus spoke to the Piovego magistrate. “[...] *e vuy, signor, ben savè se quelli de Sen Nicolò è desiderosi de // tor tuto en plovego.* (And you, Sir, know very well that those of St. Nicolò [the Nicolotti, members of the fishermen corporation living near the church that Raphael had bishop Magno build, p. 167] want all [Venetian waters] to be public).⁸⁹ Simon and Angelo were trying to defend their well-established rights pertaining to some mills located on a private stretch of water which abutted public waters, fished by the powerful Venetian guild.

The posture of supplication may have served Simon and Marcello well, as they did win the case. But this was not an isolated instance. About fifty years earlier, in 1284, the archdeacon of St. Mary in the village of Metamauco (Santa Maria di Metamauco) struck a similar note in his

⁸⁶CP1, sent. 27, (1294).

⁸⁷ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, (SGM) 43. The papers of the *podestà di Torcello* also contains rents for *valli*. For example, PT 29, (1354-55), 18 April; 35, (1361-62), no date (three year rent); PT 55, (1381-82), no date (biannual rent); PT 106, (1466-67), 30 June.

⁸⁸PT 35, (1360-61), no date (three year rent).

⁸⁹CP2, sent. 72, (1327), 551.

deposition to the Piovego.⁹⁰ He spoke of “those using the public waters” such as the guilds, as “just wanting to reap their own profits and do their own pleasures,” by keeping all of the waters of Venice public. In the case of the archdeacon, the magistracy of the Piovego dutifully marked off boundaries, as was part of its duty, but in this case it is impossible to say whether there were winners or losers.

What was going on? It was not just that corporations such as that of the Nicolotti held “exorbitant” privileges in an increasingly populated and over-exploited lagoon.⁹¹ The depositions dramatize one important problem that plagued the use of the lagoon. Certain types of waterscapes could either be privately owned or public domain. Their juridical status affected who could use them and under what conditions. Private owners used their own resources or rented them. Public areas were in theory accessible to all Venetians, although mostly exploited by guilds and corporations or participants organized in *societas*.⁹² The result was that two groups of users of important resources worked, literally, side by side in landscapes of objectively difficult legibility, subject both to slow and sudden change in morphology. Conditions could be such in the lagoon that even unintentional trespass, perhaps on a foggy winter night, was a distinct possibility. In March of 1318 then *podestà* of Torcello, Pietro Barbarigo, collected depositions pertaining to a trespass perpetrated at the expense of Franco Cassetus from the island of Burano, his father in law, Albano, and one Andrea Franco. One night, the three men were placing a *lignola* in their rented (privately owned) water. At some point during the night, two other men, Franciscus Sallamani, also of Burano, and Michele Gonellus appeared in a gondola and also tried to place a *lignola* in e those same waters. Shouting and chasing ensued, involving also other men who were working nearby. In their defense, the two trespassers assured the *podestà* that they only placed their *lignola* “believing” (*credentes*) that they were in “the public waters” (*publice*).⁹³ It is of

⁹⁰[...] *archpresbiter opponerat et dicebat quod eis (the magistrates) non debebat fides aliqua adhiberi pro eo videlicet quod decebat illos fore piscatores et homines qui propter eorum utilitates et comoda vellent omnes aquas et palludes de Venciis publicari et in comune et publicum conservari [...]. CP1, sent. 4, (1284), 39.*

⁹¹And even more so in the fifteenth century. Crouzet-Pavan, 1995, 191.

⁹²Cessi, 1943, 94. A *societas* for fishing was for example formed in Torcello on 25 October. PT 35, (1361-62) or on an undated day in January, 1460, PT 102.

⁹³PT 6, (1318-19), 13 March, 1318, several consecutive documents.

course impossible to judge the credibility of their claim, or whether unintentional trespass would have been a distinct possibility in this case. That the two suggested it at all should alert us to the fact that this may have reflected very real working conditions, and opportunities for getting away with cheating. It is likely that the binary legal situation pitted users against one another and that the situation was used to mutual advantage. Especially the powerful fishermen may have waxed arrogant with (small-scale) private users, trying to push the boundaries of the public to their advantage.

Posturing and rhetoric aside, the Venetian state recognized the problem. The creation of the Piovego in 1282 and the mentality behind its *modus operandi* was a development in an ongoing Venetian legal tradition involving the lagoon, its resources, and their users. As discussed, the lagoon's bewildering variety of environments had been systematized on the basis of their relationship to tides and water which, in turn, determined its "utility," or lack thereof (p. 164). This arrangement made sense in the context of Roman law, which the Venetians chose and applied to their own conditions. According to Roman law, codified in the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, the air, the sea, perpetually running water, and their immediate banks (and beaches) which guaranteed access to the water were *res communis omnium* (common to all according to natural law), and could belong to no one.⁹⁴ Rivers and roads were also part of *res publicae* or *res communis*, over which nobody could exercise exclusive rights. As in Venice, so in the lagoon, it was illegal to block public access ways as well as access to public spaces.⁹⁵ Uncertainties about the legal status arose for those areas which according to Roman law could be either private or public: waters, land, reed beds, (*canneti*) and swamps (*paludi*).⁹⁶ These were the areas of contention to be resolved by the magistrates of the Piovego. The remaining areas were deemed either "useless," or plainly public, as were canals, ports, beaches, and river banks destined for

⁹⁴Avanzi, 1993, 31.

⁹⁵Fishing and collection of oysters (*ostregare*) were prohibited under any circumstance in all canals of Torcello as well as those of Mazzorbo without a license issued by the *podestà* which permitted the setting of nets. PT 94, (1449-50), 2 December.

⁹⁶The preamble to each and every Piovego sentence clearly states that these areas, *aquas, terras, canedos, seu paludes* where indeed the ones the magistrates were admitted to rule over, for example CP1, sent. 3 (1283), 28-29.

general use and always guaranteed access.⁹⁷ For the areas under contention, the Piovego magistrates would decide on legal status depending on their documented use in the past one hundred years.⁹⁸ For example, in 1293, Leonardus Iustiniano and his brothers, Perino and Pangraccio, asked the magistrates to determine the status of their swamp and water, called Barciniga located in an area near Chioggia. The three successfully proved ownership (private use) for the last 100 years, by producing rental agreements presented to the Piovego. The latter ruled in their favor and, upon Leonardus' request, bounded the area, possibly to prevent possible future contestations.⁹⁹

The discussion should make the anxieties of private owners and users come into better focus. When the Nicolotti were accused of wanting to “make all waters public,” their underlying reasoning made good economic sense, at least to themselves. Nevertheless, private owners abounded, and there is documentation for landowners in Venice since at least the 800s.¹⁰⁰ Private property could be acquired through grant, like Venetian nobleman Leonardus Venerio, who, in 1294, was granted a “possession” called Seucho by Doge Petrus Gradenigo perhaps on the basis of special service rendered to the state.¹⁰¹ Private rights could also be acquired if the *aque* were not subject to the public good clause of Roman law because they were either too shallow, emerged above medium tide, or had been artificially created by channeling or infilling as was increasingly the case in urban Venice. This explains the concentration of privately owned *valli*

⁹⁷Avanzi, 1993, 89.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 90. Occupancy for one hundred or more years, gave the users an un-contestable use-right in perpetuity. This *status quo* could be upheld in court. For Venetian jurist Jacopo Bertaldo (d. 1315) the first requirement of a custom (*consuetudo* also known as *usus*, or use) was its being in place for at least thirty years. Zordan 2005, 170-71.

⁹⁹CP1, sent. 25, (1293), 180-88.

¹⁰⁰Due to the difficulty in reconstructing the physiognomy of the medieval lagoon, it is not presently possible to determine the relative size and distribution of private and public areas. When the magistrates were called to redeem a controversy in an area, they walked the boundaries, marked them, and provided a detailed written description, providing us with a map of medieval conditions in that location. Still, transposing them to the modern day physiognomy of the lagoon is difficult at best. Where possible, Roberto Cessi has attempted a reconstruction on the basis of some of them, and states that the public areas were indeed very large. For example of different areas, Cessi, 1943, 89, 94; more sporadically, Crouzet-Pavan 1992 and 1995, throughout.

¹⁰¹CP1, sent. 34, (1297), 239-40; Zordan, 2005, 139.

and salteries in more remote, and shallow, areas of the lagoon, for example around Torcello, and Chioggia.

It is possible to view the Magistratura del Piovego as providing a public service to lagoon users and to uphold Venetian priorities in matters of protection of the *qualitas soli* (p. 163). It is clear from a reading of the rulings that the areas there under consideration had economic value, or potential. These were either sites valuably employed for various types of resource extraction or localities that could become economically interesting if they changed status. For example, the several requests for infilling of public waters, by nearby private owners, especially in urban Venice, would have resulted in building lots of various kinds. On the medieval Venetian real-estate market, this new land had great economic potential.¹⁰² The way in which the Piovego's magistrates went about their labors reflect governmental understanding that only by creating legal legibility on solid, and observable, material grounds, could the mutable lagoon environments be successfully managed. In the process of collecting evidence, documents were flanked by perambulations and the depositions of local inhabitants from all walks of life: local knowledge was recognized.¹⁰³ In their work, the magistrates made legal landscapes and the presence of the state plainly visible through the planting of their wooden boundary markers. Subsequent infringement upon this legal *status quo* had to be reported by the users of the areas, for example tenants, who were to report trespass to the owner of the location.¹⁰⁴ In other words, once the Piovego had done its work, implementation was put in the hands of those most interested in it, the users of the lagoon. The Venetians fowled and extracted resources from all kinds of ecologically suitable locations, no matter their legal status. The way these rights were assigned, however, differed between the two types of areas, and their legal and social frameworks. When

¹⁰²Of the 150 reported cases, thirty gave public status to the areas in question, another thirty regularized situations of mixed status, assigning boundaries to the private and public parts therein contained, fifteen assigned private status to the locations and the rest (75) allowed for emerging lands, including those created by infilling, to be added to existing private areas.

¹⁰³If things did not go as planned some of these could then conveniently be dubbed as "ignorant" or perhaps self-serving on the basis that they were "low people." Avanzi, 1993, 55-56.

¹⁰⁴CP2, sent. 48, (1306), 353.

called upon, in all waters of the *dogado* famously bounded by its northern and southern end points in the formulaic phrase, *a Grado usque Caput Aggeris* (from Grado to Cape of Aggero), the Piovego could establish legal status of the areas both *a priori* to conflict and environmental change, and *a posteriori*. At least in legal terms, the Piovego could create public order.

5.4 RESOURCE EXTRACTION IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WATERS

Public waters were technically open to all Venetians, including the fowlers. There is no evidence as to the existence of guilds of fowlers, but those of the fishermen show them engaged in duck hunting also. For this reason I here assume that the models of organization in place for the fishers also involved the fowlers. It is also possible that some fowlers plied their trade outside of pre-established organizations.¹⁰⁵

There were good practical reasons for working within an association. Economies of scale in extraction, transportation, as well as efficient risk, labor, and capital management recommended this collective agency. For members of guilds, there were the added advantages of mutual help and solidarity, as well as collective bargaining power to be gained. This may have granted access to larger areas of operation within the public areas of the Venetian lagoon.¹⁰⁶ Part of the Nicolotti corporation's strength lay in its ancient lineage, part in the successful enforcement of internal regulations among guild members, ensured by their elected leader, the *Gastaldo Grande*.¹⁰⁷ In the interest of both the Venetian state, and the Nicolotti themselves, he inspected the stalls at the market and ensured adherence to current Venetian market regulation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵I have not been able to trace the fowlers described by Martin da Canal (p. 168) as gifting the doge with 2,000 mallards every year at Christmas, although a *deliberazione* (decision) of the municipality of Torcello, in 1515, 7 November bids the *osellatori* of that island to go capture "the ducks" and bring them to the doge for the "usual" distribution. Battaglini, 1874, 77. There is some fragmentary evidence that people recognized as fowlers, and so perhaps not as fishermen on a seasonal assignment, existed, for example, Cecchetti, 1885, 53 n. 1, which I have not been able to verify.

¹⁰⁶Zago, 1982, 129-30.

¹⁰⁷The original *mariegola* (rules) of the corporation of the Nicolotti fishmongers is held at the Library of the Museo Correr (ms. Cic. 2791 or ms. IV, 98) and titled *Laus Deo et Beatae Virigni Mariae coppia della Matricola de compravendi pesce*. It was compiled in 1772 from remaining original fragments.

¹⁰⁸Zago, 1982, 71-77.

He was also the corporation's go-between with the Venetian state and, apparently, the corporation's clout in the corridors of the Ducal Palace was not negligible. All this provided long-term job security for the corporation's member, and brisk sales, also of ducks, as Nicolotti over the age of fifty could become fishmongers, a much lighter line of work which included the sale of "birds."¹⁰⁹ As was medieval custom the two trades could not create a monopoly situation. Zago warns, however, that for all this, the life of fishermen and fishmongers was rather "miserable."¹¹⁰

Documents from the wider lagoon allow detail to emerge on the municipally sponsored legislation and organization of fishing and fowling. The lagoon contained several municipalities dependent upon Venice, but still allowed some measure of internal self-rule. Local justice was administered by a *podestà* sent by Venice.¹¹¹ As elsewhere in medieval Italy, these municipalities had their own *statuti*, and controlled varying amounts of waters around them.¹¹² Products extracted from public waters had to be taken to Venice for sale, while local markets seem to have been supplied from the municipal waters. For example, in the twelfth century local citizens fishing in Methamauco's (northern lagoon) public waters had to bring product to their local market.¹¹³

Within this framework, it was the *podestà's* responsibility to ensure the protection and enjoyment of private property, as well as the tutelage of public waters and accessibility. The situation is not much different from that of Tuscany, where a local commune may try to protect its *contado*, its resources, and the revenue derived from them by their legitimate users, from territorial lords and/or dominant cities. Venetian *podestà* had a say in assigning access to resources. For example on April 20, 1449, the *podestà* of Torcello prohibited any person, citizen

¹⁰⁹The provenance of the animals was rigorously local, Monticolo, 1896, vol. 2, XXXVII.

¹¹⁰Zago, 1982, 130; 139.

¹¹¹Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, "Venise et le monde communal: recherches sur les podestats Vénitiens 1200–1350," *Journal des savants*, July-December 1992, 277–315.

¹¹²Ortalli, 1989; Battaglini, 1874.

¹¹³[N]on audebant pisces venedere nisi in Methamauco. They should not dare sell the fish anywhere but in Methamauco, CP1, sent. 4 (1284), 37, the incident is from 1158.

or foreigner, of any condition or status, from fishing or having others fish for him with any technique, in a string of locations, unless they had his explicit permission.¹¹⁴ The penalty was hefty, at least for a fisherman, as it consisted of the loss of one's boat. That same year, on 11 May, the same *podestà* assigned through public auction the right to use the public waters of Lio Mazor to one Nicolao, who, on that occasion, was the *persona plus offerente*, (highest bidder). A couple of similar documents from that same year suggest that this modality of resource assignment was common or becoming so.¹¹⁵ Much like in Fucecchio, also the Venetian commercial hunts on municipal waters were regulated and managed by the town itself. These sources are stingy with details about the activities taking place in these locations, and their size. One possible scenario for securing workers and organizing labor emerges through the application of the current medieval contractual agreements to Venetian conditions.

As discussed in the chapter on Tuscany, *societas*-type contracts (pp. 160-61) provided an agreement between different parties in which each one contributed capital, manpower, or both, according to his possibilities. These types of contracts found in the Venetian lagoon run along similar lines. For example, on an unknown day in January 1461, Petrus Fererexio and Petrus Faxuolus appear in front of Tommaso Zane (*arbiter amicabile*, friendly arbiter), and the *podestà* to form a *compagnia* for fishing and fowling in the *valle* of the Benedictine house of St. Lawrence (San Lorenzo) which the two were already renting.¹¹⁶ In this case, one partner provided the fishing equipment, while the other was responsible for the fowling equipment, consisting of a *panthera* and nets. One, it is not clear who, provided a boat, and paid some money into the enterprise, while, as a reflection of their respective activities, the two were to use the *valle* at different times of the year. We may speculate whether the two were involved in several such contracts, for different areas. When the society was dissolved, equipment was divided according

¹¹⁴I will here as elsewhere, again include fowling under fishing, although it is not mentioned, for the reasons already outlined. The waters were called Zoioxa, Cavalin, Falconara, and La Spada. PT 94, (1449-50).

¹¹⁵For example, PT 94, (1449-50), 11 May (Nicolao) as well as 13 July and an undated document.

¹¹⁶PT 102, (1460-61). For other examples of Venetian *societas*, PT 35, (1361-62), 25 October; PT 38, (1364-65), 1 June.

to the individual investment. In case of disagreement, Tommaso Zane would likely provide testimony as to the initial agreement, hold the two to their responsibilities, and help liquidate the equipment. In this specific case of fowling, the *societas* was formed in order to perform work, and share risks and expenses, for a private, rented, structure, rather than use a public stretch of water. It is however possible that once the use of public waters had been obtained, *societas* type arrangements could be put in place to exploit them.

As described, Nicolao was the man who in 1449 obtained the three year lease of the public waters of Lio Mazor. In hypothesis, once he had secured his right to the area, he may have entered into a *societas*-type agreement to secure financial means and workers for the task. Perhaps he did none of the actual work himself, and merely provided capital. Lio Mazor is a relatively large island in the lagoon, and Nicolao may have acquired quite a large area to work in, which would support the *societas* hypothesis.¹¹⁷ Crouzet-Pavan argues that the lagoon was overexploited, full of enclosures, and less financially endowed users were to a large extent shut out.¹¹⁸ As in Fucecchio's hunts, the way to commercial success may have lain with gaining exclusive access to larger size areas, and firmer, contract-based forms of organization.

Private individuals, families, or religious institutions such as the important monasteries could own specific Venetian waters.¹¹⁹ The payment of a carefully defined rent was the customary way in which tenants could, for a pre-determined period of time, obtain specific rights of use.¹²⁰ As we saw, long tenancies were especially useful in providing evidence for private ownership in the case of contested areas, and hereditary rentals were not uncommon in the Middle Ages. In a thirteenth century document from the monastery of St. George (San Giorgio Maggiore) one witness says, for example, that "for over sixty years, they and their elders as they

¹¹⁷See for example the contemporary map published in Crouzet-Pavan, 1995, 349.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 184.

¹¹⁹Luigi Lanfranchi and Bianca Strina have published several collections of those. For example, Lanfranchi, 1956 and 1957, and Strina, 1957; Luigi Lanfranchi and Bianca Strina, eds., *Ss. Ilario e Benedetto e S. Gregorio* (Venezia: Il Comitato Editore, 1965); Luigi Lanfranchi, "Documenti dei sec. XI e XII relativi all'episcopato equilense," *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti* tomo CIV, parte seconda (1944–45): 891–915; Lanfranchi Strina, 1981.

¹²⁰For example, PT 25, (1348-49), 26 April.

have heard from their fathers, have held [the area] for the monastery for a rent (in fish and fowl).”¹²¹ For the tenant, hereditary rentals could provide economic peace of mind, but evidence shows that rented tenancies in Venice varied in length and with a tendency towards shorter rents by the fourteenth century.¹²² This arrangement favored the owner, but put a pinch on the tenant, and may have squeezed out smaller, less endowed ones.

While scarcities of fish and fishing frauds were commonly reported there is currently no such evidence for the ducks.¹²³ Duck rents ranged widely in the amount of birds requested, whether this reflected the size of the area in question, available duck populations, the landlord’s preference, or other reasons. Rents varied from one pair, to three, eleven, twenty, fifty, even seventy although rents of twenty plus birds were more rare. In all rents involving both fowl and fish, the latter consistently and greatly outnumber the former. For example, in 1236 the owner of an *aqua*, Leonardus Iustinianus, demanded nine pairs of ducks and 300 *cefalos* (mullet).¹²⁴ In another instance, outlined in sentence 70 of the Piovego from 1324, the number of fish greatly outnumbered the ducks in several areas owned by the monastery of St. Lawrence (San Lorenzo) with 1000 or even 2000 *cefalos* to 18, 15, 11, or 7 pairs of ducks.¹²⁵ Monastic houses may have been more diligent in their observance of proscribed meatless days and financially capable of doing so by eating fish, but the relationship is evident everywhere. This may reflect the more prestigious status of ducks (game birds), as well as natural differences in flock sizes and the

¹²¹SGM 43.

¹²²For example, 5 years (1128); 15 years (1159); 4 years (1180); 25 years, and 30 years. (both 1195); 10 years. (1210); 2 years. (1214); 2 years. (1230); 6 years. (1267). All these were all among evidence presented to the Piovego, CP1, pp. 75; 75; 38; 67-68; 67; 73; 73; 85. Amongst rents from the *podestà* papers, 4 years (1342); 3, 2, and 1 year. (1354); 1 year. (1348); 3 year. (1360 and 1361); 2 years. (1381). These latter rents involve fowling rights in fisheries, open waters, and *pantherae*.

¹²³Scarcities of fish, Zago, 1982, 131-33. A very slight indication that ducks were not scarce in the lagoon is the following. The 2,000 pairs of mallard ducks that Marin Sanudo described being gifted to the doge at Christmas were substituted with a coin, aptly called *osella* (duck) in the fifteenth century. On the basis of that, Zug Tucci, 1992, 503, argues for scarcities amongst lagoon ducks due to their indiscriminate hunting and lack of protection of their environments. However, on 7 November 1515, the *deliberazione* from Torcello to “send ducks,” reported in Battaglini, 1874, 77, states that the distribution is “as usual.” Although we don’t know the number of ducks actually delivered, it may be that the duck populations, at least around Torcello, were still in good health.

¹²⁴CP1, sent. 25, (1293), 183.

¹²⁵CP2, sent. 70, (1324), 518-535.

relative efficiency of the capturing techniques. Fish was often salted, as indicated in a 1142 rent for an *aqua* owned by the bishop of Equilio involving 4,000 *cefalos ad salandum* while ducks (unless kept alive) could not be preserved for long and were not salted.¹²⁶ In many cases ducks were due in the winter, and fish in the summer, although this is not entirely consistent.¹²⁷ The prized fowl was likely intended to deck the dinner tables for the numerous festivities surrounding Christmas. In fact, duck rents could be due to monastic houses for anywhere from eight days before All Saints' Day (1 November), to the Epiphany (6 January). As Chapter 6 will detail, game meats and fowl were festive foods for lay and religious elites all over Europe and historian Barbara Harvey writes that “monastic diet was a form of upper class diet,” that included game.¹²⁸

In Venice as elsewhere, peaceful enjoyment of one's resource and the fruits of one's labor were appreciated and protected by law. Venetian *statuti* and *podestà* tried to prevent threats to this enjoyment. Yet even a cursory glance at the *podestà*'s papers reveal that poaching of fish and related damage to equipment, as well as similar, albeit less frequent, incidences surrounding fowling, were endemic in the lagoon. Trespass and attempts at illegitimate use of waters and resources were likely behind a pronouncement issued upon taking office in 1449 by *podestà* Nicola Contarini. It stated that nobody of any condition, status or gender, could under any circumstance, fish or capture fowl or make others do so for him, in any private location in Torcello.¹²⁹ That private waters were off-limits to all but the owners and their tenants should have been obvious to all. Other documents like Contarini's remain undiscovered, but why was it

¹²⁶The mullets are in *CP2*, sent. 67 (1321), 500.

¹²⁷[...] *paria sex aucellarum sive clausorum videlicet circa Nativitatem Domini .XV. dies ante vel post et per totum mensem augusti cevalos mille pro una vestra aqua*[...]. Six pairs of mallards due in the timespan of fifteen days on either side of Christmas, and one thousand mullets in August. This was a four year rent of a *valle* from 1258). *CP2*, 70 (1324), 521. Evidence also from a deposition of fishermen who state that the rents to the monastery were “fish in the summer and ducks in the winter,” *ibid.*, 525. Rents due for festivities in, *CP1*, 15 (1287), 102 (rent from 1260) and *CP2*, 70 (1324), 529 (rent from 1159).

¹²⁸Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100–1540. The Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 34, 52. Overall English and French upper class households' patterns of purchases of foodstuffs around winter festivities changed. More food of better quality was purchased. Ryan Whibbs, personal communication.

¹²⁹PT 94, (1449-50), 2 December.

necessary for a *podestà* to state such obvious matters in writing? The pronouncements may have been part of a developing trend. Twenty years earlier, on 25 August 1420 then *podestà* Giovanni Marni had pronounced himself to the effect that nobody, under any circumstance, was to fish or fowl in the (private) fishery rented to one Jacobo Faxolo. The document appears as an *ad hoc* response to a break-in that Faxolo had experienced in his *valle* on July first. The break-in had involved slashing the trellis work enclosing the fishery and, while nothing was reported stolen, repair work had to be done. Of course the real damage was in the considerable amounts of fish that may have escaped, only to be captured in somebody else's nets.¹³⁰ *Valli* were good places to perpetrate damage and steal because of the high concentration of equipment and fish that they contained. For another fisherman, the goods were easy to place on the market and provenance difficult to track. In another instance, in 1383, several tenants who were placing their fishing nets within the enclosures of such a fishery had these, and presumably all they contained, stolen from them. In the process, one tenant, Niccolino, was wounded as he tried to resist the thieves.¹³¹ In 1450, one tenant experienced damage in his *valle* for the amount of 10 *lire*; five years later, two individuals fishing in a *valle* were shot at with bows and arrows. The list could go on.¹³² The pronouncements of the *podestà* were likely attempts at providing at least legal responses to a situation of endemic poaching and trespass in an attempt to limit the damage to the legitimate users. Perhaps the "miserable" conditions of many fishermen alluded to by Zago, the "overexploitation" described by Crouzet-Pavan, the power of guilds, and scarcities of fish, all exacerbated the problem. In the changeable lagoon environments limiting damage as well as local crime may have been a very difficult proposition.¹³³

Fowlers are less well represented among victims of harassment, probably because they were less numerous than the fisherfolk. But fowling was not an activity free of risks and public

¹³⁰The document is from 1383. PT 56, (1383-84), 16 August. The general prohibition is in PT 94, (1449-50), 2 December 2, and the other two documents are in PT 75, (1420-21) 25 August, and I July.

¹³¹PT 56, (1383-84), 16 August.

¹³²PT 94, (1449-50), 26 July; 98, (1455-56), 6 July. See also Salem Elsheick, 1999, 58-65, for an instance of breaking and entering in a *valle*.

¹³³For thefts in Venice, and their punishments, Stefano Piasentini, *Alla luce della luna. Furti a Venezia (1270-1403)* (Venezia: Il Cardo, 1992).

waters represented a challenge just as much as private ones. Around dawn on November 12, 1321, two individuals from Burano were harassed by a third, as they were peacefully fowling *ad lignola* in public waters. The intruder, Petro de Creda, took to beating the water with an oar from his boat, chasing away the ducks. The hunt was ruined. Still not happy, Petro then started slashing the *lignola* of the hapless two.¹³⁴ About one hundred years later Fererexio of Torcello brought Jacobellus and Bartholomeo in front of the *podestà* accusing them of slashing and carrying away an unknown number of his *pantherae*.¹³⁵

The thick folders of the *podestà* make clear that laws and punishments did not necessarily stop crime. The motivations behind many of the conflicts that erupted remain obscure. In some instances, the damage was done simply for the sake of causing trouble, whether out of boredom or general discontent.¹³⁶ Elsewhere, incidents may have been part of vendettas, or prolonged local feuds in which participants sought revenge more than economic gain. One such emerges from testimony in a Piovego proceeding from 1327. According to witnesses, a several decade long feud existed over the use of a beach on the island of Sagagnana, between “those of Torcello” and “those” of the island of Lio Mazor. The beach was sought by both groups as it was a favorable location to hunt falcons as well as sandpipers. Amongst the hunters was also the priest of the island of Burano Mare (Burano by the sea), then legally under the municipality of Torcello. After repeated and unheeded warnings to the priest not to hunt falcons on the beach, one night those of Lio took matters in their own hands. They chased the terrified prelate into the lagoon muck, and then took his boat and his hunting devices back home with them in triumphal procession.¹³⁷ The situation was not resolved until several rounds of confrontation later, and then only with the intervention of the doge, who divided the hunting rights of falcons and sandpipers between the two communities. Stealing and doing damage to equipment and the natural resources of others, may generally be ascribed to the volatility intrinsic in a situation in which multiple

¹³⁴PT 9, (1321-22), 12 November.

¹³⁵PT 82, (1433-34), 27 May.

¹³⁶Salem Elsheikh, 1999, throughout.

¹³⁷CP2, sent. 71, (1327), 540.

users made a living working similar resources in difficult natural environments and a hardscrabble social world. Incidents surrounding fowling express a general problem of public order, variously manifested, not linked to the waterfowl as anything other than an economic good, product of somebody's work.

5.5 ELITE HUNTS

The lagoon was certainly a work place, but there were also those who played there. Waterfowl, game, and hunting possessed the same status in Venice as they did elsewhere although evidence consists of hints, rather than a full picture. As earlier described, the doge received 2,000 mallards every year as a tribute from the fowlers of Venice. This was a *regalia* right, which confirmed the man's rank and power. The doge was also recipient of old *regalia* type tributes in the form of select parts of game meats (boar feet) but also help with the hunts from the communities of Cittanova and Loreo located on the coast of mainland Italy and part of the Venetian holdings.¹³⁸ It is likely that commercial hunting was also taking place in these areas. Indeed if we substitute the bishop for the doge, the arrangement echoes that found in the chapters on hunting of the *Statuto della Sambuca* (pp. 143-44).

Venice did not lack for nobility and their status was undisputed. The Grand Council was made up of Venetian nobles and they were the recipients of those 2,000 Christmas mallards gifted to the doge. As described, during the winter months in the twelfth century, the noblemen (*nobili viri*) of the location of Ammiana hunted ducks over what appears to have been decoys.¹³⁹ In that same century, Petrus Mauro, priest of St. Mark (San Marco) of Venice, in order to entertain himself (*facetem solatium*), went capturing birds in the swamp of the monastery of St. Gregory (San Gregorio), to which he duly gave his game birds. Milanese sources showed that Venice was an important port of entry for the raptors and other exotic hunting animals procured

¹³⁸ASVe, Pacta II, f. 92v and 29 respectively.

¹³⁹Although the document reads that the noblemen *faciebant* or made decoys, it is more likely that the verb refers to their actual hunt with decoys than the actual manufacturing of the artificial birds. Lanfranchi, 1956, 104.

in the East some of which were destined for the likes of the Sforza. (p. 106) Hunting dogs were apparently also available and given as gifts to ambassadors.¹⁴⁰ It is likely that some of these animals ended up in Venetian hands as well. A similar fate may have been reserved for the falcons captured on the islands of Venice itself.¹⁴¹

Venice had no landed territory of consequence until the mid-fifteenth century, but when the Venetian aristocrats started acquiring lands there, they quickly demonstrated that they were no strangers to the hunting culture of all other landed aristocrats. From the sixteenth century onwards they started building their *case di caccia*, or hunting lodges, meant for the overnight stays of hunting brigades, and reminiscent of situations found elsewhere in Italy.¹⁴² As much as lack of land, the lack of a court in Venice, such as those found in Visconti and Sforza Lombardy, and sixteenth-century Florence, also hampered the development of a visible hunting apparatus with its cultural imperative of aggressive self-representation. Yet early hints and later developments both point to the fact that the Venetian aristocrats participated in the same elite hunting culture that could be found elsewhere in Italy.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Although some Venetians did hunt for play, documentation shows that commercial hunting was ubiquitous in the lagoon. Despite the successes of the Venetian Republic at becoming the primary port of entry for oriental goods, and despite the wealth accumulated by its mercantile class, living in sumptuous urban *palazzi*, the lagoon remained an important and very particular work place for the city.¹⁴³ Due to a large extent to its watery environments, the city's growth had warranted strategies of use and regulation resembling, but different from, those found

¹⁴⁰Cecchetti, 1885, 55.

¹⁴¹CP2, sent. 71, (1327), 540.

¹⁴²Salvarani, 2001; Sabine Frommel, "L'Italie de la Renaissance, du *casino di caccia* à la résidence de chasse," in *Chasses princières dans l'Europe de la Renaissance.*, eds. Claude d'Athenaise and Monique Chatenet (Paris: Actes Sud, 2007), 289–326.

¹⁴³Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, "Murano à la fin du Moyen Age: spécificité ou intégration dans l'espace vénitien?" *Revue Historique* 268, no. 1 (July-September 1982): 45–92, details the ways in which the island of Murano and its waters were made to serve Venetian needs.

elsewhere in northern and central Italy. Erasure, or at least change in natural conditions generated by the environment itself, was part of the almost daily development of the lagoon environments to a degree impossible to imagine on the mainland. To this was added anthropogenically induced change with its unintended consequences, which, among other things, modified the hydrological balance of the lagoon basin. The Venetian lagoon was a hybrid between natural and cultural forces. Nature forced some patterns of human behavior directly and some indirectly.

An incident recorded in 1354 by then *podestà* of Torcello Barton Barbaro, neatly illustrates the hybridity of the Venetian lagoon, the problems this landscape could create to its users, and the way in which such users co-existed in the process of resource extraction.¹⁴⁴ In early December of 1354, *podestà* Barton Barbaro was presented with a unique case involving the behavior of both wild animals and humans. One Testinus, clerk for a mill operating in the lagoon and owned by the influential Venetian Zane family, and another man, called Gomberino, brought before the *podestà* a Venetian fisherman, Marco, who legally fished in the waters pertaining to the mill. Testinus and Gomberino explained to the judge how the three of them had been whiling away time and came to observe an eagle chasing a coot (*Fulica atra*). The coot, to save its life, dived under water, as coots do, but was captured by the nets of Marco which were placed there. “That coot is ours!” Gomberino exclaimed as the bird dove into Zane waters. “What?!” Marco replied. “That bird is mine as it is caught in my nets.” Marco then proceeded to grab an oar and hit Testinus on the head. As so often in the records the judge’s decision is unknown.

The story is a good place to conclude a chapter on Venetian waterfowling, (although a coot is not a duck), because the accidental animal behavior illustrates the peculiarity of the problems that those working in the Venetian lagoon faced in negotiating a landscape at once natural, material, and legal. The work of the fisherman Marco in constructed lagoon waters, much like that of many fowlers, simply took advantage of built infrastructures, or what I have earlier named the material landscape, consisting of the Zane mill and its appurtenances. The

¹⁴⁴PT 29, (1354-55), undated, December, 1354.

multilayered legal landscape is what caused the situation to explode. Marco owned his nets, however the movable devices were physically placed in private waters not his, but belonging to Zane. Marco had a right of use for fishing and he likely paid a rent for the use. The coot literally falling out of the sky was an unexpected boon, but who had the right to it? The animal was *res nullius* (pp. 20-21), but his natural disposition, as jurist Bartolus (p. 21) would have opined, was clearly to dive into (Zane's) water. The animal could not have known about the nets. Both parties had good legal claims, and it is unfortunate that the *podestà's* finding is unknown. It is tempting to ask if the conflict over the bird was really prompted by its dubious desirability as meat or whether it simply provided an excuse to act on an existing feud between users.

Venice had inscribed its waters with boundary markers of various kinds. This was not to cement an environmental *status quo*. Indeed, the Venetians knew very well that this would not be possible. It was rather done to establish an operational system within a situation of dynamic change. The capture of the coot illustrates an unexpected and unpredictable meeting point between the landscapes that made up the hybrid, but one that allows insight into the social and everyday life dynamics of the lagoon work place. By the fourteenth and fifteenth century much had changed since the time when Bishop Magno's dreams provided him with volatile landmarks for churches in the shimmering monotony of the lagoon (p. 157). At the same time, much had remained the same. Making lagoon spaces both materially habitable, and culturally legible, through use, construction, and conceptualization remained a daily concern of both government authorities and duck hunters.

The preceding chapters have examined the dynamics through which differently motivated groups of hunters variously procured status-laden game animals and fowl in hybrid medieval Italian landscapes. Work and play informed the way they structured their activities and material and cultural frameworks within which they encountered, controlled, and modified game animals and landscapes. The result of venery ended up on plates and dishes. As the animals and birds passed from fields and woods to the kitchens and banquet halls, they lost none of their status. Now to follow the processes for distribution and consumption of the successfully hunted game.

CHAPTER 6. FROM FIELD TO FORK. GAME MEATS AND BIRDS IN MARKETS,
KITCHENS AND ON THE TABLE

As Giovanni Boccaccio tells the tale, Currado Gianfigliuzzi was a notable figure in Florence.¹ He was “generous and magnificent.” As a natural part of his aristocratic life, Gianfigliuzzi enjoyed hunting with his hounds and falcons. One day, while out hunting, his falcon killed a young and plump crane (*Grus grus*) which the lord was quick to send to one of his fine cooks, a Venetian by the name of Chichibio. Chichibio was to roast the bird for supper and see to it that it was prepared with great care. As the roasting bird was giving off a delicious smell, there happened in the kitchen a country maid called Brunetta, with whom Chichibio was passionately in love. She pleaded with him for a leg of the bird, but to no avail, until she threatened the poor cook that if he would not give her the leg, he would never again get anything from her. Under such conditions, Chichibio surrendered.

The one-legged bird did not please Gianfigliuzzi, who, irate, asked his cook for an explanation. Chichibio replied that cranes only had one leg and one foot, and that he could prove this to Gianfigliuzzi. Not wanting to pursue the matter further in front of his guest, the gentleman desisted, but, still fuming, he took the terrified Chichibio out riding the following day. The destination was the river bank, famous for its cranes. As chance would have it, the Venetian cook was the first to spot a flock of cranes. They were all asleep, and as is common in sleeping cranes, they stood on only one leg. Triumphant, Chichibio pointed out to his lord that cranes indeed only had one foot and one leg. But Gianfigliuzzi was not yet satisfied. He rode up close to the cranes shouting ‘Hey! Hey!’ at them. Predictably, the cranes lowered their other leg, ran a few paces and took flight.

“What do you think of that, you scoundrel?” Gianfigliuzzi asked Chichibio, “do they or don’t they have two legs?”

¹Quondam et al., 2013, day six, story four, 995-99.

Not knowing himself where his answer came from, Chichibio managed to say:

“Yes, sir, but last night you did not shout, ‘Hey! Hey!’ at the crane that was served for dinner. If you had, it would have pushed its other leg and foot down, just as these did.

Gianfigliuzzi liked the reply so much, that he agreed with Chichibio and made peace with him.

Despite its dubious appeal as game meat to modern diners, the crane, and the story surrounding it, encapsulate many of the cultural and material issues surrounding late medieval game meat consumption. High status of the game animal and its meat, socially limited access to it, and its participation in formalized consumption, rife with symbolic meanings, all were an integral part in the consumption of game meats. This resulted in a very particular pattern of cultural and material performance. Game animals were special, both in the woods and on the dinner table. The marginal caloric but highly symbolic contribution to human diets of such animals affected who was able to consume the creatures and how they were captured. For example, the nobleman Gianfigliuzzi could procure his crane for himself using a falcon. For this reason, he and his peers alone could dine on crane. The attribution of meaning continued in the kitchens, where in unique ways in which the animals were integrated in to the dominant, and mostly upper-class, dietary theories that were negotiated by lower-status workers. The animals continued to be special as they were carried into the dining rooms, where their status was reflected in their presentation. In the process, the status and symbolic meaning attached to both the game animals and the dinner’s host were underlined and enhanced. The social standing of a host rested on his ability to present to deserving guests that which his own personal power had allowed him to appropriate. For a man like Gianfigliuzzi, appropriation involved the ability to hunt; for other social agents procurement may involve markets, instead, or gifts of game meats. In all cases, procurement and consumption of game involved some form of control over scarce natural resources, either directly (hunting) or indirectly (sufficient purchasing power). In the latter case, consumption was vastly smaller. The aristocratic elites tried to maintain a mostly closed system positioning themselves at the two end points of the cultural path from procurement

to consumption. This pattern reinforced the (male) aristocrats' status as "top predators" in society.² They hunted and consumed conspicuously. While lower orders attempted to mimic this behavior, their performances were mostly truncated by lack of means of control over suitable hunting grounds. For better-off, mostly urban aristocrats and wealthy leading Florentine townspeople, consumption of game took place on a more moderate scale, although owners of country estates *may* have occasionally hunted or procured some game through the stewards and tenants. Lesser folk consumed sparingly, if at all, or smaller, less expensive low status animals, such as thrushes and starlings. Ironically, wild animals and birds which Roman law had conceived of as being largely *res nullius* (pp. 20-21), were in medieval minds controlled species for the use, prestige, and enjoyment of distinctive groups.

Brunetta and Chichibio knew of the status and desirability of game, but their social status barred the road of access to the good flavor. The sexually charged power match between the two was caused and reinforced by the bird itself. First of all, the crane was of course desirable for reasons of status. If Brunetta could get Chichibio to yield her some of that meat then, much like for Gianfigliuzzi's guests the value of the symbolic offering would have gone well beyond the calories it contained. Similarly, the amount of trouble that Chichibio could expect when he, inevitably, was caught, was far larger than if the crane had been a common fish. The social consequences for Gianfigliuzzi when the mutilated bird was served at the table, were similarly greater.

But high status was not the whole story. The specific nature of that which Chichibio will no longer be getting from Brunetta, if he does not surrender the meal, may be linked to the fact that, in the Middle Ages, all birds carried sexual meaning and connotation. In part this meaning

²The application of this term is in, Anton Ervynck, "Medieval Castles as Top-Predators of the Feudal System: An Archaeozoological Approach," in *Château Gaillard. Études de castelleologie médiévale. Actes du colloque.*, vol. 16 (Luxembourg, 1992), 151–59, which studies the habits of the upper classes of feudal-type societies in north-western Europe through the excavation of their castles and the analysis of their remains. The castle was clearly identified as a "privileged site" of consumption, not just of game, but of the best foodstuffs that could be procured from a wide catchment basin. While by Boccaccio's time this was a thing of the past, the behavior of the court-based aristocrats perpetuated an established tradition.

was symbolic, in part it was a matter of material qualities attributed to game bird meat which “heated the blood,” or aroused, the eater.³ As Brunetta hints, things may be much better for Chichibio if she gets to eat the leg of the crane. We may speculate whether these considerations played a role in the meanings surrounding gift giving between sexes. Perhaps when Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan, gifted his wife with sixty quail, he intended to please more than her palate (p. 108).

Urban authorities were also concerned with the characteristics of game meats and fowl. Sumptuary legislation developed in Italy starting already in the twelfth century, but grew in volume particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth under the impetus of the growing wealth of urban commercial elites.⁴ The intention behind the measures was to curb conspicuous consumption and excessive display of luxury, especially in public settings. It mandated modesty in women’s dress, banned loud manifestations of grief at funerals, and placed various limitations on feasting occasioned, for example, by marriages or christenings. Behavior around the dinner table was regulated in general, and game meats in particular. For example, in 1459, in Venice “pheasants, peacocks, partridges, and doves were all banned” during the celebrations of “feasts for high-born youths.”⁵ In clear recognition of the ostentation and high price of such foods, they were considered excessive and wasteful on such an occasion, as well as others. Concerned with maintaining order and avoiding waste of resources, municipal authorities stepped in, we know not how successfully. Banning or limiting consumption of game meats and fowl clearly shows that, beyond individual behavior, society at large understood these as products signalling to status and wealth.

³The Italian term *uccello* meaning bird, could also denote the male sexual organ. Similarly *uccellare* may mean to hunt for birds, but also for women, and also means to trick. For a discussion on the topic, Allen J. Grieco, “From Roosters to Cocks: Italian Renaissance Fowl and Sexuality,” in *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*, ed. Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 89–140.

⁴Catherine Kovesi Killerby, *Sumptuary Law in Italy 1200–1500*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 28-29; on the topic see also, Ronald E. Rainey, “Sumptuary Legislation in Renaissance Florence” (New York: Columbia University, 1985).

⁵Kovesi-Killerby, 2002, 67.

In this broader cultural context the present chapter examines procurement and consumption of game meats. As Boccaccio's story made clear, the two aspects were closely interconnected, but for reasons of clarity they will be treated separately and form the major two sections of this chapter.

6.1 PROCUREMENT

Different medieval consumers distinguished by their budgets and amounts of social clout could resort to a variety of strategies in order to put game meats on their table. As a substitute, or complement, to the hunting territories of the aristocrats, urban markets were places in which game meats and fowls were commonly available for sale for those unable to hunt. Markets were common features of medieval Italian towns. Specifically located and regulated, they could be weekly occurrences as in Fucecchio, or daily, as in Florence and Venice. In all cases they largely served the requirements for food and other goods of the urban populations. The lists of goods, including game meats and fowl, taxed upon entry at city gates, the *gabelle alle porte* (p. 121) or because they transited through a certain town's territory (*gabelle di transito*). While we cannot gauge the amounts of game presented and sold at market, if we are to trust literary sources, game meats were offered for sale in all three of the primate cities in this study.⁶ The Rialto market, writer Jacopo d'Albizzotto Guidi stated in 1442, was stocked with large numbers of various "fat birds" sold plucked. Jacopo says he would be taken for a liar if he said how much all those birds were worth and how many are caught each year from "autumn to the Carnival" in the *valli* of the lagoon. Game meats and partridges, likely procured from the mainland, were also part of the offerings.⁷ Tuscan novelist and poet Antonio Pucci (1310-1388), while more restrained in his delivery, still speaks of a separate area of the market where the poultry sellers displayed, all year long, hares, boar, roe deer, pheasants, partridges, and capons as well as "other birds" such as

⁶Cecchetti, 1885.

⁷Marta Ceci, ed., *Jacopo d'Albizzotto Guidi, El sommo della condizione di Vinegia* (Roma: Zauli Arti Grafiche, 1995), "birds," both ducks and partridges are the subject of Chapter II p.16, lines 157-195. Game (*selvaticine*) are in line 204.

sparrow hawks and falcons.⁸ Thirteenth-century Milano, was enthusiastically described by writer Bonvesin della Riva who speaks of “bird meat” from both domesticated and wild animals and birds such as ducks, pheasants, various passerines, quail and partridges. Falcons were also offered up for sale in Milan.⁹

Medieval markets were busy places carefully organized and regulated by municipal authorities to ensure good environs for the safe performance of brisk trade. While most of the information presented here is from Venice and Tuscany, many of the general observations would apply to most medieval markets. Different spaces were exclusively devoted to different activities for organizational reasons, the convenience of the consumers, and reasons of hygiene. For example, the Venetian fish market had its own designated and covered area as well as its own loading docks and waterfronts. Within the area, stands were assigned by the public authorities, for example to the Nicolotti fishmongers. These were closed at night, pending cleaning and dumping of garbage in designated locations. In any medieval market, butchers were grouped together and kept separate from other vendors.

Consumer safety was another big concern of urban authorities. Weights and measures were standardized by individual market, and scales were checked by authorities. Municipalities exercised control over prices especially of subsistence goods such as grains. They mandated that perishable goods be sold “not rotten”, nor adulterated so as to make them appear fresh. For example, it was commonly prohibited to freshen the gills of old fish with fresh blood, or to dress the fish in seaweed (which hid parts of it) when presenting it for sale on the stalls.¹⁰ The fact that the Venetian “birds” were sold plucked suggests this was a strategy to help the consumer detect defects, bruises, and age of the meat.¹¹ To protect consumers and control prices, monopolistic practices and vertical integration, for example in Venice between fishmongers and fishermen,

⁸N. Sapegno, ed., *Poeti minori del Trecento* (Milano, Napoli: Ricciardi, 1952), 404-408.

⁹Paolo Chiesa, ed., *Bonvesin della Riva. De magnalibus Mediolani: Meraviglie di Milano*. (Milano: Libri Scheiwiller, 1998), XI, chapter IV.

¹⁰Monticolo, 1896, *Capitolare dei Pescivendoli*, chapter V, p. 62, X, p. 63, and , XI, p. 64.

¹¹Ceci, 1996, line 164.

were commonly prohibited.¹² Policing bodies were established such as the Venetian *Ufficiali sopra Rialto*. But also heads of corporations and guilds, such as the Gastaldo Grande of the Nicolotti (pp.187-188), had every possible interest in maintaining good relationships between the guild members and the authorities.¹³

For all this organization, the evidence shows some inconsistencies in the organization of game retailers in medieval Italy. But, in general, the sale of game meats and fowl was connected to the activities of poultry sellers, meat sellers, and fishmongers. For Venice, a document from 1371 pertaining to the division of some *pantherae* for duck hunting taking place after the normal dissolution of a *societas* situates the event in the meat market of Mazzorbo.¹⁴ Indeed, Jacopo d'Albizzotto Guidi states that the *beccari* or meat sellers sold the vast quantities of birds, while venison might be bought in the *polleria*, the area of the market designated for the sale of poultry.¹⁵ A fourteenth-century document cited by nineteenth century Venetian historian Cecchetti indicates the presence of game meats (*animalia sivestris*) in a boat moored by the bridge of Charity (Ponte della Carità). According to that same author, fourteenth-century game meats and raptors came to Venice from Treviso and did not pay tolls. It is not clear whether the products in the boat were sold quay-side or intended for the market.¹⁶ At the Florentine Mercato Vecchio the poultrymen sold both game meats and fowl, while Bonvesin della Riva does not specify Milanese arrangements.¹⁷ The regulations or *mariegola* of the Venetian fishmongers indicate that they were the ones responsible for selling the fowl.¹⁸ In the Venetian case, we can track the product from the boats to the stalls. Fishermen brought the fish and fowl to the so-called *palo*, a wooden pole planted in the ground in front of the ducal palace in the Piazzetta San

¹²Zago, 1982, 133.

¹³The organization and tasks of the Venetian *Ufficiali* are outlined in, Alessandra Princivalle and Gherardo Ortalli, eds., *Il Capitolare degli Ufficiali sopra Rialto* (Milano: Editrice La Storia, 1993). Roberto Zago, 1979, 58-79; 95-96; 109 details the role and functions of the Gastaldo Grande of the Nicolotti.

¹⁴Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASVe), Podestà di Torcello e Contrade (PT) 47, (1373-74), 11 December.

¹⁵Ceci, 1995, ch. II p. 16, line 186 (*beccari*) and 200 (*polleria*).

¹⁶Cecchetti, 1885, 56. I have not been able to verify the documents.

¹⁷Sapegno, 1952, line 46.

¹⁸Monticolo, 1896, vol. 1, XXXVII. Fishmongers were also responsible for the sale of game in Rome, Cortonesi, 1995, 143.

Marco. At the *palo* a public official made sure it met sanitary requirements and levied a tax. The product could then be sold to the fishmongers. Buyers were restricted to a total value of two ducats' worth of fish and there is no information pertaining to ducks. Fish had to be delivered promptly to the stalls for sale. D'Albizzotto Guidi specified that the majority of the fowl arrived to the market dead and there is no other indication on the matter.¹⁹ There is similarly no information as to when the animals were plucked, but probably this took place at the market stall as feathers would protect the meat in transit.²⁰ After the thirteenth century, new arrangements took hold in matters of fish selling, and so, perhaps, fowl. The fishermen could bring the goods to market directly, avoiding the tax at the *palo*. The near monopoly of the St. Mark (San Marco) and Rialto markets was undermined by the establishment, for example, of a competing market, St. John in Bragora (San Giovanni in Bragora). Presumably, rising population and travel distance to the major markets made this necessary. The fourteenth-century boat moored canal-side and loaded with game meats described above, may have indeed been a venue for local sale.²¹

The trip of Tuscan game from their place of capture to the markets is difficult to document precisely. The roe deer captured in the Cerbaie hills were meant for sale, as the hunting license gave its holder specific rights to the *venditio*, or the sale, of his prey. Did the hunters sell the meat reatail, or, perhaps more practically, relied on middlemen? Either way, game meats were part of municipal natural resources and might not be moved beyond town limits at will. The *statuto* of Fucecchio of 1359, written about forty years before the first extant *gabella* on deer hunting, prohibited anyone from taking any fish or game meats (*selvagginas carnes*) out of Fucecchio and its *distretto* without a proper sales licence.²² Likely motivated by the income they garnered from control over natural resources, Lucca's government mandated that all the meat

¹⁹[c]he la più parte vi si portan morte, Ceci, 1995, line 163.

²⁰It is much easier to pluck warm birds successfully. On cold birds the skin tends to rupture as the feathers are pulled out. On the other hand, it is still customary in present-day Italy to hang dead, unplucked game birds for a couple of days before they are consumed and this may have been the case in Tuscany also.

²¹Cecchetti, 1885, 56.

²²Archivio di Stato di Fucecchio (ASFu), Statuti e Riformagioni (ST) 116.

produced in the area immediately surrounding to the town , the so-called *Sei Miglia*, (“six miles” from the city center) be brought to town and butchered there.²³

It is possible that the larger quadrupeds reached urban centers alive and on their own hooves. This kept the meat fresh and clean and may have been less cumbersome than it appears. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Milanese dukes procured live deer from Tuscany and these animals traveled across the Appennines, albeit perhaps in cages (p. 102). English kings enjoyed not only salted but also fresh deer meat, that likely wer brought live to their residences, where the animals were kept fenced, pending consumption for special occasions. References speak of deer being “caught” as opposed to killed. ²⁴

Whether dead, alive, or simply field dressed, once inside the city gates, the commercially captured deer may subsequently have been sold to butchers who processed them *in loco*. From the butchers, the game meats went to the stalls of the *beccari*, the meat sellers. Absence of exit taxes on deer, as opposed to occasional ones on birds, indicates that once the animals were in town, they remained there. Butchering represented good income for the towns. The butchers paid a tax to the town for each item processed, called the *gabella al macello*, which varied depending on species and live weight. From March 1388, to February 1389 the game butchered in Prato consisted of six hares, 16 roe deer, and two boar, of which one had been killed by wolves (*allupato*) and so was taboo for human consumption.²⁵ It is not clear why it was brought to town. Perhaps this was for sanitary reasons and to inform municipalities of the presence of wolves, or, perhaps, to make sure that nobody in the countryside, perhaps in dire straits, consumed it.

The *gabella alle porte* for Volterra shows that, despite the tendency to retain local products for local markets, some marketing strategies may have been employed. The Volterra gate duty list of 1459 contained two separate lists of duties, one for the local market and one for goods, including game, apparently travelling on to Florence. That goods were expected to fetch

²³Castiglione, 2004, 53.

²⁴Birrell, 2006, 180.

²⁵Prato, Sezione dell’Archivio di Stato, Archivio Datini, n. 227, published in Nigro, 1983, Appendix A.

better prices in the more opulent Florentine market despite transportation costs, may be indicated by the fact that roe deer, the only animals present on both lists, destined for Florence were taxed three times the amount of those destined for the local market; two *soldi* in Volterra as opposed to six if it traveled to Florence, was quite the mark-up.²⁶ No birds traveled to Florence. Their smaller value may not have been worth the trouble of keeping them alive during the trip. This piece of information from the *gabella* might signal that game quadrupeds, getting scarce around the dominant city, had to be procured from more remote areas, while birds were still available closer to town. Conversely, the Volterrani were seeking to redistribute their local resources to earn higher profits. Boar and boar piglets, as well as prestigious red deer, were also destined for Florence. Bear, which was a common item on *gabella* list (lists from Lucca, Pisa, and Santa Maria a Monte all from the mid to late fourteenth century), and likely also common in the hills around Volterra, was reserved for local use. Bear may have been problematic to transport live or perceived as lesser quality meat by the Florentines. Otherwise, consumers in Volterra were expected to be satisfied with hares, boar and boar piglet smaller than 30lb, high grade upland birds such as partridge and quail, and “large” wild doves and wild pigeons.

The only indication as to the value of game relative to domesticates comes from Lucca’s *gabella alle porte* of 1353. At that city’s gates, game was taxed less than its domestic counterpart, but as the animals were taxed per head, relative body size may have affected total value.²⁷ Birds were taxed by the pair or the brace (smaller birds), and of course at lower rates than mammals. For all this information we have no clear indication as to who consistently bought up all the game meats brought to market. The next section will, however, identify several groups

²⁶In Alberto Malvolti’s estimation one florin was worth 2.5 *lire* or 50 *soldi* in 1302. In 1375 that same florin was worth 3 *lire* or 75 *soldi*. Personal communication.

²⁷Boar was taxed 4 *soldi*, but its domesticated counterpart, pig, was taxed 12. High status veal was taxed 18 *soldi*, cows, oxen and buffalo, 12 and 14 *soldi* but bear only 5 *soldi* and roe deer 4 *soldi* 5 *denari*.

of medieval people with access to game meats both through a mixed procurement strategy and market purchases.²⁸

6.1.1 Distribution Strategies for Game

Game meats were limited by their relative scarcity and cost. In addition, medieval society provided a regulatory mechanism for the consumption of game. The “great chain of being” was the medieval ranking mechanism which assigned all natural things a relative position and a value according to natural law.²⁹ While such a ranking established, for example, that animals are above plants, but below man, among men, it dictated to each individual certain limitations and obligations, involving also food consumption. As I discussed, given their intellectually demanding tasks, the Priors of Florence were expected to consume very fine and well-prepared foods. Furthermore, social principles that, for example, forbade aristocrats and burghers or peasants and everybody else to mix. This was reflected in what everyone could eat. Even for political elites such as the Priors of Florence, certain high status dishes, based on cookbook recipes, were only served “on the days in which this institution served banquets to honor official visitors.”³⁰ Another example was the banquet organized by Benedetto Salutati and other well-off Florentine merchants for the sons of the King of Naples; taking place in Florence on 16 February, 1476, the occasion was the celebration of an old friendship, dating from when the Duke of Calabria was not yet king. Historian Claudio Benporat, in publishing the details of the banquet, comments that feasting at the appropriate aristocratic level practically pushed even rich Salutati

²⁸For a variety of European consumers, purchasing game on the markets, see their published accounts in, for example, Harvey, 1993, 37, 48, 53, 57, on the finances of the dukes of Burgundy, Jean Rauzier, *Finances et gestion d'une principauté au XIVe siècle. Le duché de Bourgogne de Philippe le Hardi (1364–1384)* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1996), 365–82, various English medieval household accounts in C.M. Woolgar, ed., *Household Accounts from Medieval England Parts 1 and 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), a century later, Robert Jutte, “Household and Family Life in Late Sixteenth-Century Cologne: The Weinsberg Family,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 176–81.

²⁹Allen J. Grieco, “Alimentazione e classi sociali nel tardo Medioevo e nel Rinascimento in Italia,” in *Storia dell'alimentazione* (Roma: Laterza, 1997), 376.

³⁰Allen J. Grieco, “From the Cookbook to the Table. A Florentine Table and Italian Recipes of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” in *Du manuscript à la table. Essais sur la cuisine au Moyen Âge et répertoire des manuscrits médiévaux contenant des recettes culinaires* (1990), 36.

over the brink of bankruptcy.³¹ In the opposite case, Francesco Datini, the famous merchant of Prato, was extremely upset when sent a piece of veal that though high status food was of a quality that he deemed below his position.³² The Middle Ages expected different social actors to remain within the place assigned to them, and food marked this place and helped keep people in it.

Moral dictates were rehearsed to tackle problems related to consumption from a different route. Fourteenth-century theologian and preacher Bernardino da Siena warned widows against the consumption of dangerous foods such as game and domesticated fowl. The consumption would have “heated their blood” to a degree unacceptable to their unmarried status, which was exactly the effect that the transgressive maid Brunetta advocated. Sexual license was class-based too: Margherita Datini, wife to the food-loving Francesco, complained that partridges gave her “bad breath” and so she did not wish to eat them, but likely also considered the venereal effects problematic for her respectable status.³³ Being seen to eat too many of such birds may have given cause to snickering, especially given the repeated absences of her husband from home. By contrast, when Francesco was a young bachelor living in Avignon and keeping a mistress, a pronounced consumption of just such birds was emblematic of his unmarried status.³⁴

The step between the sins of incontinence and lust was short. Of course, sin, lust, and, importantly for our purpose, gluttony, were not limited to the consumption just of game meats, although they certainly contributed their part. Massimo Montanari argues that the early medieval monastic orders tried to counteract the exercise of violence by the (largely) meat-eating aristocrats with spiritual power, and did so in part, through an ascetic diet rich in legumes and poor in meat.³⁵ The medieval church considered good only that food which was necessary to

³¹Claudio Benporat, *Feste e banchetti. Convivialità italiana fra Tre e Quattrocento* (Firenze: Olschki, 2001), 237-40.

³²The standard text on Datini is, Iris Origo, *Il mercante di Prato* (Milano: Bompiani, 1957), the incident surrounding the veal is in Grieco, 1997, 374, recent research on the merchant, Nigro, 2012.

³³Grieco, 1997, 374; Maria Giagnacovo, *Mercanti a tavola. Prezzi e consumi alimentari dell'azienda Datini di Pisa (1383-1390)* (Firenze: Opus libri, 2002), 180.

³⁴Grieco, 1997, 374.

³⁵Montanari, 1979, 464-68.

keep life going and always condemned gluttony.³⁶ In the thirteenth century, Tuscan poet Dante Alighieri famously placed his gluttons in the third circle of Hell, where they were left to grovel in stinking viscous mud that offended all those senses they had strived to please in life. But there were also more pragmatic attitudes. For example, also in the thirteenth century, friar Salimbene de Adam was far more liberal towards food enjoyment and excesses, and by the 1400s, Folgore da San Gimignano unapologetically celebrated food in the *Sonetti della Semana* and those of the *Mesi*.³⁷ In them food, including plenty of game meats and fowl, was a pleasant component of the joyous adventures of sensual people.

Through material and cultural means, elite social groups attempted to control consumption of foods in general, and game meats in particular. Their motives and strategies were different, but all pointed to the cultural complexities of food. Consumption was never neutral in the Middle Ages, and managing it involved establishing identity and controlling social behavior and prerogatives. These ideas informed the behavior of different groups of consumers in relation to game meats.

6.1.2 Different Consumers

The eight Florentine Priors, governors of the Republic, represented Tuscany's highest political elite. Their table was envied, as the *Camera del Comune* kept their pantry well-stocked through market purchases and payments to regular food providers.³⁸ Ability to pay was only part of what gave the Priors access to fine foods and enviable lifestyle, even, as Frosini remarks “on the edge of the abyss of the famine and the Great Death.”³⁹ Chapter 4 remarked how the Priors

³⁶For example, in the late thirteenth century Bono Giamboni *Libro de' vizi e delle virtudi* ('Book of vices and virtues'), Cesare Segre, ed., *Bono Giamboni, Libro de' Vizi e delle Virtudi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1968).

³⁷Emilio Faccioli, “Le fonti letterarie della storia dell'alimentazione del basso Medioevo,” *Archeologia Medievale* 8 (1981): 71–82. Also in Davide Puccini, ed., *Franco Sacchetti, Il Trecentonovelle* (Torino: UTET, 2004), food was also a welcome activity unburdened by moral issues.

³⁸Giovanna Frosini, *Il cibo e i signori. La mensa dei Priori a Firenze nel sec. XIV* (Firenze: Accademia della Crusca, 1993), 31–42; Curzio Mazzi, “La mensa dei Priori a Firenze nel secolo XV,” *Archivio Storico Italiano* 208. a. XX, s.v. 4 (1897): 336–68. Itemized purchases, also of game, in Libreria Medicea Laurenziana, *Codice Ashburhan*, 1216 which lists various purchases (including game) for 1344–45.

³⁹Frosini, 1993, 7, 38–42.

were also successful in requisitioning from the countryside of Fucecchio for at least part of their game. But even within Florence, it was clout and prerogative, on top of actual spending power, that provided access to the fine foods. Francesco Datini, merchant of Prato, was not a poor man, yet even he felt entitled to celebrate upon obtaining veal of the same quality as that destined for the Priors.⁴⁰ The power of the Priors was that of the state it was linked to status only temporarily embodied by a person. A famous statement from 1404 by Datini's friend, the notary Ser Lapo Mazzei, neatly encapsulates this. The Florentine scolded his good friend Francesco who persisted in sending him partridges. They were not suited for his life, Mazzei says. He had nobody to give them to and did not have the heart to sell them. However, the notary continues, had he still been in the service of the state, eating them would have been his duty.⁴¹

As in ducal Milan, so in republican Florence, the power of the state drew on its ability to politically control surrounding territories and their resources contributing to the development of an exchange-rich regional economy. Though there was nothing akin to the princely self-indulgence and display of the dukes of Milan, nor any of their hunting in a republican Florence run by committees, the Priors copied culturally significant material acts of a different, aristocratic matrix. They decked their tables and consumed and controlled game meat resources not through hunting, which they could not do, but through impositions made possible by their offices. In a different way from the dukes, they made apparent the late medieval connections between game meat consumption, landscape, and power.

Early medieval restrictions in matter of monastic diet had been stringent. But by the period under study wealthy monasteries enjoyed many sources of income, including rents. Their material wealth, which included land and buildings and moveables, and their political power came with the obligation to entertain high-ranking secular and religious men. Especially the heads of monastic establishments, who may have been of noble status, participated in the dietary

⁴⁰Elena Cecchi, ed., *Le lettere di Francesco Datini alla moglie Margherita (1385–1410)*, Biblioteca Dell' Archivio Storico Pratese (Prato: Società pratese di storia patria, 1990), letter 1089 to Francesca, 12 April, 1398.

⁴¹C. Guasti, ed., *Lettere a Francesco Datini, II* (Firenze: Successori Le Monnier, 1880), 25.

performances of powerful secular lords. The topic has not been studied systematically for Italy and it is difficult to draw conclusions. In England, however, Barbara Harvey suggests that, although some monks at fifteenth-century Benedictine Westminster always ate according to the dictates of the *Rule*, a very permissive approach to dietary restrictions, and good consumption of lesser game, “coney,” or rabbits and fowl such as ducks, still took place.⁴² What little may be gleaned from Italian archaeozoology confirms only some game meat consumption for special occasions. For example fragments of bone remains from the “summer refectory” of the Frari convent of Venice came from several high status species: swan, mallard duck, boar, and red deer, albeit all in small amounts.⁴³ Religious festivities and special visitors were also cause for gustatory celebrations at monastic tables. As discussed, many of these fell in the winter months when, as in Venice, the duck rents were also due.

At the abbot’s table of the monastery of Santa Trinita of Florence, however, there was no such observable pattern. The monastery’s urban location next to the municipal palace, the Palazzo dei Signori, and its importance as the main Florentine seat of the Cluniac Vallombrosa order, made it an influential social player in Florentine life. By the mid-fourteenth century, its dinner table hosted abbots, religious men, and important secular lords from all over Italy.⁴⁴ The published household account books for 1360-63 contain detailed and careful daily entries for food expenses as well as specifications as to their use. For example, raisins were destined for a *torta* on Tuesday, 29 September 1360, and almonds, fennel, and vinegar, all bought on July 7, 1362, were for making *agresto*, a typical sauce served with meats.⁴⁵ When it came to fine ingredients and spices, the kitchens and cupboards of Santa Trinita lacked in nothing. For all this, however, game consumption was modest at best. The estate of Ema, property of the monastery, was the source of scant amounts of wild meats in the form of thrushes, such as the eight

⁴²Harvey, 1993, 34-53.

⁴³Lucia Caloi, Piero Cassoli, and Maria Rita Palombo, “Ritrovamento di resti ossei,” *Bollettino d’Arte - Studi Veneziani, Supplemento* 5 (1983): 61.

⁴⁴Roberta Zazzeri, ed., *Ci desinò l’abate. Ospiti e cucina del monastero di Santa Trinita, Firenze, 1360–1363* (Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2003), ix.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 55, 179.

delivered on 8 February, 1360.⁴⁶ What larger game meat did reach Santa Trinita, was of unknown origin, but who consistently served for guests at special dinners. This was the case with the only gifted hare of the three years, delivered on October first, 1360, and some partridges delivered a couple of days later for a dinner with the abbot of Rezuolo and the one of Coneo. A boar was presented to Santa Trinita's abbot on 26 January, 1363 and duly served for dinner in a pepper sauce for the abbot of Resuolo and a notary, one ser Gherardello. A single partridge for the abbot's dinner was uniquely purchased on 20 December 1361.⁴⁷ The predominance of the abbot's table is notable as the game participated in elite culture in which the diet of the monks did not partake, yet even this dinner table was not the place to find large amounts of game meats served. The overall evidence suggests that while religious houses no longer followed strict dietary norms, the consumption of game, especially of larger mammals was restrained and perhaps even somewhat suspect for men of the cloth.⁴⁸

No such concerns surrounded Jacopo di Francesco del Bene, a nobleman who was the *capitano di custodia* (keeper of the fortress) of Pistoia in 1339. Del Bene's military profession and rank should have entitled him to pursue game and consume its meats. While we can only speculate on the former, we may be sure of his consumption pattern. His extant account books involve almost daily or twice-weekly itemized entries recording income and household purchases, including game, for the period of four months from 19 July to 14 November.⁴⁹ These

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 10 the payment was 3 *denari* in this case. Ema's delivery of thrushes were only two for the period, for a total of 18 birds. Five plus nine more were obtained presumably through purchase. Ema delivered good amounts *pippioni*, the wild pigeons, a popular item on the monastery's menu. These (grey) animals were kept and bred in captivity by the Middle Ages, but derived from migratory species that the Romans had attracted and kept with their white domesticated counterparts. It is therefore difficult to define them as wild meat, better it is to consider them one step above chicken. Carnevale Scianca, 2011, 507-508.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 56-57, the boar is on page 78 and the partridge on 217. Perhaps a sign of the status of the monastery and its abbot was a game related entry on 6 September 1361. On that date an entry of 13 *soldi* was recorded for the "cutting" of a chamois skin vest for the abbot. An entry of two gold florins and fifteen *soldi*, cash (*contanti*) was entered for the vest on 28 October, presumably for the actual sewing and fitting.

⁴⁸Archaeozoological evidence from twelfth to seventeenth century northern France available in, Clavel, 2001, 112-114, clearly show the absence of game from religious sites. Rare studies testify to the ability of certain religious houses to hunt their own lands or hold concessions to do so on other lands, for example, Jaminon, 2006.

⁴⁹A. Saponi, "Per la storia dei prezzi di Pistoia. Il quaderno dei conti di un Capitano di custodia nel 1339," *Bollettino Storico Pistoiese* Anno XXIX (1927): 95-176.

reiterate the connection between was, state power, and game meat consumption. For the period of his tenure, his consumption of game meats involved a total of 34 pairs of partridges, 13 pairs of wild doves, nine quail, three hares, eleven pounds of wild boar plus one whole boar, and one lone pheasant for a special Sunday meal. Deer meat of any kind was inexplicably absent. It is likely that the meats were simply purchased at Pistoia's market. Del Bene's game birds are sometimes listed with the poultry purchase, suggesting that all bird species likely came from the same stall. With two meatless days a week the captain's tenure would have included about 90 days for game meat consumption, but as elsewhere, the consumption of game concentrated on certain days, or weeks, involving special occasions, visitors, or festivities. For example, on a couple of occasions a single partridge was purchased specifically for the notary "Ser Bono," presumably a respected guest.

The account books show that del Bene's diet was that of a well-off man with social obligations. It contained much protein, including high status veal, capons, quantities of eggs used in recipes, and pork. His expenditures also included fruit and vegetables, nuts, lard, pasta, a few spices, and laundry expenses, including some for "table cloths." Game meats were the most expensive source of protein on the captain's grocery list.⁵⁰ His position and status entitled him to an aristocratic type diet fully in line with current class ideology. We do not know if the captain hunted, nor if his status entitled him to employ requisitioning strategies similar to those of the Priors. We do not know if, in addition to his purchases, he was gifted with game meats or other food items. Either way, the percentage of his game meat consumption to other meats reflects the norm (when available) for similar high status Italian sites of about 3%.⁵¹

⁵⁰In his appendix, Saponi tentatively calculated the price per units of del Bene's foods. A hare cost between 9 and 11 *soldi* (s.), boar, 1s. per pound (*libbra*), quail between s. 1 and s. 1 *denari* (d.) 10, the pheasant was s. 7, partridges between s. 1 d. 2 and s. 4. All game fowl was priced per one. By comparison, veal was between d. 11 and s. 1 d. 1 per pound but better cuts could be up to s. 5 d. 6. the most expensive cut of pork was about d. 11, and chickens were sold in pairs for between s. 3 d. 6 and s. 4 d. 1.

⁵¹Del Bene's sample also does not involve bear, which is sometimes present in the Italian data. For archeozoological information from high-status sites, Egle Micheletto and Marica Venturino Gambari, *Montaldo di Mondovì. Un insediamento protostorico. Un castello*. (Cuneo: Leonardo - De Luca Editori, 1992), 242 (Cuneo, Piedmont X-XVI centuries); Egle Micheletto, "Scavo nell'area della torre di Santo Stefano Belbo. Analisi dei resti faunistici," *Alba Pompeia* 13, no. 1 (1992): 39 (Piedmont, XI-XVI century); Chiara A. Corbino, "I reperti faunistici e l'ambiente della Rocca," in *Rocca Ricciarda dai Guidi ai Ricasoli*, ed. Guido Vannini (Firenze: Società

Food was an important part of the busy life of merchant Francesco Datini of Prato.⁵² No doubt, Datini liked to eat good food, but his dealings with food also reveal his keen sense of propriety and awareness of food as a prestige item. Datini's letters reveal a rich fare including some game used for his own consumption and for gifts. In October of 1397, on a Sunday, he received a quarter of a boar, weighing eleven pounds. On that Monday, his wife's laborer could not go to Florence, where the merchant was staying, because "it rained all day." Deeming that the meat would be "too stale" on Tuesday, Margherita Datini gave one third to Barzalone, a factor, another to one Niccolò (perhaps Datini's brother in law) and kept the last third.⁵³ The letters Francesco exchanged with Margherita mention a "large" roe deer in 1399, and a piece of boar and three partridges in 1410. These items were not purchases. The "fine big" deer had been a gift from Datini's brother in law, but Margherita deemed the weather too hot to send it to her husband in Florence so she gifted it to Guido del Pelagio, a prominent politician, as was appropriate for the status of the gift. At least Datini could enjoy the boar and partridges of 1410.⁵⁴ These were also gifts, the partridges from the cobbler, the boar from the father of a business contact. The givers as well as the recipients matched the status of the game. No doubt, the merchant carefully partook in an established network of exchanges in which food was a meaningful currency. Datini was unable to hunt and we cannot gauge how much game came to the merchant from his own sources, but clearly direct purchase was at least one source of procurement. Whenever the Datinis did purchase game, Francesco was involved in the

Editrice Fiorentina, 2009), 313–24, (Arezzo, Tuscany, XIV-XV). This author reports on "considerable" (but not quantified) amounts of game animals, including the lynx (*Lynx lynx*) a species that predominantly favors deer. (pp. 315, 323).

⁵²Origo, 1975, 245-68. His letters to his wife Francesca, cited above often speak of food items. So do those she wrote him, Valeria Rosati, ed., *Le lettere di Margherita Datini a Francesco di Marco (1384–1410)* (Prato: Cassa di Risparmi e Depositi, 1977). See also, Maria Giagnacovo, "Due 'alimentazioni' del basso Medioevo: la tavola dei mercanti e la tavola dei ceti subalterni," in *Alimentazione e Nutrizione secc. XIII-XVIII*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Roma: Le Monnier, 1996), 821–29 compares the food consumption of merchants with that of lesser (urban) folk.

⁵³Carolyn James and Antonio Pagliaro, trans., *Margherita Datini. Letters to Francesco Datini* (Toronto: Iter, 2012), 237-38.

⁵⁴Rosati, 1977, 279 (deer); 339 (partridges and boar); James and Pagliaro, 2012, 330-31 (deer); 396 (partridges and boar).

consumption, as the highest ranking family member. Records from the Datini branch (*fondaco*) in Pisa, where the merchant rarely resided, reveal only scant consumption of game meats and then only the lowest ranking ones.⁵⁵

To honor his guests in style and to make gifts, the Prato merchant bought the game on the markets. His access to other sources of provisioning may have been too unreliable, while apparently the markets were consistently stocked.⁵⁶ Behind the purchase of a hare, served roasted, was the occasion to celebrate Gido di messer Tomaso, whose title indicates he was a lawyer or a knight. The lavish banquet, involving no fewer than thirty partridges, six pheasant, and hare and roe deer meat, was for a dinner honoring Bonifazio Ghoadini, messer Giovanni, and others, while Francesco was sojourning in Bologna.⁵⁷ Another large purchase consisted of 15 pairs of partridges and three pairs of pheasants, to honor Bonifacio Gazandini (perhaps the same as B. Ghoadini) and other guests.⁵⁸ Datini's consumption pattern echoed the aristocratic ones. He wanted his table to be varied, to serve very good quality products, and to include game for special occasions and guests. Finally, he gave game meats as gifts. As opposed to the aristocrats, he mostly had to pay dearly for the honor.

The consumption achievements of Datini stand out in comparison to those of Morello di Pagolo Morelli, a generation earlier. Pagolo Morelli was a wool merchant in Florence. The wool merchants' guild was part of the wealthy and politically influential *Arti Maggiori*, and the family had included in its ranks both a Prior and a *camarlingho* (financial official). This merchant may have shared concerns about status and social appearances with Datini. His extant account books illustrate expenditures for purchases of food stuffs of what historian Giuliano Pinto says, "must have been a well-to-do family."⁵⁹ For 1386 the Florentine historian has calculated di Pagolo Morelli's monthly expenditure for food, with wine and bread importantly excluded, to be of 10

⁵⁵Giagnacovo, 2002, 179.

⁵⁶Giagnacovo, 1996, 825.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 179-181.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 825. I have not been able to verify the source.

⁵⁹Giuliano Pinto, "Le fonti documentarie bassomedievali," *Archeologia Medievale* 8 (1981): 39-58 also in, ASFi, Carte Gherardo Piccolomini d'Aragona (GP), 163 (1385-1411).

soldi, and so well above average. In the wool merchant's books, food purchases were recorded on a regular basis and itemized; reflecting a varied diet all through the year, they confirm the family's status. For all that, wild animals were scantily represented and consisted, very modestly, of thrushes, a few larks, wild doves, and only occasional partridges in small quantities for must have been special meals. In 1386 the consumption of wild game meats amounted to a single quail on 5 January, and two partridges for a November meal. If the merchant received gifts of game, as Datini did, these remain invisible. Did Morello di Pagolo Morelli have less disposable income for food than Datini, or was his household simply more frugal? It is not possible to know. In either case, his social obligations and related food performances were similar in nature, although more modest in scope, to those of the Prato merchant.

Moving down the social ladder finds consumption of game meats dwindling to a vanishing point. The Ospedale degli Innocenti of Florence was a rather large orphanage endowed with lands of its own. Its financial records survive for the period 1451-62 and document only the consumption of eleven thrushes, we know not for what occasion or by whom.⁶⁰ Consumption from the hospital's estates may have played a part, but then a record of expenditures for the *gabellia alle porte* would be expected, as is visible in the Santa Trinita books. The problem here, as for all consumers with less disposable income, may simply have been one of costs. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, a pound of deer meat cost three *soldi*, a single hare cost 30 *soldi* while a pheasant was priced at 21 *soldi* and a partridge could be purchased for between six and nine *soldi*. Even smaller birds were expensive. One was to pay between six and fifteen *denari* for a thrush, between six and eight for a lark, about five for an *uccellino* (generic "small bird"), and three for a bird "with a long beak."⁶¹ David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber

⁶⁰ Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti, Florence, (AOI) 5342 (1451-62).

⁶¹ The latter may have perhaps been some kind of sandpiper of the *Scopolax* family or a type of woodcock. The data is from Giagnacovo, 2002, 182. I have not been able to verify it.

calculated the minimum living wage in Florence in 1427 at “about 14 florins.”⁶² While Florence was “a blazing sun of affluence” in the urban and rural panorama of Tuscany, and while the city held about two thirds of the total wealth of Tuscany and owned all of its public debt, things were not rosy for everyone, nor evenly distributed. According to the 1427 data, while 14% of the population owned nothing, the hundred richest families, about 1% of the population, owned about one quarter of the wealth of the city.⁶³ For many in Florence, there was little money for food, let alone game.

For somebody like Battista d’Agnolo Vernacci, whose recorded household expenses for food in the period 1460-66, amounted to about three to four *lire* per month, or about 60-80 *soldi*, there was little excess money to spend on game.⁶⁴ While Vernacci’s known expenses did not include bread and wine, proportionately large items of consumption, his diet was nonetheless rather monotonous. Diversity reflected wealth. As a consequence, amongst individuals of lesser means, for whom sources on expenditures survive, the trend is towards the consumption of lesser wild birds, if any at all. In fact, Vernacci’s game consumption for the period amounted to 20 thrushes, a handful of larks, and one lone quail.⁶⁵

In the years 1487-92 the widow of Niccoló Strozzi, Francesca, consumed only one pair of pigeons, scarcely to be considered wild birds.⁶⁶ The family had one servant and a monthly food budget of five *lire* and so only slightly higher than that of Vernacci. Francesca Strozzi, however, never bought wine, grain, or oil, as she obtained those from her own lands and merely paid the

⁶²David J. Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families. A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 95. In this period the *denaro* was the smallest unit of currency. Twelve of these equaled one *soldo*, and there were twenty *soldi* to a *lira*. *Soldi* and *lire*, however, were moneys of account. The prestigious gold *florin* (*florino*) was worth about four *lire*, but fluctuated, and was normally expressed in terms of *soldi di piccioli*. In 1400 the daily wage for an unskilled construction worker was ten *soldi di piccioli*. All information from Carolyn James and Antonio Pagliaro, trans., *Margherita Datini. Letters to Francesco Datini* (Toronto: Iter, 2012), 402. In his estimation for 1302 Alberto Malvolti calculated that one florin was worth 2.5 *lire* or 50 *soldi*. In 1375 that same florin was worth 3 *lire* or 75 *soldi*. (pers. comm.). For an overview of medieval Italian currencies, Peter Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1986). xix-liv.

⁶³Herlihy and Klapisch Zuber, 1985, 97, 100.

⁶⁴Vernacci’s books are in AOI, Estranei (E) 916, and cited in Pinto, 1981, 55.

⁶⁵The quail cost him s. 1 d. 4. One thrush or lark was priced at s. 1.

⁶⁶CS, serie IV, 72, 101r-122v (1488).

gabella for them. This possibly made her available food budget larger than Vernacci's. The absence of even the more modest types of game birds from her diet, may reflect moral concerns, rather than culinary preference or economic possibility.

Game meats and fowl were clearly available for purchase on the Florentine markets. The ability to purchase them was restricted by wealth, status, and cultural means. While well aware, as the maid Brunetta was, of its cultural meaning and tasty flavor, the lower orders simply could not afford game. They might sometimes establish a replacement strategy involving smaller birds, such as larks and thrushes, but may have mostly relied on other sources of protein, or none at all. For those with disposable income, the situation was rosier. On the one hand, landowners such as the Venetian monasteries, collected rents as returns on invested patrimonial wealth. On the other hand, while people such as Pagolo Morelli and del Bene obviously purchased game on the markets, others, such as Datini, and to a more limited extent, the abbot of Santa Trinita, could purchase, but also receive gifts of game because of their position in society. For them, game meats were a token, a hybrid between a material item of good protein value and flavor, and a sign, or symbol of wealth, prominence, and gift-giving ability. The Priors of course had no concerns of income whatsoever, as the moneys for their foodstuffs came out of the state budget. In addition to the social mechanisms surrounding game put in place, for example, by men like Datini, game for the Priors became part of the exercise of political power. The expropriation of game from the surrounding countryside sent a clear message as to where political power resided in Tuscany.

6.2 CONSUMPTION

6.2.1 Preparing Game

As all foods, game needed to be prepared in a kitchen and served at a table. Medieval cooking aimed at making food taste good was inextricably linked with the ideas and dictates of (Galenic) humor theory derived from Galen of Pergamon (129-c. 200/216). Humor theory understood the human body as made up of four humors, defined by binaries between hot and

cold, moist and dry. One of the humors, choler, was moist and hot, while another, phlegm, was cold and dry. Diseases were understood as imbalances that had arisen in a body's normal humoral levels. The cure consisted of bringing the levels back to that specific individual's normal levels. Climatic characteristics were also catalogued according to those binary definitions and affected the body to the point that they could cause diseases, and the same was true for foods and ingredients in recipes.⁶⁷ As a consequence, animals also took on the qualities of their environment. Among game, roe deer, young chamoix and boar, partridges, pheasant, and quail were considered *rubales* animals, creatures that lived in open airy areas or mountains.⁶⁸ Their consumption was considered healthy, and encouraged by medieval medicine. Not so that of creatures living in swampy or wet areas prone to miasmas and "bad airs." Despite recognized prestige and eating practices, medieval medical experts did not encourage the consumption of the cold and humid meats of ducks, herons and cranes.⁶⁹ According to Galen, opposites counterbalanced one another, so to counteract too much moist and cold, the cook had to add hot and dry in the way the animal was cooked and/or in the ingredients added to it. Roasting reduced moisture and added heat, as did ginger and garlic.⁷⁰ In essence, cooking practiced matching of opposite qualities in order to obtain a balanced humoral product, but it also produced what appear to have been flavorful results. This product had to be attuned to the characteristics of the individual eater. In elite establishments, physicians worked in close collaboration with cooks, since an unbalanced diet was unhealthy and could lead to disease.⁷¹

Eating and medicine were never far apart in the Middle Ages. In 1332, a native of Milan, Magnusus Mediolanensis (Maino de Manieri) composed his *Regimine Sanitatis* ('regime for health'), in which he devoted ten chapters to a systematic examination of the health-related

⁶⁷Anna Maria Nada Patrone, "Trattati medici, diete e regimi alimentari in ambito pedemontano alla fine del Medio Evo," *Archeologia Medievale* 8 (1981): 373.

⁶⁸The Arab physician Avicenna said that deer meat was the healthiest and most nutritious of all. Terence Scully, ed., *Chiquart's "On Cookery." A Fifteenth-Century Savoyard Culinary Treatise* (New York, Berne: Peter Lang, 1986), 39.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 382.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, xxi-xxii.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, xv, xix.

qualities of all foodstuffs generally in contemporary use.⁷² The text confirms how much late medieval literate culinary practice was indebted to Arab and Galenic medical theory not just in its ingredients, but also in the ways foods were prepared. In the chapter entitled *De saporibus et Condimentis*, ('on flavors and condiments'), Magninus explains the various warm and cold sauces appropriate to a wide variety of the meats and fishes that he had analyzed elsewhere in Part 3. Not only did the sauces make the food delicious, they also counteracted "harmful superfluities in the foodstuffs which are to be consumed."⁷³ The link between flavor, preparation techniques, and optimal metabolic functions was complete, and cooks and doctors shared ingredients.⁷⁴ In both the culinary and the medical fields, it was all a matter of achieving proper balance. Medieval "diets" often served the long term purpose of (re-)establishing internal balances and were almost slow-working medicinal treatments. As discussed, the medieval penchant for hierarchical classification invested food also, which in turn served to organize social hierarchies on the basis of metabolic functions. This was used to provide a logical explanation for why, for example, peasants could not eat finer foods. Due to their metabolic characteristics, they would have become ill from such foods.⁷⁵ In several interconnected ways, food and metabolic functions related to it, fully participated in the medieval conception of the world.

A meal such as might be served at a banquet therefore represented a small world within the larger one. It reflected the social and economic standing of its host and articulated these on various scales of magnitude and variation within a pre-set pattern. The goal behind the design of a meal was to achieve a harmonious whole through correct sequencing of warm and cold

⁷²Scully, 1986, xix, informs that the *Regimine* exists in a 1482 edition by Johannes de Westfalia in Louvain. His Chapter 20, the *Opusculum de Saporibus* was copied in a manuscript currently at the *Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli*. The part *De Saporibus et Condimentis*, part of that chapter, was published in an abbreviated form from the Naples ms. in, Lynn Thorndike, "A Mediaeval Sauce-Book," *Speculum* 9, no. 2 (April 1934): 183–90.

⁷³Thorndike, 1932, 186, [...] *corrigatur quorundam ciborum malitia seu saltem remittatur*.

⁷⁴Various medical treatises (*Taquina* or *Regimine Sanitatis*) were produced in the Middle Ages containing recipes, good advice, empirical common sense, and the dictates of the Salerno school of medicine and of Arab doctors. Nada Patrone, 1981, 370. Manuals uniting suggestions on good health coupled with more or less moral injunctions were also common, in for example fifteenth century Bartolomeo Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*, ('on wholesome appetite and health'). Emilio Faccioli, ed., *Arte della cucina*. (Milano: Il Polifilo, 1966).

⁷⁵Grieco, 1997, 379-80.

preparations, each humorally balanced. The human stomach was considered a kind of furnace, which digested different foods at different speeds. The mechanics of the stomach demanded that it be “opened” or made ready to work, through the eating of fresh fruits and acidic preparations (humid and cold). These were to be followed by sauces (*brodetti*) and smaller and lighter preparations, including game fowl, that slowly and through the increasing heat and substance of the preparation, led up to the meal’s climax, the roasted meats which included game. These were substituted by fish on meatless days. After this climax, a progressive “cooling” led to the very end of the meal, when the stomach had to be “closed” again and the furnace left to work. The “closure” of the meal, and that of the stomach, was provided by sweets such as candied fruits and digestion enhancing ingredients as, for example, hot and dry ginger.⁷⁶ Within this formal structure, the status of the dinner, and that of the host, were determined by the quantity of food served, its variety (a meal of just game would have been unacceptable) and, as we shall see, some labour intensive tricks on part of the chef.

6.2.2 Cookbooks

Cookbooks are the place to look for established medieval culinary practices of elite households. As written documents the books possessed obvious cachet and as literary products targeted a specific audience. In fact, the inventory of the Visconti library at Pavia castle lists one copy of the *Viandier*, (or *Vivendier*) the cookbook written by Guillaume Tirel or “Taillevent,”(1326-1395) the famous chef working for the count of Savoy.⁷⁷ The Pavia ducal library inventory also lists a copy of the *Regimine Sanitatis* of Magninus, discussed above,

⁷⁶Odile Redon, Françoise Sabban, and Silvano Serventi, *A tavola nel Medioevo* (Roma: Laterza, 2012), 17–18.

⁷⁷The book exists in manuscript form at the Gesamt-Hochschul-Bibliothek Kassel, 4 Ms. med. 1. This is the manuscript underlying an English translation, Terence Scully, ed., *The Vivendier a Fifteenth Century Cookery Manuscript* (Devon: Prospect, 1997). A critical edition of all extant manuscripts is, Terence Scully, ed., *The Viandier of Taillevent* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988). According to Scully, 1988, 27, Savoy’s culinary environments gave birth to another famous cookery book, the *Du fait de cuisine* (‘On Cookery’) of Maistre Chiquart Amiczo. The duke himself (Amadeus VIII, first duke of Savoy and later Pope Felix V) had commissioned its compilation in 1419.

besides Taillevent.⁷⁸ Clearly the dukes and their cooks were versed in matters of medical and culinary theory, as was fitting for a cosmopolitan court such as that of Milan.

Yet books and recipes were not merely literary exercises for the well-off. Grease stains and emendations in extant manuscripts, as well as, where it has been attempted, comparative analysis between ingredients lists and shopping lists, all point to the fact that the books and their contents were used in actual kitchens.⁷⁹ They ranked conceptually with hunting manuals and legal treatises as *Fachliteratur* (p. 17), technical writing involving practical and pragmatic problem solving in the realm of the material world. Cooks and their staff had to match the material opportunities and limitations of gustatory and humoral characteristics to provide *ad hoc* products. An example from France demonstrates how the books were practical tools and not just for the very well-to-do. The *Menagier de Paris* was a book covering a broad range of household instructions, including how to run a kitchen and prepare all sorts of foods, compiled by an elderly husband, possibly a minor noble, to aid his young wife.⁸⁰ For special occasions, the book also lists the preparation of game meats and fowl.⁸¹ For all their practical function, cookbook requirements of ingredients, including expensive spices, made them objects for those with at least a somewhat respectable food budget, including the author of the *Menagier* who used “costly ingredients, such as only people in comfortable circumstances could afford.”⁸²

Italian cookbooks or collections of recipes from the 1300s and 1400s belong to two distinct traditions. A southern tradition was headed by the *Liber de coquina* from the fourteenth

⁷⁸Elisabeth Pellegrin, *La bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza ducs de Milan, au XV siècle* (Paris: Service des publications du C.N.R.S., 1955), 453 (Taillevent); 447 (Magninus). There is also evidence that the dukes of Milan knew of and used the cookbook of another famous late medieval cook Mastro Martino, of which more later. Aldo Bertoluzza, ed., *Libro di cucina del maestro Martino de Rossi* (Trento: Edizioni U.C.T., 1993). There apparently is not connection between Taillevent and Martino, as Scully, 1988, 29 points out.

⁷⁹Richard Hoffmann, personal communication (grease stains and emendations), Grieco 1990, 30-31; 37.

⁸⁰Georgine E. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier, eds., *Le Menagier de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). The *Menagierr*'s recipes were influenced by Taillevent, and entire sections of the latter were also incorporated. Scully, 1988, 26-27.

⁸¹Brereton and Ferrier, 1981, 174-78 (quadrupeds); 228- 29 (mallards and upland birds). The recipes display no significant differences from those of the Italian books, detailed below.

⁸²*Ibid.*, xxiii. On the same page, and concerning the falcons, the editors state that hawking was “a suitable amusement for his wife [...] a recreation enjoyed by noble ladies and the wives of rich men of the middle class.”

century originating probably from the Angevin court of Sicily. To this tradition belonged also a recipe collection entitled *Anonimo Meridionale* which possibly preceded it. From the *Liber* derived the *Anonimo Toscano*, written in the vernacular, and the *Liber coquinarum bonarum*. A second, tradition was called that of the Twelve Gluttons (*Dodici Ghiotti*). This was of Tuscan derivation and derived its name from the distinctive fact that all its recipes were geared towards twelve diners. To this tradition were anchored several anonymous collections, one Florentine, one more generally Tuscan, one specifically from Siena, one from Venice, the second collection of the *Anonimo Meridionale*, and the *Libro di buone e delicate vivande*.⁸³ Historians have acknowledged a *cesura* between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁸⁴ After a few decades, the silence was broken by the emergence of the important *Libro de arte coquinaria* by Maestro Martino de Rossi whose recipe collection to some scholars represented the transition between medieval and early modern cooking traditions.⁸⁵ The collection was organically and logically organized, with recipes grouped according to type, laid out so as to be easy to follow for other practitioners. Martino's book was to become very influential and was extensively copied and followed in the sixteenth century.⁸⁶

The cookbook recipes for game reveal consistent approaches, some of which appear in the earliest extant books. Variation existed, but was finite and more pronounced for the fowl and birds than for the quadrupeds. What follows aims at illustrating the medieval ways of matching flavors with culinary practices, and presents some of the ways to prepare birds and quadrupeds comparing both to their domesticated equivalents.

⁸³Carnevale Scianca, 2011, IX-XI.

⁸⁴Benporat, 2001, 63; Carnevale Scianca, 2011, X.

⁸⁵Bertoluzza, 1993.

⁸⁶It is first Venetian edition from 1516, the book, now called *De arte coquinaria*, was attributed not to Martino, but to a Frenchman, one Maestro Giovanni de Rosselli. The above cited Platina, however, in recognition and admiration of Martino's work, included large parts of it in his *De honesta voluptate e valitudine*, printed in Rome in 1473-75. Platina's was the first Italian printed cookbook. Angela Adriana Cavarra, "La letteratura gastronomica nell'epoca rinascimentale," in *Magnificenze a tavola*, eds. Marina Cognotti and June di Schino (Roma: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2012), 37.

6.2.3 Fowl and Birds.

As Chichibio seemed well aware when he prepared Gianfigliuzzi's crane, the standard way to prepare birds was to roast them, oftentimes stuffed with herbs and/or spices. Perhaps Chichibio stuffed his bird with onions and garlic, as Mastro Martino suggested. A leaner specimen may have been larded, or stuffed with chopped lard before roasting. Other options existed, for example a standard sauce consisting of the bird's liver, hard-boiled egg yolks, spices, wine and vinegar.⁸⁷ Storks and herons would have been prepared along similar guidelines.⁸⁸ Ducks, unhealthy, according to the doctors, but ever present in Venetian rents, were treated much like domestic geese. Their cold humid meats warranted the use of warm and dry garlic and onions which often served as a stuffing before the almost ubiquitous roasting which would have heated the meat and reduced moisture content. As for crane, duck liver, customarily minced and mixed with ingredients such as breadcrumbs, wine, and vinegar constituted the basic warm and cooked sauce for the fowl. These sauces were fairly standard preparations oftentimes named after the animal they were served with.⁸⁹ The peacock, object of so much attention at the aristocratic tables, also appears in the cookbooks roasted and served with its own sauce, aptly called the *savore ad pavonem*.⁹⁰

The dryer meats, such as those of pheasant, considered by the doctors one of the best and most delicate meats available, had to be larded before roasting. Like all other birds, roasting on a spit was the classic way of cooking pheasants, but there were many others for a bird whose meat lent itself to different combinations of flavors. Deboned pheasant could be served cooked in a pastry crust (*pastello*) which would have kept the meat moist. The *pastello* was a medieval classic. Maestro Martino used it for veal, capon, goose, chicken, pigeons or "any other meat" as long as it was lean.⁹¹ The warm sauces served with pheasants varied, but were creamier, denser,

⁸⁷Carnevale Scianca, 2011, 295-96.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 160.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 484.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 475.

and less acidic, to complement the drier meats. For example, one for boiled pheasant involved almonds, milk, pine nuts, sugar, ginger, and cinnamon. Partridges and pheasant could also be served with a warm sauce based on pomegranate and orange juice, as well as sugar, reduced slowly. Quail, the classic object of sparrow hawk hunts, were roasted slowly on a spit, or cut in half and wrapped in pastry like thrushes.⁹² The partridge Martino preferred roasted on a spit, but left “green” that is, rare. At that point he suggested to partially separate the wings and breast filets from the body and rubbing the cuts with a mix of salt, “sweet spices,” pulverized cloves, and orange, or lemon juice and vinegar. This was the preparation called *alla catalana*, or “Catalan style.”⁹³ When the sources speak of pigeons, it is often impossible to ascertain whether what is meant is the wild gray bird, or the domesticated white version. This was further complicated by the fact that medieval courtyards and dovecotes routinely hosted the wild varieties. The pigeon was standard fare at Santa Trinita, and a good substitute for game among low ranking consumers. Roasted pigeons of all kinds are delicious, but the bird was considered heavy to digest, because hot and moist. As usual, this could be obviated by boiling them which reduced the heat. Gourmand Maestro Martino argued that the wild variety tasted much better stuffed with pepper and sage and roasted. Yet while roasting reduced moisture, it enhanced (or at best did nothing) to the heat. Therefore, “cooling” preparations in the form of sauces could be served with the roasted bird and contained ingredients such as rose water, vinegar, and lemon juice. Finally a sauce based on pigeon liver with the standard thickening agent of bread crumbs and black pepper for extra flavor was aptly called *savore a pipioni*.⁹⁴

For all the small birds, delicate, digestible, and suited for the sick and convalescent, basic roasting was always an option, as was the case with blackbirds.⁹⁵ The pattern for small birds was similar to that of their larger counterparts, only the ingredients varied because of their humoral qualities. As well, since the birds were small, they were often roasted several together to preserve

⁹²*Ibid.*, 544.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 632.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 508.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 397.

moisture, or they were sometimes not field dressed at all, but only plucked. Thrushes could be roasted with a stuffing of aromatic herbs, or they could be roasted individually having been previously wrapped in a crust. As with larger birds, there were sauces for the smaller ones. Maestro Martino's sauce for the warm and dry thrushes involved ground almonds, red sandal(wood), ginger and cinnamon, mixed with vinegar and a little broth, reduced for about fifteen minutes and poured over the creatures. Alternatively he suggested orange juice or salted lemon juice with sweet spices.⁹⁶ After a quick boiling, small birds could also be fried in lard and laurel, and served with a sauce, again based on their own livers.⁹⁷ Overall it seems that a certain interchangeability between species existed, and it is likely that the individual preferences, costs, availability of spices, the host's humoral peculiarities, and the season of the year all influenced the chef's exact ingredient list. To this variation contributed the fact that different preparations could obtain the same effect, boiling reduced heat, but so did certain sauces designed to be used for recipes that required roasting which augmented the heat. In the context of all this, the play on sweet-sour flavors coupled with that of game was everywhere evident to complement gamey flavor. Combinations of sweet (sugar, almonds, raisins, rose water etc) and acidic (orange, wine, vinegar) flavors were common for the small birds also as was standard for all game meats.

The preparations for domestic fowl were conceptually similar, but varied in the ingredients. As stated, domestic geese were treated much like ducks and the line between domestic and wild pigeons and doves was blurred. Chickens, standard sources of relatively low cost medieval protein, were versatile, and could be prepared following mostly the standard patterns of roasting and serving with sauces, some of which involved roasted chicken livers. Chickens could be cooked under a layer of *pasta*, cut in pieces and fried and served with a sauce. The chickens were treated differently depending on age and sex, but overall presented less problems in terms of heat and humidity than did their wild counterparts. Poultry was considered good food for convalescents, but as was true for all meats, younger specimens were healthier to

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 659.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 685.

eat for all. The spicy ingredients used for non-game birds were more bland and played less on the sweet-sour contrasts despite the presence of the regular “sweet” spices such as marjoram, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves. Regular water could substitute rose water, and the overall use of cooling ingredients such as lemon, wine, and vinegar was limited.⁹⁸ The lower status of the chicken likely contributed to less spice-laden preparations than the elitist game birds.

6.2.4 Game Meats

Similar patterns were apparent in the preparation of the meat of quadrupeds. There were conceptual similarities in the preparation, but with different ingredients. Pork was mostly roasted, and only the extremities were sometimes boiled and served with a sauce. A summer sauce, consisting of herbs and sweet and strong spices, raisins and fennel was coupled by a winter sauce, which followed the standard procedure of roasting the liver and mixing it with egg yolks, wine, roasting grease, vinegar and spices. Rare mentions of pork in pastry exist.⁹⁹ Veal was similarly roasted, the best way to preserve the flavor of the high status meat. It could also be boiled slowly adding wine, vinegar, raisins, saffron, cloves and other spices at the end. The meat could also be made into a sort of stew, that is, cut in pieces and mixed with raisins, onions and spices with water added and once it was halfway cooked in the oven, more spices. The Maestro also envisioned cooking veal in a crust.¹⁰⁰ Lesser quality older bovines could be boiled, or fried in pieces, or, as was common, served in pastry. Extremities, parts, entrails, and minced meat, could be used for separate preparations. This was in part true for wild quadrupeds also.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 523.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 532.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 710.

¹⁰¹Bovines, *ibid.*, 93, innards, 314-15. Preparations based on these animals include boiled veal tongues, veal meatballs, stuffed veal stomachs, or veal ribs, morsels of pork on the spit, stuffed goat's heads, brains in (pastry) crust, and so on. In the cookbooks the recipes emerge more frequently from the sixteenth century. For example see a menu created in 1570 by Bartolomeo Scappi, chef for Pope Pius V, which contains several such preparations. Luigi Firpo, ed., *Gastronomia del Rinascimento* (Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1974), 50–57. As discussed, some types of participation in the communal hunts organized in the municipality of Sambuca could earn the hunter the game meat entrails which may have been cooked and consumed locally. Although Carnevale Scianca does not report on any recipes, well known local preparations may have existed geared for consumers who did not use cookbooks.

Rabbits could be boiled but Martino categorically stated that their hind legs were the best part and they were to be roasted. Not much sophistication was apparently applied to their preparation beyond this.¹⁰² In contrast, the preparations for hares were many and complex, perhaps reflecting their relative scarcity in the fifteenth century. The animal's hind legs were the best part, and roasting was always an option, but the cold and dry meats represented a challenge, which, as usual, could be variously tackled. The hare, for all its small size, had a sweet and dry (gamey) taste, which warranted that it was treated much like its larger game meat counterparts. Similar treatment was reserved for ungulates. For these animals, salting was apparently not a common practice outside of Savoy or at least for those social classes whose feeding concerned the authors of cookbooks.¹⁰³ Roasting the animal whole was of course the most prestigious way of preparing the animals. It may have been somewhat an aristocratic prerogative because it required that one had the whole animal, not just a few pounds of it, as did Datini, or, even, the Priors. Individual cuts could of course also be roasted. In either case, this preparation would have been the highlight of a medieval meal.

Black pepper sauce was standard for hare, boar, and all deer species.¹⁰⁴ Sauces were served with previously cooked (not roasted) meats and “the blacker the sauce, the better,” wrote Martino.¹⁰⁵ A very simple game meat sauce was the *cennamata*, a cinnamon sauce with bread crumbs, diluted with wine and allowed to reduce on slow heat.¹⁰⁶ The *brodo lardiero* (lard broth) was also specifically for game. Martino recommended this fatty sauce for the drier front quarters of the red deer. The tenderloin was delicious roasted, while the hind quarters were minced for

¹⁰²Carnevale Scianca, 2011, 180.

¹⁰³Irma Naso, “Alla mensa del principe. I prodotti alimentari alla corte sabauda negli ultimi secoli del Medioevo,” in *Archivi per la storia dell'alimentazione. Atti del convegno Potenza-Matera, 5-8 settembre 1988*, vol. III (Potenza-Matera: Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, 1995), 1067. Salting was common at the English courts and consumed in large amounts, Birrell, 2006, 180-81.

¹⁰⁴The preparation was ubiquitous, starting with the earliest fourteenth century books. An entry for black pepper, specifically for this sauce to be served with boar, appeared among the entries of the account book of the monastery of Santa Trinita on Tuesday, 27 January 1362, Zazzeri, 2003, 78.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 503.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 152.

meatballs or cut into pieces, studded with cloves, wrapped in pastry, and baked. Apparently such a preparation could be preserved for between two weeks and a month.¹⁰⁷

While bear was given as a gift to Piedmontese Amedeo of Savoy in 1299, and eaten at that court for several days after, and while that court shows unique evidence for salting of that animal, bear meat was viewed with some suspicion in medieval Italy. Cold and dry, it was high in phlegm and so unhealthy. It is likely that the medieval contemporaries were reacting to the taste of the animal, which would have been especially pronounced if the beast had not be properly field dressed and cooled right after the kill. This would have been particularly difficult for larger (older) animals. Recipes for bear were rare and generic, perhaps a reflection of relative scarcities of that species on the table and perhaps also in the woods by the time the books were being written.¹⁰⁸ Martino's advice amounted to a recommendation to eat young animals, and that bear was best cooked in *pastello*.¹⁰⁹

There were similarities between the preparations of the game animals and fowl in part due to a certain commonality of flavor. The distinctive taste of the game meats were was used as an asset. It was matched with savory lard when the meat was lean, it was subdued by roasting, and heightened and accented by spicy and sweet-sour combinations of flavors of the accompanying sauces. The use of the fowl's liver, with its pungent taste reminiscent of the animal's own, thickened sauces, but also worked to underline and heighten the taste of game, especially when set off with warm or sweet spices. It would also have provided a binding agent, as well as salt flavor. The play with flavors was then incorporated in the ways in which the animals were (slow) cooked. The final aim appears to have been to create a continuum of integrated flavors and textures at every mouthful. The recipes suggest some quite sophisticated

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 155. The issue of food preservation outside of salting and drying has been neglected by scholars. It is likely that concerns about preservation in an era without refrigeration played a role in how the foods were prepared and the spices used. For example, parboiling may have had such a function, as it would have disinfected the meat prior to cooking.

¹⁰⁸Evidence for aristocratic bear hunts exist in fifteenth century Lombardy, for example, PS, 1483, however, see Pastoreau 2008. Bear appear less frequently in the Tuscan gate duties, however the animal was still hunted (with nets) in the early modern period, Sforza, 1918.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 456.

gustatory experiences. Of course, eating was not just about taste. The presentation and overall pleasant context of the meal played a large part in the ways in which foods and flavors were perceived. Beauty heightens memory. Providing one's guests with a memorable experience, especially in the highest circles, involved formally choreographed and predictable presentations coupled with quite a bit of unexpected theater. All this included food, but went well beyond it.

6.3 GAME MEATS AT THE TABLE

6.3.1 The Aristocrats Were Special

The entry into Bologna of Hannibal II, firstborn son of Giovanni II Bentivoglio, and his bride, Lucrezia, daughter of Ercole d'Este, duke of Ferrara, prompted extensive gift giving by many people. Among the food gifts was a total of 870 "birds."¹¹⁰ Hare, a roe deer and 80 live quail were given by various individuals for the June 1466 Florentine wedding of Bernardo Rucellai to Nannina de' Medici.¹¹¹ The gifted game was only a part of a much more varied and articulated dinner menu. The table was an important public and performative place and offered a prime occasion to give and receive gifts in gestures of that all-important exercise of patronage which supported pan-European medieval exercise of power.¹¹² The table was a crucial crossroad

¹¹⁰Benporat, 2001, 250.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 249-53; 148-51.

¹¹²The English kings were keen on giving gifts of deer (dead and alive) as well as rights of warren and rights to empark to their noble subjects. Andrew M. Spencer, "Royal Patronage and the Earls in the Reign of Edward I," *History* (2008): 27–28. Largesse was a fundamental characteristic of lordship and social dominance in general, Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193–98. The subject of medieval gift-giving is very large and complex and articulated in religious (i.e. to monastic houses) and lay giving. The field was traditionally explored by anthropologists Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) and Bronislaw Malinowsky (1884-1942). Traditionally gift giving exchange has been interpreted by modern scholars as in opposition to the exchange mechanisms of the capitalist economy. Early studies emphasized the reciprocity of the gift and the social bonding in engendered. For good discussions of origins and developments, Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," *Speculum* 81, no. 3 (July 2006): 671–99 esp. on pp. 671-78. For a very valuable overview of the literature and developments of giving to religious institutions, Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach," in *Medieval Transformations. Text, Power, and Gifts in Context*, eds. Esther Cohen and Mayke B. De Jong (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001), 123–56; Andrew Cowell, *The Medieval Warrior Aristocracy. Gifts, Violence, Performance, and the Sacred* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 5-10. The focus of this author centers on how the act of giving for the (male) medieval warrior aristocracies was couched in violence ("the status of violence as enacted in the gift" p. 11) and connected to (public) performance. Another quality of gifts was their transformative nature which affected both giver and receiver, Valentin Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts. Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

for the exercise, display, and material consummation of aristocratic power. Gift-giving and giving of the game that was to be eaten provided the final, and shared, assertion of power that originated with exclusive control of territory and hunting. The quantities of game gifted on the two occasions above should elicit no surprise.

In 1368, when Lionel, Count of Clarence and brother to Edward III of England came to Milan to marry Violante, daughter of Galeazzo II Visconti, Lord of Milan, the rather extraordinary list of gifts given *during* the 18 servings of the wedding feast included dozens of hunting dogs with lavish finery, raptors similarly luxuriously furnished, horses of various types (for war, tournaments etc.) with bridles and saddles, armor, weapons, and, only toward the end, also some beautiful items of clothing.¹¹³ Not surprisingly, the presents given were items usefully employed in hunting or war: primary aristocratic activities but also occasions to display status and test and explore social reciprocities. The wedding represented the union of two important European aristocratic blood lines. The gifts underlined the nature and origin of the two families' power.

Celebrations occasioned by knightings, weddings, or important aristocratic visits were often multi-day events involving far more than just food and dining. The celebrations were all-day entertaining performances for male and female guests and young heirs, involving jousting, hunting, dancing, music, performances, and more.¹¹⁴ Game meats were served up in often unique ways bordering on micro performances within the larger dinner setting. Initially, these performances had been small dishes served between courses and called *entremets* in France and *subtleties* in England. These evolved into dinner entertainments in the form of inedible ornaments or acted performances including "illusion foods" which heavily favored status animals and game animals. Among the former were peacocks and swans, skinned, cooked, seasoned and redressed in their original plumage. During the 1343 feast dedicated to Pope Clement IV, one of the Avignon popes, one *entremet* consisted of a castle with walls made from roast birds,

¹¹³Benporat, 2001, 132-33.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 143.

populated with cooked and redressed deer, wild boar, goats, hares, and rabbits.¹¹⁵ Events and dinners surrounding special aristocratic occasions contextualize game meat consumption and make its peculiarities and meanings clear.

Aristocratic banquets typically followed the general sequence of “courses” outlined above. This standard sequence involved an opening, a closing, and the climax of the roasts. In such sequences, game fowl and smaller birds would have appeared early in the meal, such as the pheasants and partridges served at the dinner presented by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza (p. 109), the brother to Ludovico Sforza of Milan, to the Prince of Capua, Ferrandino, in Rome in 1492.¹¹⁶ The extant evidence on servings for such elevated occasions, however show that things were maybe less consistently performed. The wedding of the Count of Clarence consisted of 18 *bandigioni* or servings in which there was no discernible ascending order dear to the humor theory. Birds were served almost to the very end of the meal, and the first “course” involved roast pork.¹¹⁷ Similarly a *convivium* that took place probably in 1473, likely in Rome, opened almost immediately with various game quadrupeds.¹¹⁸ It is likely that breaking the rules was part of aristocratic prerogative, (or that rules were not that firm), and that the desire to impress and perhaps overwhelm the diners counted for more than prescribed sequencing of dishes. The description of the 1473 *convivium* alerts us to the performance based nature of aristocratic dinners. For each list of foods served at each “course” corresponded a *representatione*, (the French *entremet*). This consisted of a tableau representing natural landscapes as well as human constructions, for example the Colosseum in Rome, all made of dough, or a sugar paste which had been colored and sometimes gold leaved. These were integrated with the serving of the dishes and sometimes echoed them thematically. For instance, the lids covering the containers holding three different preparations of boar, including one with pepper sauce, were made of

¹¹⁵Scully, 1995, 105-107; Melitta Weiss Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 114 (feast for Clement IV).

¹¹⁶Firpo, 1974, 51.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 132-33.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 157.

pastry and decorated on top with pastry caves inhabited by black devils.¹¹⁹ The color and supposed ferocity of the demons echoed that of the black pepper of the *peverata* sauce, the notorious aggression of boar, and the fact that it was commonly counted among the “black” game animals.

The *representatione* testifies to the degree that food had become an endlessly variable possibility for play at an aristocratic banquet. But nowhere was this more apparent and sought after than in the presentation of game. The surprise element at banquets often lay in the interpretation of a known theme. Dressing the cooked peacock(s) back in their feathery dress before presenting them at the table was a cliché. Having one made for each *signore*, and having it carry around its neck his personal coat of arms, as happened at Hannibal II’s 1486 banquet, was more unique.¹²⁰ Serving game animals and other large domesticates whole was likewise not unusual both in their boiled and roasted form. But serving game animals such as hares and roe deer whole and dressed back in their hides was more imaginative. Even more so as they were set up and decorated to look alive.¹²¹ A similar tableau was created on occasion of the banquet offered by Ascanio Sforza in 1496. In this case the animals, a red deer, a roe deer and two hares, were served in a *bosco*, a table top recreation of a forest.¹²² This performance was echoed, a bit later and at the same banquet, by a “castle” made of pastry being set on the floor of the hall, from which live rabbits frantically escaped in all directions. Rabbits made of dough, but to look like the live ones that had just run away, were brought in immediately afterwards. The live rabbits escaping from a structure made of edible material was in itself an innovation on a much more common practice, so common indeed it was listed in Maestro Martino’s cookbook. The standard version involved small live birds trapped in a pie-like creation of bread dough. When the pie was cut open the birds flew off and sang. In 1476 Benedetto Salutati had opted for this classic version

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 157-60. The devils are on page 158.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 251.

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*, 272.

at his banquet. Striving to please his aristocratic betters in a recognizable fashion at a banquet, he employed their semantic tools.¹²³

Gold was of course a clear mark of status, but gold leaf was also an exclusive food ingredient in and of itself. Apart from its visual qualities, gold was believed to have very positive and tonic nutritional qualities, making it very fit for exclusively aristocratic consumption. The match with game meat was therefore apt, and the substance was used to coat entire cooked or roasted game animals. The Count of Clarence's wedding presented gold-leafed hares, herons, quail and partridges.¹²⁴ At Ascanio's banquet, gold was rather uniquely used to coat the heads and antlers of the red and roe deer presented in the table top "forest" just described.¹²⁵ As an utmost rarity, two bear were presented coated in gold at the banquet celebrating the investiture as duke of Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan in 1395.¹²⁶

The banquets' performances were organized around the blurring of boundaries and transporting the guests to a make-believe space. Hunting game animals and eating them symbolized aristocratic control over the natural world which went well beyond that normally allotted to human beings. The animals were served cooked but redressed in furs and feathers looking as if alive and capable of running away at any given minute. This inedible diorama was contrasted by images of animals made of sugar paste, and sudden irruptions of real live animals into the banquet hall from serving platters and food preparations. Performing all this animal magic at one of the most public and contrived events of a court made aristocratic pretense of control over even life and death resonate even further. It also brought indoor the outdoors seat of that familiar and exclusive aristocratic activity, hunting, much like miniatures in books and wall-sized *trompe l'oeils* did. The appropriation of the natural world and its most prized animals by the ruling lord was complete.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 239.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 132.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 272.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 142.

6.3.2 Other consumers

Most non aristocrats could not match the elite's performances at the table because they could not command the requisite labor and resources. While on a much reduced scale of grandeur, those outside the higher aristocratic circles still consumed their game to some extent along the lines of what the recipes suggested. We know little about how the Priors consumed their game, but Grieco has documented the connection between the use of some twenty specific cookbook recipes and dinners for special occasions.¹²⁷ As discussed, purchases of ingredients such as pepper, may alert us to the ways in which game was prepared. For all his talking about food, Francesco Datini never reports on how he had it prepared, with one notable exception, a hare which was roasted whole and so in full agreement with standard cookbook practice.¹²⁸ If what Grieco demonstrates for the Priors was also true elsewhere, certain recipes were both markers of the status of the dinner, and obligatory performances on such occasions. The same may be inferred, in the silence of the documents, about the preparations employed by captain del Bene. What we have does demonstrate that the cookbooks were not just literary exercises, but were involved in real life practice for special occasions among certain better off groups of consumers and their cooks and that some of the recipes outlined in this chapter were put into good practical use.

For those consumers who were limited to smaller passerines, wild doves, and similar less prestigious creatures, little shows how they were cooked, lacking the expensive ingredients that often accompanied them in aristocratic circles. It is likely that they were simply bundled and roasted on a spit or perhaps wrapped in a pastry shell. More than likely such preparations were simply part of common knowledge passed on through an oral tradition. Accounts from England show that there was an urban "fast food" market involving items such as pies and other ready to go food but also roast game birds from pheasants to mallards to woodcock and more, items for

¹²⁷Grieco, 1990.

¹²⁸Giagnacovo, 2002, 41.

the better-off customers.¹²⁹ The existence of such urban food industry has not been researched for Italy. The Italian cookbooks contained many recipes for pie-like preparations (*torta, pastiera*) but none of these employ wild birds, except pigeons, and Italian blackbirds were apparently not incorporated in pies.¹³⁰ We stand on slightly firmer ground with regards to the *alberghi*, the roadside hostels where one could stay overnight and eat.¹³¹ Ten account books remain from three generations of proprietors of the Albergo della Stella (Star Hotel), the largest of its kind in Prato.¹³² The books listed both what the individual guests ordered, and what was brought out ready made to consumers in their homes. The social range of the hotel's consumers was vast. As a consequence La Stella's kitchens offered both dinners at fixed prices, and *à la carte*. While the former were less expensive and contained wholesome foods, the latter included finer meats including game and game birds, and more laborious preparations. These were geared towards better-off guests. Both at home, and when dining out, medieval Italians followed established patterns of consumption.

6.4 CONCLUSION

Game meats and fowl were very desirable for medieval Italian consumers from all walks of life. Game was scarce, expensive to buy, and had high status as a food item. While game animals might be procured from a variety of sources, the strategies available to individual consumers were limited by socio-cultural and economic factors. Even for those who could afford it, game was mostly reserved for festive occasions, but to many it was not accessible at all. Boccaccio's story about Gianfigliuzzi and Chichibio that opened this chapter (p. 200) is emblematic in this regard. Gianfigliuzzi, allowed for social and cultural reasons of status to hunt

¹²⁹Martha Carlin, "Fast Food and Urban Living Standards in Medieval England," in *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, eds. Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1998), 27–51. A price list for the roast game birds is on pages 38–39.

¹³⁰Carnevale Scianca, 2011, 684–85; 397.

¹³¹Fanfani, "Note sull'industria alberghiera italiana nel Medio Evo," *Saggi di storia economica italiana* dispensa 4 (1934): 109–21; Pinto, 1981, 56.

¹³²Nigro, 1983, 64 and Appendix B; Nigro, 1996, 387. The originals are held at the Archivio di Stato di Prato, *Patrimonio Ecclesiastico*, 419, I have not been able to consult those.

with a raptor, has access to hunting and its resource and uses them freely. Chichibio could not afford to purchase game and apart from perhaps leftovers he was unable to eat it. Brunetta, of course, was even less able to access game, but was resourceful enough to get around the problem in unique ways.

When Florentine merchant Benedetto Salutati held his banquet, in 1476 (p. 210), his attempt, or obligation, to mimic aristocratic performances may well have cost him his fortune. His practical ability to organize that banquet at all is impressive although he may have been able to count on the help, and gifts in nature, of a circle of friends. His dinner party makes it clear that there existed two quite separate circuits in medieval Italy for game meat consumption. One circuit was aristocratic. Aristocrats controlled the whole process of consumption, from procurement in the field, to serving game on the table. They had eliminated competition for the game by appropriating even the habitats of the game. This allowed for extravagant behavior, and vast consumption, which in turn justified exclusive appropriation also of certain species, like the crane, that would not have been available on the markets for purchase.

The other circuit was that of people who, unable to hunt themselves, could only procure game through purchase, or because they could exercise some kind of right over others. The abbots who received game as gifts, merchants like Datini, military men like del Bene, those collecting rents in ducks in the lagoon, all for different reasons, could gain access to the meat itself. But they were helpless to control the hunt of the game, or, indeed, the habitats it came from. Commercial hunters may have been able to control their impact on the game's habitats, but there is no information available illustrating self-regulatory measures on their part. We do not know if they ate any of the animals they hunted. As far as ducal huntsmen, the documents remain similarly silent, reporting only on abuses.

The behavior of the above two different sets of consumers around game reflected different attitudes to the ecologies of the game. Aristocrats manipulated habitats and hunted in ways that enhanced their social visibility and skill. They imposed no limitations on themselves, nor on their strategies, but could simply continue to hunt because they maintained control of

access to all that the natural world had to offer, and could procure themselves with animals even beyond the confines of their territories. Their response to scarcities was to increase control and exclusive access, most visibly in their creation of parks.

Non-hunting consumers were bound by what re-distributive strategies on natural resources were put in place for them by their societies. The marginal role of game as a food and as a source of income was due to its habitat requirements. While these habitats were still present in later medieval Italy, their extension was far diminished compared to its early centuries and the degree to which they were exploited for other uses also posed limitations to game animal populations. Non-aristocratic consumers could do little to obviate this. The strategy of the Florentine Priors was to remove what may have become available on the market for their own consumption. The gesture echoes the aristocratic monopoly. For most others, even with good purchasing power, there was little to do but hope for good fortune at the market stalls. The status of the animals and their ecological characteristics meant that the forces of demand might not have helped increase supply. Sumptuary provisions, also on game, were enacted by a variety of Italian governments, but these measures did little to curb the consumption of those with the largest power over game animals and habitats, men like Gianfigliuzzi, for example. Those with the cultural and political ability to position themselves outside of the mechanisms of supply and demand, did so, as this allowed them to escape any kind of control and limitation on their behavior. To all effects, game was the meeting point of two vastly different and competing circles of consumers, who, apart from their desire to eat game meats, exchanged and communicated little.

CHAPTER 7. ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS, ECOSYSTEMS, AND GAME ANIMALS

The central chapters of this dissertation have established the encounters that took place between three distinct groups of human hunters, sometimes aided by their domesticated assistants, and a variety of game animal species in the landscapes of north and central medieval Italy. For the professional court huntsmen of the dukes of Milan and the commercial hunters in Tuscany and Venice, hunting was motivated by work. For aristocratic dukes of Milan, hunting was motivated by leisure, play, and display of power. In all instances, it was through different sets of practices consisting of hunting procedures and skills based on an ecologically sound understanding of the natural world that an interactive linkage was established between the wild creatures and their human pursuers. In the process, a dynamic human colonization of certain habitats took place through hunting. As a consequence of the hunters' activities the natural world was visibly changed through anticipated outcomes and unintended consequences. It is the purpose of this section to summarize and synthesize this process.

7.1 HUNTING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

7.1.1 Environmental Limitations and Shaping Forces

All the hunters encountered in the last few chapters, inherited and inhabited a world of hybrid environments (p. 8). The way these environments looked and functioned ecologically was the result of centuries of co-evolutionary process between the natural world and differently cultured humans. In most of medieval western Christendom both large and local scale environmental changes had been precipitated by demographic increase, urban development, agricultural expansion, deforestation, and land reclamation. Different medieval landscapes provided a variety of resources. Woodlands, for example, were exploited for coppice wood and timber, but also for pasturage, charcoal production, chestnut groves, as well as hunting. Although the actual volumes and densities of individual species' populations remain invisible to us, game

animals shared fully in this process of change. These involved the carrying capacity of habitats and alterations in the overall plant and animal species composition. For example, the beaver had been extirpated in England by 1200. By that date also hare populations in France and elsewhere were dwindling and the animals' ecological niche was being re-colonized by rabbits. Due to over-hunting, bear, wolf, and wild pig were extirpated from the British Isles by the end of the Middle Ages. By the thirteenth century deer in Britain existed mostly in enclosed, private hunting parks as a consequence of combined over-hunting and habitat loss.¹ Change and pressure on the environment encouraged the development of attitudes of strict control over natural resources and their extraction. Legal, fiscal, and social measures were put in place meant to limit access and redistribute exploitation to select groups. For game animals, this was ironic, given the Roman conception of the game animal as *res nullius* (pp. 20-21). Yet by the later Middle Ages these species were controlled by extant polities, whether in the form of centralized governments or municipalities. By then, enlarged dominion over the natural world involving both its materiality as an economic resources and its ideological connotations, valuable, for example, to enhance the visibility of the body politic, had become indistinguishable from the successful exercise of power. As a consequence, any medieval Italian who wished to hunt had to negotiate both material and conceptual limitations.

Included in the limitations were the ones pertinent to game animal ecology. While each species' behavior was bound by certain consistent traits, game animals in general were often suspicious and quick to flight, required large territories, reproduced poorly if at all in captivity, and overall possessed agency because of autonomous causation. Within the complexities of hybrid landscapes, medieval hunters had to find ways and develop skills conducive to drawing such creatures in so that they could be captured or killed. Heavy anthropogenic pressure was not necessarily detrimental to hunting as long as good habitat was available. Game animals become accustomed to human activity, if they learnt that it does not represent a threat. In Venice fowlers

¹Hoffmann, 2014, 191; Mileson, 2009, 29; Birrell, 1992, 124.

could work within earshot of human voices, and the Cerbaie hills, crossed by the busy Franchigena pilgrim route, were nonetheless commercially hunted. The presence of numerous and at times vast urban centres, important metabolic sinks provided with large populations and frequent markets, mandated interconnectivity between urban conglomerations and the surrounding countryside. This further created possibilities for human-animal co-adaptation as well as quick routes to the demanding markets. We must not imagine medieval Italian hunters necessarily plying their trade in remote areas, given the presence of game, hunting could take place with relative ease close to home. This factor was especially vital to commercial hunters.

Current historiography has acknowledged that the great medieval mortality of 1348 gave the much exploited European landscapes a respite.² For a few decades, perhaps even some human generations, natural forces played a more prominent role in shaping environmental conditions and natural habitats. Agriculture beat a retreat, and *saltus* and *silva*, albeit second or third growth, made a come-back. This was also the case in Italy, where human mortalities especially in cities were at the same levels as elsewhere in Europe and local migrations oftentimes away from less environmentally favorable areas were marked.³

Despite obvious and intense human suffering, spiritual crisis, and effects on wages and grain prices, the Black Death did not cancel the basic tenets of the medieval world. Populations in Italy as elsewhere learned to co-exist with the recurrent disease and, with some regional variation, their number slowly started climbing again. Part of this co-existence with more nature and less people may have favored hunting which was integrated in the economy and organized in

²Specifically for the Italian countryside, Cortonesi, 1995, 61. For England, Bruce M.S. Campbell, *English Seigneurial Agriculture 1250–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 430-31.

³Venice, which suffered great demographic losses, was repopulated through migrations from the countryside, Lane, 1973, 170, who also writes that inducements were offered for example in the form of exemptions from initiation fees on the guilds. For Tuscany, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1985, 70-71, argue that urban populations were harder hit by the pandemic than those of the countryside, while Ginatempo, 1990, 114, identifies a situation in which post-Black Death urban populations did not bounce back attracting immigrants, even in the case of Florence but overall settled on reduced overall relative numbers. In Lombardy, Milan's populations increased after the pestilence, but at a slower rate than, for example Cremona, Brescia, and Mantua. These three cities lay on important trade routes. Overall, this author argues that economic vivacity seems to have played a larger role in urban repopulation than pre-Black Death patterns. *Ibid.*, 74-75, 79.

ways that reflected general trends of resource exploitation. The development of instruments such as the *societas* (p. 151-52) and the *gabella* (p. 130) were not brought about by environmental factors. But their application to hunting in areas already known (pre-Black Death) to support that activity (in Tuscany, for example Fucecchio, Santa Maria a Monte, Lucca, and Sambuca) suggests that game animal populations may have grown and that municipal officials and commercial hunters both were paying attention to the financial potential of the game resource.⁴ In Venice, duck hunting continues to appear healthy both through and after the Black Death. Similarly to the Tuscan scenario, the evidence for the organization of the activity through *societas* points to an increasing commercial organization of the activity and that it participated in the growing regional trading networks and financial tools characteristic of the commercial revolution (p. 150). On municipal or public lands, distribution switched from use-right (p. 127) to a framework of organizational structures. In Milan, where the analysis has covered a period that in good measure overlaps with the Tuscan, the activities of the dukes and lack of local documentation, renders post-Black Death changes invisible but does not mean that they were absent. In general it is possible to say that medieval Italian hunters faced better hunting conditions involving both more habitats and more animals for a short while after 1350.⁵

7.1.2 Consequences

Medieval Italians engaged their hybrid landscapes in different ways. Amongst those with the power to control both hunting territories and allocation of the game meat resource they consisted in creating and ensuring conditions of exclusive access. Unrestricted access to resources was never the case in medieval rural economies, and the evidence for the “tragedy of

⁴Maps 3 and 4.

⁵In Fucecchio, the otherwise inexplicable fall in the *gabella*'s value over the period ca. 1390 to 1442 (when the record is interrupted) could argue for an initial post Black Death situation of good deer hunting, worthy of a good fee, followed by a worsening of conditions, perhaps due to over hunting, but likely also to (or in conjunction with) increased habitat use and/or destruction as human populations and their cattle again inched their way back in the fifteenth century. For example, it is at least possible to posit that increasing pressure on the pasturage of the Cerbaie, which we know took place concomitantly with hunting, may have meant competition for fodder between the stock and the roe deer.

the commons” dear to American ecologist Garrett Hardin is inconclusive at best both in general and specifically for Tuscany.⁶ As we saw in Chapter four, in 1297, Alberto and Bandinello Lese (p. 128) were fowling in a specific location because they had developed the right to do so based on customary use and there is no indication that this led to overuse or depletion of the resource. Later on this customary right of access switched to becoming mandated and required by the political class or by very strong social forces, such as the guilds. Fishermen’s corporations of Venice such as the Nicolotti (pp. 187-88), the fowlers and hunters organized in *societas* whether in Torcello (p. 189) or around Lucca (pp. 152-53), those lagoon dwellers who paid rents for their right to fowling and those who, in Fucecchio, paid a *gabella* (throughout Chapter 5 and p. 132), as well as, on a much grander scale, through legislation and emparkment, the dukes of Milan (p. 85), all recognized that limiting others’ hunts was advantageous to their own hunting. The strategy reflected changing views on the cultural and economic use value of the natural world and its resources, including the game.

Of course a vast conceptual and political gulf separated the municipal council of Fucecchio from the duke of Milan when it came to distributing exclusive hunting rights. The former did so for fiscal reasons, assigning to an individual the annual exercise of a commercial activity within the relatively limited environs of Fucecchio. The duke did so to favor his own and his friends’ exercise of their favorite leisure activity at the permanent expense of everybody else in an area covering a third of his duchy and involving lands not owned by himself, but public. Yet while both duke and municipal council were plainly exercising superior ownership rights, the emphatically larger scale and motivation behind the duke’s behavior exploited both ecological and seignorial elements to obtain a unique result. He used hunting as a means to transport the natural world into the body politic of the state where it was consumed in material and symbolic ways that aspired to transcend physical limitations. Exclusive access at the level of commercial hunting had no ambitions to overcome the limits of nature, it was simply a working tool. Here

⁶Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162 (13 December 1968): 1,243–8.

the cultural and the natural existed in a condition of dynamic adaptation and produced different strategies of exploitation. To procure ducks, several fowlers may have profitably worked relatively close to one another, as they apparently did in the Venetian lagoon and on the riverbanks of the town of Santa Maria a Monte. For deer, on the other hand, the *statuto della Sambuca* (pp. 143-44) recognized that uncoordinated multiple hunting activity for deer might be detrimental and organized the pursuit of the ungulates accordingly. Local ecological restrictions and desires of medieval users surrounding hunting existed in a situation of co-dependent push and pull situation that echoes a situation recognized on a much wider scale by Richard Hoffmann who writes, “[t]he medieval colonization of natural biological resources -- from the cereal economy, through the sheep, to the coppice woods, to the rabbits and the fish -- often retained some sense of real natural limits, even when pushing against or beyond them.”⁷

The environmental consequence of exclusive hunting rights resulted in a colonization of designated areas through hunting. For example, in Fucecchio, that area was the Cerbaie hills, at least semi-permanently populated with snares and hedges. In Lombardy, it consisted of the many *cacce* (p. 81). In Venice a similar bounding took place in the division between the public and private waters and their respective, and differentiated, users (p. 182). The colonization was a process of marking off of territory and consisted of describing physical boundaries and legislating what specific hunting activities could, and more often could not, be performed therein. The process assigned a specific and recognizable functionality to an area in terms of its (animal) resources and the ways they were procured.

Within spaces designated for hunting, the hunters themselves colonized or marked off their territory through further means varying in scale, functionality, and meaning. The commercial hunters’ colonization was informed by the need to organize repetitive and unobtrusive captures of the animals. As described, Fucecchiese deer hunters positioned their snares, and at times laid out their hedges. For a period of time, these remained in place. Similarly

⁷Hoffman, 2014, 194-95.

the banks of the Gusciana may have been at least temporarily furnished with *escati* (p. 128) which we may think of as a superimposed landscape for the capture of ducks. The mostly sixteenth century *uccelliere*, elaborate systems of nets for the capture of small birds are an early modern example of exactly such permanent colonization of the landscape through hunting.

It is however in the Venetian lagoon that we find an almost textbook example of hunters' adaptation both to hybrid environments and to the habits of the game fowl through the creation of small scale socio-natural sites. Areas containing *pantherae* (pp. 167-69) and set-ups of decoys (*escadurie*, pp. 170-73), were clearly bounded and recognized as specifically organized for hunting. Especially in the case of the former, a permanent or semipermanent, rentable, and sublettable fowling technique appears frequently in Venetian documents pertaining to both public and private areas. In both situations, the mechanics of the capturing device meshed well with both duck behavior (suspicious, but adaptable, gregarious and consistent) and with human commercial procurement dynamics. The *panthera* marked off the ecological and social features of a location and assigned it a precisely articulated hunting function. In and around it, a certain set of repeatable practices interacted with a material structure. The network of individual devices in turn colonized the lagoon landscape.

While conceptually similar, aristocratic landscape colonization for hunting was far wider in scope and more varied in its material expression involving parks and castles, a multi-tiered labor force, and the duke himself. The metabolic footprint of this colonization stretched far beyond the boundaries of Lombardy to include other courts and other urban markets, such as the Venetian. Within Lombard territory, the largest and most momentous environmental consequence of aristocratic imprint on the natural landscape was the park. While Chapter 3 outlined the genesis, cultural, and material aspects of the park, the concern now is its biophysical dynamics and legacies.

From an ecological perspective, the park was a permanent sink. Closed off and guarded from the external world, notwithstanding its internal agricultural production, the park depended on constant outside input in order to make deer available for hunting. Parks were not only a

construction constantly emphasizing elite prerogatives, they put a real strain on their surroundings. Peasants and landowners were sometimes expropriated as part of park construction, as happened in Pavia. The parks were provided with water, a precious resource in an increasingly irrigation-dependent Lombard economy and their requirements might compete with those of other users. The emparked deer were provided with food and sometimes shelter, and the park environs were specifically landscaped and provided with roads. The walls of the park subtracted timber, brick and possibly labour from the local economy, but they were also a tangible reminder of aristocratic prerogative. When in disrepair it was cause for alarm. The deer were quick to escape, as the huntsmen frantically reported.⁸ While the park appropriated local resources its catchment basin could extend beyond Lombard borders when deer, for example, were procured in Tuscany, as they were in the 1470s, or plants and swans arrived from the court of Mantua (p. 88).

The Lombard parks were not apparently intended as a substitute for the out of bounds hunts, but as a culturally necessary complement to them. The parks were specific hybrid socio-natural site designed and operated so as to ensure a supply of accessible and abundant deer hunting and falconry under controlled and predictable conditions. The parks were second natures, a carefully crafted assemblages of imports, whether exotics such as the fallow deer brought in from other areas. To enable certain hunts the dukes created a simplified ecology and reduced and compartmentalized faunal diversity.

Deer behavior was one of the most prominent sources for many of the unintended environmental consequences and problems arising within the parks. Deer are big eaters, and despite the tenants' provisions, keeping them may have cause difficulties. A document from 1483 asks for 3,000 bundles to cover immediate needs at Pavia.⁹ A document from the tenants of Pavia shows that perhaps the emparked deer populations were getting bolder, or were not fed sufficiently, as it asks for permission to build additional fencing inside the park, to keep ravenous

⁸Archivio di Stato di Milano, (ASMi), Comuni, Pavia (CPv) 331, unreadable date. These were red deer.

⁹ASMi, Potenze Sovrane (PS) 1483 undated.

ungulates away (presumably from the crops).¹⁰ But the supreme irony was when park life changed animal behavior to the point that the deer were no longer suitable to be hunted. In 1467 Carlo da Cremona, then master of the hunt general reported to duke Galeazzo Maria that the deer “refused” to let themselves be chased in to the woods and hunted. In fact the deer were so pampered, plush, and accustomed to harmless human presence, that not even food could lure them and if one needed to capture them, success depended on “luck.”¹¹ In 1495 a disconsolate huntsman wrote to duke Ludovico Sforza about the damage done by red deer in the Milano *barcho*. The animals had become so tame that chasing with neither dogs nor men dispersed them more than momentarily. Indeed, the companionate formation of deer “would rather let themselves be killed than split apart.”¹² The easy life of the park had simply rendered the deer useless to their primary purpose and unwilling to run. It also exposed them to risks. As the deer in the Milan park apparently grouped together and did not move they were thus liable to have “sticks and metal objects” thrown at them, as well as being “run after and chased” all of which was of course prohibited.¹³

Another aspect of unintended consequences of wild ungulate emparking may have been the sudden mortalities among animals not meant to be kept enclosed. In 1457, one Bonifacio di Castell’Ottieri saw his flock of fifty apparently healthy creatures raised in enclosed conditions suddenly dwindle to a mere seven red and roe deer.¹⁴ We may speculate whether irruptions of diseases such as rinderpest in cattle, sometimes present in parks such as that of Pavia, may have affected Castell’Ottieri’s or other park owners’ deer.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, in the context of much

¹⁰CPv 331, undated.

¹¹ASMi, Finanza, Parte Antica, Caccia (FC) 485, 21 October, 1466 and 18 October, 1467.

¹²FC 485, April, 1495.

¹³PS 8, ff. 102v. - 103r.

¹⁴PS 1483, 24 October, 1457.

¹⁵Elizabeth Williams, S. and Ian K. Baker, eds., *Infectious Diseases of Wild Mammals* (Iowa: Blackwell Publishing, 2001). RPV (Rinder Pest Virus) is unlikely to erupt in deer and its outbreaks are not well sustained in deer populations. However, wild ungulates may contract the virus from diseased cattle and it then causes high mortality. Gregory of Tours observed the connection in the sixth century in his *History of the Franks*. No medieval evidence is known at this point, but deer are also reported to have died *en masse* in later epizootics, in the 1700s. Tim Newfield, personal communication. Epizootics in medieval Lombardy have not yet been studied, nor do we know if Bonifacio di Castell’Ottieri’s also had cattle.

human anxiety and excessive ungulate docility, unexpected incursions of wolves, attracted by the game and facilitated by broken walls, elicited justified panic.¹⁶

Parks were complex hybrids in which deer farming and agricultural practices and material structures co-existed within an enclosing wall (pp. 93-94). Their apparent dysfunctions were due to high level of dependence on human management and outside metabolic sources focussed on maintaining a very simple ecology, something akin to a monoculture of deer. Prior to stocking and landscaping very little in the parks had involved deer, thus making for unstable ecologies. Lombard park practice may have been metabolically unsustainable in the long run, except perhaps with a very small population of animals.¹⁷ Even if a purely mathematical metabolic balance was achieved through exogenous inputs, and without taking into account the taming and morbidity, we may still well wonder how healthy and viable the deer populations were. The effect on ungulate behavior of the co-existence within park walls of unknown numbers of up to three different species of previously free deer remains unknown. The contemporary huntsmen were left to observe and describe a situation that they were helpless to fix.

7.1.3 Conservation, Preservation

Present-day environmental studies refer to the concepts of “conservation” and of “sustainability” to assess the effects of human activities in the natural world. Concepts surrounding conservation now spring from a desire to preserve an animal, plant, or indeed an entire ecosystem for its own sake, in recognition of its intrinsic value. Individual organisms all play a role in maintaining species complexity on planet Earth, or the species may be a key

¹⁶CPv 331, undated.

¹⁷The only numbers I have been able to find for some indication of emparked deer populations are from Vaglianti, 1998, 79 (note 85). In 1451, Pavia housed 13 male and 16 female fallow deer, 4 red deer does and 4 fawns as well as 16 roe deer, for a total (with fawns) of 53 animals. In 1453, the numbers were a staggering 80 fallow deer, 12 red deer and 30 roe deer, for a grand total of 122. Contemporary historians seem unreliable, unless we are willing to believe sixteenth century Stefano Breventano’s estimation of 5,000 deer in the Pavia park (as well as countless hares, pheasants, quail and partridges) cited in, Erba, 1999, 73.

component in an ecosystem.¹⁸ The concept of conservation is oftentimes discussed in conjunction with that of sustainability, or sustainable practice. The latter is normally linked to activities surrounding specific, and often productive, systems, for example fisheries. By sustainable practice is meant one geared towards achieving an inter-systemic long-term (“future generations”) balance between metabolic inputs and outputs, including waste management. Medieval thought, whether learned or not, did not recognizably display such conceptualization of the intrinsic value of natural resources. It did recognize economic and cultural value, as is clearly the case with game animals. In the Middle Ages, what is covered by the modern term of sustainability may have been unintentionally achieved for a span of time within a specific system through a negotiation of local conditions by trial and error, orally transmitted. Neither of these factors need negate good stewardship, care, and, perhaps, attachment to *Natura* on part of the humans involved.

Those in power, whether municipal councils and aristocratic lords, variously attempted to *preserve* the game meat resource. If applied consistently, some of these measures may have been efficient in *conserving* the game species, but this was not done because of that species’ intrinsic or ecological value. Preservation was always targeted towards maintaining its cultural value, whether as a source of income, for example the ducks in the Gusciana, or a source of leisure and political power, for example the deer in the parks. It is finally not possible to gauge the sustainability of any of the hunts presented in the previous chapters.

When included, municipal preservation strategies pertaining to hunting may be found in the *statuti* (p. 66). These involved guarding town patrimony of which the game animals were part. Towns prohibited the use of certain techniques, considered “damaging” because too

¹⁸Wildlife biologists recognize that top level predators often play a key role in maintaining the balance and characteristics of an ecosystem (always dynamic but endowed with recognizable long-term features). For example see discussions pertaining to various such creatures in John Terborch and James A. Estes, eds., *Trophic Cascades. Predators, Prey and the Changing Dynamics of Nature* (Washington: Island Press, 2010). The re-introduction of wolves in North America was at least in part justified by the need to reduce wild ungulate (elk) pressure on vegetation. Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious. Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004), see his extensive bibliography on the topic in note 3, page 226.

efficient and conducive to unintentional consequences, for example killing young animals or trampling standing crops. The *quagliere* and the *scudo* (or *scudicciolo*) refer to a calling device and a red “shield” with eyeholes carried by the hunter camouflaging his human contour allowing him to net an entire covey of quail.¹⁹ The *statuto* of Lucca instituted a closed season for quail and partridge between April and May in order to protect mothers and chicks.²⁰ The *statuto della Sambuca* prohibited hunting on snow covered ground with certain types of dogs and its regulations pertaining to the organization of hunting may also be interpreted as conservation measures aimed at avoiding disturbance to game from excessive human activity as well as kills of unsuitable (young, or pregnant) animals as a consequence of haphazardly organized hunts.²¹ The “300 fathom rule” (p. 129) for duck hunting at Santa Maria a Monte may be similarly interpreted. No known records indicate any kind of preservation strategies in the Venetian lagoon.

For the aristocrats, the preservation of game animals was clearly targeted towards self-consumption both in the parks and outside them. This is plain in several preambles to legislation put in place to eliminate hunting pressure which otherwise, or so the dukes asserted, would have been so large as to “destroy” the duke’s pleasure.²² This apparent intransigence was mitigated by political strategies observable in Chapter 3 when the dukes found it convenient to please the Lombard elites by granting them temporary hunting rights. Maybe this inconsistent behavior ultimately damaged the duke’s intent at preservation (and perhaps political credibility). Furthermore, in the sometimes heavily exploited hybrid landscapes of Lombardy, allowances had to be made when local population complained that boar, for example, were causing damage to agriculture. Such was repeatedly the case in Lombardy in the early 1490s when permission was

¹⁹Tori, 2009; Alberto M. Onori, ed., *Statuto del Comune di Pescia 1339* (Pistoia: Società pistoiese di storia patria, 2000), 124; Enrico Fiumi, ed., *Statuti di Volterra. 1210/1224* (Firenze: Deputazione di storia patria per la Toscana, I, 1951).

²⁰Tori, 2009.

²¹Chapter 3 discussed a document illustrating how a group of ducal hunters accidentally drove out and killed two small boar, when the intention was to take one large one. This type of mistakes were probably more liable to happen than we imagine, not just during aristocratic hunts.

²²PS 1496, Grida, 19 April, 1473.

granted intermittently to noblemen and/or the court huntsmen to hunt the boar. For socio-political reasons, the protection of the duke's subjects and their fields and meadows took precedence over the protection of his game.²³

Preservation efforts for game in Lombardy involved not just game animals but also their habitats. This legislation was wide ranging. For example, in certain hunting areas such as Cusago woodcutting required specific permission issued by the master of the hunt.²⁴ Wood and brush cutting on river banks in reserved areas was similarly only by permission as those habitats were preferred by the various bird species hunted with falcons. Collection of acorns "ruined the woods" at least according to the dukes.²⁵ Rather, the dukes thought the nutty resource better destined to sustain boar rather than domestic pigs. For all this, two letters from 1490 and 1497 discussed the paucity of nuts.²⁶ Characteristically, mast crops vary from year to year which may have been the case here. A poor mast year would push more boar into agricultural areas, as seems confirmed by complaints on destructive boar activity dated from those same years. There would have been several good reasons for the dukes to keep the acorns in the woods. Legislation prohibiting gleaning the stubble, and pasturing pigs in fields was prohibited because the fallen grain provided a good source of food for quail, partridges, and pheasants, popular game birds for falconry. The open spaces of the stubble fields of course provided a perfect setting for that activity and the amount of bird food they provided may have been significant. An undated document from the Pavia area explained that following a meager wheat harvest, the fields have not been left accessible to the upland birds, but rather quickly re-sown with millet (*migli*), a fast growing crop. As a result, the document continues, the pheasant and quail that the lord had wanted to hunt were staying in the woods, unfit to be hunted with raptors.²⁷ We do not know how well all this legislation was obeyed. The sum total of all these ordinances, if respected, must have

²³PS1496, 2 and 24 October, 1494; FC 485, June 9?, 1495.

²⁴Comincini, 1989, 93-95.

²⁵ASMi, Archivio Panigarola, Registri degli Statuti (PRS) 11, 21 November, 1496.

²⁶PS 1483, 25 November, 1490 and 25 November, 1497.

²⁷FC 485, undated letter.

represented an economic burden to local populations because it limited access to exactly those residual (stubble) and/or non-agricultural resources (acorns) that were so vital to the proper functioning of agricultural economies as to be traditionally held and managed in common.

The hunting parks were the most elaborate attempt at deer preservation.²⁸ This was clearly a targeted preservation for personal use close to home and display of status which had nothing to do with conserving the species for its own good. In England, emparkment was prompted by scarcities in the countryside already by the thirteenth century.²⁹ Milanese evidence shows that roe and red deer were still hunted in the open countryside although the populations were likely smaller than in previous centuries. It is likely that the parks were also a response to scarcity.³⁰ However, evidence shows that the parks were used for hunts different from those out of bounds, and so served a complimentary, not substitute function as in England.³¹ For all ducal rhetoric on maintaining viable hunts in preamble to the legislation, no known documents clearly or consistently report on scarcities of deer. In the second example in the Introduction, (p. 1-2) the apparently exiguous number of deer must be put in relation to locale, difficult terrain, season, and vegetation and need not indicate a scarcity. Potentially recalcitrant communities may also have been quite effective in steering ducal huntsmen away from the game. In 1456 Francesco Sforza had requested hares and roe deer from all over the duchy to restock his preserves. The result was most unsatisfactory, but this may have been due as much to unhelpful local populations as to real scarcities. Similarly uncertain were the grounds for Galeazzo Maria Sforza's request and procurement of dozens of deer from Tuscany in 1472-73. Was he responding to Lombard scarcities or was he exercising his clout on young Lorenzo de' Medici, (pp. 101-102) or both? Did his 1473 Tuscan requisitioning happen as a response to the shipments of very tame deer

²⁸There is no evidence from Lombardy of hunts by huntsmen within the parks, intended strictly to supply the lords' tables, although such hunts did take place outside the parks. Birrell, 1992, 125.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 124; Pluskowski, 2007b, 75.

³⁰Vaglianti, 1996, 66 suggests that Lombard deer were emparked to protect what little was left of them, Andreolli 1988, 80-81, writes that red deer populations were dwindling in the area of Modena.

³¹For example the *caccia alle tele*, for cardinal Ascanio's hunt (p. 113) as well as that of Isabella d'Este on the Ticino river (p. 86) and also in FC 485, 10 May, 1491 (Cusago) in which a huntsman informs the duke that the *tele* will be mended this month so red deer hunts may subsequently be organized.

resulting from his appeal to his own subjects earlier that year?³² Political relationships between Milano and Florence make sorting out these issues difficult.

Preservation was but one of medieval hunters' responses to their environmental scenario. They appear cognizant of animal behavior and its connections to habitat. Their knowledge was garnered through observation, trial, and error. Given that the hunters pursued similar animals in similar habitats, why did they choose to handle and use this aspect of the natural world differently? The next section will turn to the issue of their hunting procedures and how these reflected their attitudes and understandings, skills and knowledge bases in the natural world.

7.2 METHODS AND SKILLS

7.2.1 Work or Play, Why Does it Matter?

Work and play did matter in medieval Italian hunts because different motivations for hunting warranted a dissimilar knowledge base, application of skills, and attitudes to the natural world. In 1995, Richard White cited Elaine Scarry for saying, "Both our work and our play involve an extension of our sentient bodies into the external world."³³ Medieval humans were also endowed with sentient bodies extending into the external world. I concur with White when he observes that "work itself offers both a fundamental way of knowing nature and perhaps our deepest connection to the natural world," and that "play, which can be as sensuous as work, does not so fully submerge us in the world. At play we can stop and start." Finally, he writes that "[w]ork left unfinished has consequences." Implicitly, White appears to suggest, play does not.³⁴ The ways in which the natural world is handled materially inform on the motivation of those who do the handling. The meaning of the handling derives from people's pool of learning, (knowledge) and skills learned and applied together through the hybridity of their human bodies. The difference between work and play was not just one of degree of personal involvement, and

³²Lubkin, 1994, 90.

³³White, 1996, 172-73.

³⁴*Ibid.* 174. That is also the stance of the present work, although of course not all readers may agree.

mastery, although it was also that. The differences also lay in what was at stake, which was manifest in the ways in which various groups of hunters put themselves in relation to the game animal *sensu latu* through their different practices. Much evidence does attest to medieval Italian (and European) skills in working in the natural world, and to the fact that these abilities were based on material understandings of nature garnered through observation and experiential learning and practice. Thus garnered, the understanding of the natural world led to informed action with it. Abundant testimony to this lies in the work of commercial hunters outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, but also the skills and understandings and “mastery” of the aristocrats, some of whom, like count Gaston Pheobus and Emperor Frederick II (pp. 62-63, 60), wrote manuals. The subtle behavioral strategies mandated by de’ Crescenzi in his hunting (p. 61-62) speak volumes on medieval ability to engage and understand nature on its own terms.

7.2.2 The Gender of Hunting

The hunters that we encounter in Italy were mostly men. Female participation in hunting existed, but was more circumscribed. We encountered Beatrice d’Este of the Milan court on a daylong outing to a hunting park the very opening of this dissertation (p.1) while her sister Isabella, married to the Marquis of Mantua was a spectator to a *caccia alle tele* (pp. 84-85).³⁵ Courtly women appear to have been involved in all types of hunts including those requiring long hours on horseback. They also flew raptorial birds, and it would be wrong to see them as only passive onlookers cheering on their male counterparts, although they were that also.³⁶ A couple of Venetian documents show female participation in connection with ownership and probably commercial use of the fowling device known as *panthera*. There was nothing in the hunting activity that required one to be male in order to successfully participate, whether with regard to aristocratic or commercial hunts, yet when women participated they so did following rules made by men.

³⁵Aristocratic women hunters were common (although a minority) at all European courts. For example Christoph Niedermann has found several in fifteenth century Burgundy. Niedermann, 2000, 181-82.

³⁶Almond, 2009, 54-100; Oggins, 2004, 111; 118-119.

Female participation in hunts thus reinforced existing understandings about medieval gender roles. Both aristocratic and non-noble medieval women were present in men's lives but were often dominated by them, albeit in different ways. Aristocratic women were idealized and commodified by men who dominated them.³⁷ Their participation at banquets was a typical place in which this objectification took place as their participation was mediated by the man who controlled them. Women in the trades and crafts worked side by side with their men, but seldom achieved the same recognition as them. For example, widows could inherit a workshop and run it but only until they remarried. In England, however, the legal status of *femme* (or *feme*) *sole* ("woman alone") included widows, spinsters but also wives who by reason of specific legal designation of some sort were not *couvert* ("covered" by husbands and so legally incapacitated) as wives usually were. Under this status, women could do business, sign contracts and be held liable in their own name.³⁸ The two Venetian documents involving women describe a mother and daughter, renting equipment to a man, and a father-daughter team (p. 180) as tenants of some *pantherae*. In the first case, the mother may have become widowed, and inherited the equipment. In the second, the daughter would have been subordinate to her father, legally and otherwise and may perhaps have filled in for a missing son, or mother. The evidence fits Mazo Karras' observations for guidelines surrounding female economic activity in the urban (craft) guilds.³⁹

Hunting participated in a larger and complex discourse about the establishment of manhood, which required validation by other men.⁴⁰ The process was different depending on one's social class simply because the concept of manhood was not homogenous and was emphasized differently. Consider commercial hunters as parts of the trades and crafts, at least for

³⁷Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men. Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 25.

³⁸Amy Froide, *Never Married. Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15, note 2; Martha Howell, *Commerce Before Capitalism 1300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 109, note 32 and 196. The peasant woman Cecilia Penifader never married and bought and sold land in her own name, Judith M. Bennett, *A Medieval Life. Cecilia Penifader of Bridgestock, c. 1395–1344* (Boston: McGraw Hill College, 1999), 97–99.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 127; 145–46.

⁴⁰Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 52.

this purpose. A trade was practiced to achieve economic independence.⁴¹ Economic independence allowed men involved in trade and crafts to fulfill their ideal of manhood which consisted of being in a position to rule over other men, marry, and own one's own workshop and equipment. Being successful as a commercial hunter may lead to all that.

For the aristocrats, things were different. Aristocrats did not work. The aristocratic classes of fourteenth and fifteenth century Europe descended from the warrior knights of earlier centuries whose purpose in society was to fight: the *bellatores* in Duby's famous tripartite division of (high) medieval society.⁴² Indeed, they were specifically trained and culturally conditioned in the exercise of violence.⁴³ Manhood was achieved through the display of prowess in battle and endorsed by other males. By the centuries under study here much had intervened to change and subvert this original knightly violence model. New roles had been established for successful as well as socially dominant male behavior. Clerical, lawyerly, and mercantile roles all had challenged the knightly road to political power.⁴⁴ Being skilled at hunting, and hunting often and for pleasure, participated in a group of activities, privileges, and mentalities surrounding the exercise of violence which was a badge of one's ability to exercise lordship, the intended aristocratic occupation. But by the fifteenth century this was no longer enough. Living in increasingly bureaucratized and centralized states, late medieval aristocratic males had to realize that the exercise of violence could be detrimental to their chances of holding public office, that new arena for aristocratic dominance and achievement of manhood. While display of prowess was no longer a requirement for officers of state, it was still a vestigial male attribute. Hunting provided a valuable proxy for the exercise of prowess in battle although it is clear, at least in Milan, that involvement in the activity could vary widely depending on individual preference and

⁴¹I cannot prove that this was the case for the Tuscan or Venetian hunters. However, as they practiced a commercial activity for a profit, it is at least likely that their ideas about what constituted a fulfillment of manhood followed the lines identified by Ruth Mazo Karras, 2003, 109, for male participants in urban guilds.

⁴²Duby, 1980.

⁴³Kaeuper, 1999, 129-30.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 194-224; Mazo Karras, 2003.

age.⁴⁵ Aristocratic women, on the other hand, had only a limited access to the exercise of sovereign power and never had access to the direct exercise of violence. If and when they exercised power, this was done in a diffused and mediated way (for example as regents or heads of religious houses). While they may have enjoyed hunting, as it seems they did, when women hunted, their hunting activity meant something different both to themselves and to their male companions and they were not subverting gender roles imposed upon them by others.⁴⁶

7.2.3 Aristocratic players

Medieval aristocratic hunting practice accurately reflected that class' relationship to nature and to the rest of society. Aristocrats were primarily users who did not seek a productive relationship to the natural world, nor one of dynamic co-adaptation like the one displayed by the careful stewardship of Paolo Squatriti's chestnut growers (pp. 10-11).⁴⁷ While in the course of the Middle Ages lordship lost its basis in fighting other people, this development did not change the relationship of the aristocrats with the natural world where game animals were still a target for explicit violence. Aristocrats mostly had a mediated relationship with the metabolic flows that they relied upon: they did not grow their food, for example, but procured it through the labors of others. The hunting behavior of this class and the consumption of its results reflected an increasingly exclusive appropriation of natural resources aimed at minimizing problems connected to having to operate in hybrid environments. Exclusivity also allowed the aristocrats to maximize their ability to play.

⁴⁵Comincini et al., 1989, 82, describe how Filippo Maria Sforza (r. 1412-1477) had the Naviglietto canal built to connect Milan with the hunting park at Cusago. The duke could thus be sailed by boat to the hunting location as, allegedly, he was too gouty to ride a horse. Obviously it was not on the basis of his physical ability to exercise violence or, presumably, chase deer, that the duke based his power, yet he still wanted to project the image of a "hunting" aristocrat. The situation contrasts sharply with the documented activities of young Galeazzo Maria Sforza, or Ludovico il Moro.

⁴⁶Galeazzo Visconti "prominent member" (according to Comincini) who accompanies Beatrice d'Este in the hunt, is "doing service to women" (in his lords' stead). In so doing he is fulfilling a chivalric requirement/ideal which eminently put women on a pedestal in order to deny them power in other parts of life. Furthermore, Isabella (or any of Niedermann's hunting women) is not hunting alone as men were sometimes known to do. This is a further proof of her gendered social position, despite the fact that she is playing at a man's game.

⁴⁷Squatriti, 2013.

Burdened by the “cares of the state” the Lombard dukes felt that they deserved to play, and stated matters thus in preambles to hunting legislation.⁴⁸ White observed that “the play we feel brings us closest to nature is play that mimics work.”⁴⁹ While White is reflecting on the practice of his twentieth century contemporaries the observation raises medieval questions also. Part of what made hunting’s immense popularity among the aristocrats was that it was considered to be the best training for war. But while mimicking war, hunting brought aristocrats closest to nature. Why they wanted to do this has to do with the shared skills and know-how between the two activities.

The Visconti and Sforza built the regional state of Lombardy through a succession of wars and kept a vigilant eye on their borders, notwithstanding the Italian League of 1455 that in theory make aggression impossible among the main Italian powers.⁵⁰ Mostly they were men of action. The comments in a letter of a servant reporting on Galeazzo Maria Sforza’s days in 1458, reveal the perhaps standard attitude of an aristocratic boy, when he says that then fourteen year old future duke “does not neglect his readings for the falcons.”⁵¹ Although the weight of future responsibilities, or perhaps a strict tutor, kept him at bay, the boy’s preference appears clear, but so do those of his parents: Galeazzo Maria must prioritize reading. But reading and hunting were not mutually exclusive. The prayerbook of Galeazzo Maria was filled with decorations of hunting dogs, falcons, and wild game, making his ideals, world view, and indeed his own identity abundantly clear. Even when engaged with intimate spiritual readings, the future ruler was immersed in hunts.⁵² Much evidence points to the fact that the dukes of Milan engaged in hunts according to systems both illustrated in hunting manuals and known to prevail at other European

⁴⁸Comincini, 1987, 140. This specific reference is from 1520, when a public proclaim (*grida*) states that, *[D]opo le impegnative occupazioni pubbliche, è secondo natura che il principe desideri svagarsi affinché, libero dalle preoccupazioni, tenga in esercizio il corpo e ricrei l’animo.* (After taxing public work, it is only natural that the prince wants to be distracted so that, free from preoccupations, he may keep mind and body fit).

⁴⁹White, 1995, 304.

⁵⁰The League lasted until the invasions of the French kings, Charles VIII in 1494 and Louis XII in 1499 who laid claim to the crown of the Naples and the duchy of Milan, thus starting the Italian wars.

⁵¹PS 1457, October 8, 1458.

⁵²This is the aforementioned *Uffiziolo di Galeazzo Maria Sforza* (p. 112) held at the national library of Florence (Libreria Nazionale di Firenze).

courts. It is reasonable to ask what role written knowledge had in the development of their hunting skills.

The Visconti and Sforza library at the castle of Pavia held three volumes on falconry, two on veterinary science and one copy of de' Crescenzi's *Ruralia Commoda*.⁵³ Considering the low absolute number of secular books of any kind at the library, this is a relatively large collection suggesting that it played at least some role in courtly hunting erudition. Yet hunting erudition means different things to different people and none of these books would have detailed how to perform, for example, the driven hunts on larger game that documents repeatedly show the dukes were involved with. What the books do detail are the more difficult or arcane matters of animal training and care: falconry and medicine. Training and caring for a falcon is more difficult than doing the same for a dog or horse. It was important to keep such expensive animal investments well. As medicine involved methods and recipes, written compendia made reference practical and speedy. The hunting information contained in de' Crescenzi involves instructions on how to perform non-aristocratic types of hunts using nets. The chapter also contains information on falconry. In other words, the dukes' library had books pertaining to the more difficult tasks of hunting and although the dukes may have been well-versed in these matters the sources show them differently occupied. For all the apparent sophistication of hunting manuals detailing terrestrial hunts (absent at Pavia) such as that of Gaston Phoebus, (pp 62-63), given the presence of game, the concept of chasing it on horseback behind scenting dogs would not have represented arcane science to medieval contemporaries and we must not exaggerate the role of the manuals in the formation of the aristocratic hunters.

Exclusive reliance on a hunting manual would not have produced a good hunter by itself because no manual could involve all the variation possible in a hunt. The manual conveyed neatly laid out information on the procedures and execution of certain techniques which

⁵³The exhaustive inventory is itemized in, Pellegrin, 1955. Texts relating to hunting include three different versions of Dancus' treatise on falconry, two in Latin and one in Italian (445-46), as well as some unidentified "treatises on falconry" (449), an apparently full edition of de' Crescenzi's *Ruralia Commoda* (465), as well as two treatises on the veterinary medicine of horses (*maniscalcheria*).

proficient hunters knew how to practice and which had been proven to work consistently well. This knowledge had not originated from books, it had originated from a dynamic process of observation and practice in *Natura*, and only later (and selectively) had been transposed, or condensed, into written form. The skilled hunter was he who could also deal with constant and unavoidable variation in the habitats and in the behavior of both domesticates and wild animals, and still obtain the desired results. That good contemporary hunters knew this, is evident in Domenico Boccamazza's painstakingly detailed descriptions of hunts that were to take place in the Roman *Campagna*. It is clear that the huntsman is trying to anticipate any kind of possible event in order to prepare and instruct people who did not have his intuitive knowledge of places and animals. We do not know if he was successful, but his dynamic combination of technical skill and *ad hoc* flexibility, amounting to hunting instinct, was very difficult to put in a written form. Individuals such as Emperor Frederick II or Gaston Pheobus count of Foix may have decided to compile written compendia of such knowledge for the instruction or as complementary education of their huntsmen and for systematic treatment of the topic, but medieval hunting culture was not dependent upon such manuals for its functioning and for the transmission and practice of its knowledge base. Texts were only one part of it. Of the correct relation between theory and practice Albertus Magnus (pp. 18-19) tellingly said, "a wise falconer adds to, or deletes from, these [veterinary] recipes as he sees fit, based on his own evaluations of the moment in improving the overall condition of the birds. In all such matters, experience is the best teacher."⁵⁴ In interaction with animals, in veterinary medicine as much as in hunting, medieval contemporaries accepted that the fixity of written instruction was valuable to a point, but, to be fully useful, was to be actively complemented by a developing body of knowledge existing in non-written form. The hunts described in the Milanese letters involve parts and aspects of the knowledge and procedures included in the manuals but no full *chasse par force*, for example. Adaptation and combinations are the norm rather than slavish execution of set

⁵⁴Scanlan, 1987, 19.

pieces and hunters were often faced with unique situations requiring quick decisions. No doubt, in the busy hunting environment of a cosmopolitan court such as the Milanese, knowledge sharing at an experiential and oral level must have played a large part of hunting erudition. For people accustomed to oral and visual transmission of information, the ability and aptitude to memorize would have been keener than for those accustomed to rely upon written information. The dukes would have learned also from their huntsmen and peers and from actual doing as much, or perhaps more, than from books. A humorous example finally serves to illustrate the risks involved in thinking that hunting manuals were fixed templates for set behaviors.

A poem entitled *Uccellazione di starne* and attributed to Lorenzo de' Medici or his circle was introduced in Chapter 4.⁵⁵ The mishaps of the day are informative. The hunting brigade involved some of the skilled huntsmen and friends of Lorenzo, as well as the Medici himself. There should have been no lack of hunting expertise available in a group that on a different occasion might have involved somebody of the caliber of the famous falconer Pilato. Yet things still occurred on that day which were beyond anybody's control. The reader is furthermore left with the impression that such situations were not unusual. For example, on the morning of the hunt a falconer by the name of Dionigi was so sleepy he ruinously fell off his horse's left side thus gravely damaging his sparrow hawk (stanzas 5- 9). Both he and his feathered charge had to return home crestfallen and hurt. Later in the day, one of the hunting dogs took a hawk that had landed on the ground still with his prey. The hunting bird was only saved by the timely intervention of one of the other hunters (not the dog's owner) who threw a rock at the dog and ran to the hawk's aid (stanzas 21-23). Yet the day was not ruined, and part of the merit of the poem was to finely trace the moods and emotions of the participants as all the events unfolded. While the poem is fictional and so not the accurate rendition of an actual hunt, it is not inaccurate to see it as a reflection of a typical hunting day, with all its joys, sorrows, and mishaps, far closer to everyday practice than to the crisp perfection of the manuals, although revolving around the

⁵⁵Orvieto, 1992, 655-70.

performance of some of their techniques. In the poem, the hunters dynamically adapt to developing events. The manuals prescribe proper procedure in a faultless universe. Hunting letters from Milan are full of mishaps, that reflect what happens in the poem, not in the manuals. As Chapter 3 makes clear, bears got away, boars were killed, deer might be few and far between or simply capable of “vanishing,” and the dogs managed to get out of their leashes at inopportune times. The world described in the hunting manuals was not fabrication, only it represented mostly technical erudition under controlled conditions. To such, each practitioner had to add his own evaluations of the moment.

By the fifteenth century aristocratic participation in the direct exercise of violence and the unmitigated right to do so that had distinguished them in the Early Middle Ages was much reduced.⁵⁶ However, aristocrats were still men of action trained as youngsters in the arts of war and who experienced violent confrontations as did Francesco Sforza, the *condottiero* who took Milan with military power in 1450 or Galeazzo Maria Sforza whose ten years in power were dotted with military campaigns.⁵⁷ As men of action experiential learning ranked high in their mode of knowledge acquisition, also in matters venatory. The warrior’s body was a hybrid, just like any other human body and it learned through stimulation. Infused with technical instruction, ethics of conduct in war and combat, and class-based assumptions about proper behavior, the physical body was subjected to grueling training, risks, and intense activity, and learned the impressive skills of the work of war as something along the lines of what Richard Kaeuper describes as “work with edged weapons”.⁵⁸ It was through this type of labor and training that the fighting aristocrats learned qualities of the physical world.

The other way aristocrats learned was through their horses. Less reliant on instinct than their wild counterparts, domesticated animals depend on human instruction for some of their behavioral skills. The majestic medieval war stallions were no exception. These animals had a

⁵⁶Kaeuper, 1999, 135-36 and throughout.; Richard W. Kaeuper, *Holy Warrior. The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 200.

⁵⁷For Galeazzo’s campaigns, Lubkin, 1994, for example, 26-27; 37-40; 238-239.

⁵⁸Kaeuper, 1999, 136.

vital role in medieval combat, and their training involved their aristocratic horseman as much as themselves, to the point of perfect mutuality. At the moment of shock in mounted combat, the rider must relinquish control to his mount and let him lead the charge. This was an instance of isopraxis, “understanding,” “knowing,” and “thought” shared between man and creature, total mutuality and dependence.⁵⁹ Arguably, mounted combat was less practiced by fifteenth century medieval aristocrats. However, jousting, its training activity, was still very popular, and involved the same dynamic and moment of shock. Shared physicality between man and creature in the pursuit of a common task created knowledge and understanding, also of the individual beast. For those who work with animals, sharing and interaction becomes a place in which to learn about the natural world and learn it with and through the animal. Despite changing war tactics in the later Middle Ages, horseback riding targeted for combat was part of the knowledge instilled in any aristocratic boy from a very young age and horses were treasured, personal belongings.⁶⁰ As a young Galeazzo Maria Sforza wrote his father, he was ready to do anything, if he could just have as many horses, dogs, and falcons as he wanted (p. 111). Aristocrats were accustomed to learn about nature also through their hunting animals’ bodies. Transposing this knowledge to the real of game animals, would not have been a difficult step.

Not surprisingly, when the aristocrats wanted to play they reached deeply into this familiar knowledge base and looked for that activity which afforded them the most enjoyable display and use of this knowledge and skills in a familiar context. In aristocratic hands, hunting mimicked the activity of war by becoming an activity involving risk, physical strength, and exercise outdoors, aggression, stamina, and close interaction with animals such as horses, dogs, and falcons, as well as game. Notwithstanding individual differences in the commitment to the activity displayed by different dukes, this type of procedure was not an intrinsic, or indeed

⁵⁹Crane, 2013, 158.

⁶⁰Lorenzo il Magnifico named all his horses personally according to their personality and characteristics. For example, Fulmine (‘Lightning’), Cuore allegro (‘Cheerful Heart’), Gentile (‘Gentle’), Falso Amico (‘False Friend’). Pietrosanti, 1992, 9. The dukes of Mantua developed their own breed of horses, depicted on the walls of their palaces, Malacarne, 1998, 34.

necessary, quality of hunting. As Chapters 4 and 5 abundantly illustrated, hunting could be very proficiently practiced in quite different ways. Hunting as the aristocrats did it, represented a choice not based on practicality. Because this hunting was done for play, not work, the elites selected which parts of the activity they wanted to participate in, and how; in other words, they chose which of their skills they preferred to perform. After all they could “stop and start” anytime they wanted, and there were no consequences to their “unfinished” play activity. What the aristocrats chose to do was to engage in hunts centered around theatrical and dangerous aspects of a hunt, orchestrating them to require public display of courage and prowess, for example chasing on horseback and in its mediated form, falconry, and killing of the prey. They left the laborious and time consuming organization of the hunts involving scouting for game and training of their animal assistants to their staff.⁶¹

The aristocratic hunting techniques mimicked war and embodied the ruling aristocratic moral code underlying physical conduct (prowess equals honor) that surrounded that activity. Not only were the aristocrats skilled at these acts, the acts were publicly performed and so honorable. Public display was conducive to fame which in turn reinforced one’s ability to rule because fame served the common good, the protection of which was primary concern and underlying justification for lordship.⁶² In performing only certain parts of a hunt which was often specifically constructed around their person and their skills, and in doing so skillfully and publicly, the aristocrats supported their status as uncontested leaders.

The game animals had to collaborate for all this to be possible. Hunting for play was built around the exploitation of the game’s observable natural tendency to quick flight and its endurance in doing so. Had the animals been unwilling to run, as some of the emparked deer were, there would have been no chase and much of the activity’s play and pursuit of honor, and

⁶¹It appears that the Lombard dukes knew about this type of work, whether they had time to do it consistently or not. A young and eager Ludovico il Moro wrote home about the joys and frustrations of training falcons, for example. Later in life he would go out into a park to run his dogs for a few hours. PS 1468, 17 September, 1467; PS 1469, undated, 1492.

⁶²Howell, 2010, 11.

technical prowess, would have evaporated. Performing the kill was more than procuring meat and this was often reflected in the huntsmen's palpable apprehension around the organization of difficult hunts, From Boccamazza in the Roman *Campagna*, to Francesco da Cremona in the Valsassina, their job it was to ensure that the duke's performance was successful.

High status game animals such as male deer and boar collaborated with certain aristocratic performances not only through their aptitude to quick flight, but also through the aggression that such a flight built in them. Courage was more convincingly demonstrated if one faced a clearly dangerous opponent. An enraged boar turning on its pursuers after a long chase was considered such and quite rightly so. Male deer, especially in the rut, were similarly aggressive and dangerous and sought after for that very reason. Animal aggression, ultimately bound to be defeated by the human hunter, served the purpose of highlighting the courage of the human. All this would have come to naught with a meek and docile (emparked) creature. It would also have come to naught in a situation in which the animal escaped or could not be found. Even though aristocrats tried to dominate the natural world and use this gesture for clearly cultural purposes, they could not do so outside of the ecological reality.

According to one traditional narrative, once the early medieval aristocratic identity became increasingly shaped by courtly behavior and its emphasis on genteel behavior, hunting oriented itself away from long-drawn chases and direct killing towards less dangerous and physically demanding forms. In fifteenth century in Milan, however, the evidence does not show that more genteel modes of hunting had substituted chases with dogs. Rather all methods co-existed. Game animals were killed with bows and arrows, but also from horseback and with spears. For the likes of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, dangerous out of bounds hunts for large boar and chamois co-existed with romps in hunting parks. The more socially and politically complex position of the aristocrat was reflected in the increasingly articulated necessities of his hunting style. A more theatrical performance of power was reflected in the frequency of hunting imagery in prayer books, frescoes, and court writing. Parks became a cultural must and the duke's hunting staff grew as did the requirements placed on it to provide a variety of hunting experiences.

Domenico Boccamazza commented in the sixteenth century that the *caccia alle tele* was not customary in Rome (indeed, it was French), all the while he explained how to use the technique so that a diligent courtier may be ready to prepare just such a hunt if so requested.⁶³ The lords also had to be prepared for cultural challenges, but remained enamored of more traditional techniques.

7.2.4 Working Hunters

The huntsmen of the Lombard court and the deer hunters and fowlers of Tuscany and Venice all hunted for work, whether for the sometimes intermittent wages and perhaps appreciation of the duke of Milan, or for the price garnered by the animals at the local markets. In hunting, these men were burdened by none of the conceptual superstructures of the aristocrats, although the court huntsmen had to adapt their performances to them. Much like the aristocrats, both groups' hybrid bodies served them well to learn experientially although their bodies knew little of mounted combat, and more, for example, of the endurance necessary in long foggy winter nights spent on the lagoon fowling. In their hunting performances both groups were bound by top-down impositions. Lombard huntsmen were asked to provide a service for their lord either by organizing specific hunting performances like a *caccia alle tele*, or the more mundane work of dog training. Commercial hunters had to operate within the social and legal frameworks of their societies. They were all subject to the limitations imposed by animal behavior within the latter's habitats. These men shared a body of knowledge and skills involving scouting territory and interpreting animal signs there, but since the frameworks in which they played out their lives affected their skills, knowledge, and activities, they here receive separate treatment.

Chapter 3 outlined the general structure of the Milanese hunting personnel. Now the concern is with those members who actually performed hunting related work, not the higher echelons of state administration. While at times this did involve lower nobility, or political elites

⁶³Innamorati, 1965, 419.

tasked with training birds, or organizing hunts, the term “huntsmen” will here mostly refer to non-nobles working as falconers, kennelmen, and hunters directly employed at court.⁶⁴ Their presence and their tasks were not uniquely Milanese and was yet another aspect of that Europe wide aristocratic culture of hunting developing out of late medieval European courts.⁶⁵

Court huntsmen trained and cared for animals, travelled for their procurement, scouted, supervised, moved animals between locations, and otherwise organized hunting within the framework in which the dukes practiced it. This involved activities ranging from small scale forays into a park, to much more elaborate out of bounds hunts for boar or bear. On occasion, such as some boar hunts in the early 1490s, they also hunted on commission. The measure of these men’s hunting success was the degree to which they provided a certain skilled service according to their lord’s understanding of it. Not only did they have a sound understanding of the natural world and the game living it, they would have learned through the animals they trained and learned to combine the two efficiently. But court huntsmen had an additional problem: they did not hunt for themselves. Much like sixteenth century Domenico Boccamazza had to provide his lord with good hunting in a very large and complex area, so Pietro da Birago had to organize his huntsmen in the field in 1467, and falconer Pilato had travel to Florence, and then back to Milano to provide his fine skills upon the bidding of his lord. For these hunters nature was a resource to be manipulated and presented for use to their lords on their lords’ terms. To all their ecological knowledge they had to add the skill of making this knowledge functional to the specific needs of a third party.

In the exercise of their services, the huntsmen were uniquely positioned in ways that reflected attitudes and prerogatives put in place by their lords. The huntsmen were part of their

⁶⁴The aristocratic members of staff tasked with hunting assignments outside and inside of the administrative circles received some kind of political payback whether as sign of favor or the opportunity to make some material gain on the side. This was likely also the case with political elites, such as that *podestà* of Vigevano Scazzoso Anfossi who was sent a sparrow hawk for training. PS 846, 19 July, 1468. This was not likely for the commoners who relied on being paid by the court.

⁶⁵For court huntsmen in Burgundy, Beck, 2000. For the English falconers, Oggins, 2004 as well as sections in the monographs of Cummins and Almond, cited above. For Mantua, the oft cited Malacarne, 1998, throughout offers insights into the lives and activities of that court’s huntsmen.

lords' concept of play. Due perhaps to their closeness to the duke's person, they were instrumental equipment, much like the dogs and falcons they carried, for a certain performance to take place. To facilitate them in their tasks, the duke projected onto them the symbols of his own power. Huntsmen carried letters authorizing them to collect animals in the Lombard territories.⁶⁶ They could carry arms, day and night, paid no tolls, and had to be housed by local populations. Much like their lords, they operated outside of social norms to a degree unimaginable to their commercial Venetian and Tuscan counterparts. This was also the case in their relationship to the hunting environments. Where fixed locations, variously assigned, were the norm for commercial hunters, court huntsmen went where their lord or their assignment dictated. As opposed to commercial hunters who possessed or developed some personal degree of investment with a certain location, the courtiers may have had little personal attachment or commitment to a location. They were not part of its cultural landscape. As a consequence court huntsmen were generalists, rather than specialists, of hunting environments and had to rely on local populations for specialized knowledge. Domenico Boccamazza stands out as an exception having developed a superb local knowledge of a large territory around Rome. This was the result of a lifetime of hunting and observation of those areas and perhaps some personal qualities.⁶⁷ In writing his *Trattato*, Boccamazza is transmitting his legacy, with a measure of melancholy, as he sees that things are changing. It may be possible to posit that the old huntsman had a measure of attachment to his hunting territories, and affection for his profession and the experiences it had afforded him. Milanese documents reveal no equivalent to "Menico" in Milan, but it is possible that specific huntsmen in Lombardy may have developed a very fine local knowledge of certain areas.

The documents suggest that much of the Lombard huntsmen's work consisted of being either on location or sent there for various reasons, for example to prepare hunts. These men had the skills to read territory and improvise and problem-solve according to ducal instructions. Their -----

⁶⁶For example falconers permits, such as the one in PS 1483, 16 November, 1469.

⁶⁷Innamorati, 1965, 288; the local knowledge is manifest in the descriptions of the hunts, pp. 295-359.

repeated reliance upon the knowledge of local populations both in terms of territory and of animals confirms this for example in the list of “men to contact about bears” consisting of local individuals living in good bear habitat and liable to be able to sight some such game.⁶⁸ This is a clear recognition that only people living and interacting with their local territory on a daily basis were likely to know where animals were at a given time of year and the best way to get to them. The duties of the huntsmen may have kept them too busy to acquire such fine-grained local knowledge. Yet, once the animals had been found, they clearly had the skills to move in to hunt with animal assistants, huntsmen, and their lords.

For all these reasons, the sum total of hunting knowledge of the court huntsmen was much different, in quality and quantity that of their commercial counterparts. The unique position of the courtiers and their tasks reflect their knowledge and suggest how it may have been acquired. Evidence from Mantua shows that falconers could sometimes read and write although it is impossible to gauge to what degree this type of knowledge transmission played a part in their lives.⁶⁹ Scanlan argues that Albertus may have had access to the imperial falconers and that he learned from them.⁷⁰ Similarly, Frederick II’s knowledge, later to become part of his manual, had been garnered from his falconers. Long tenures were instrumental in the practice of falconry. They would have ensured the building of an orally transmitted knowledge base coupled with long term experiential learning, and, *ad hoc* adaptations. Court huntsmen would have learned from their animals, from their lords, from their daily practice, and finally, from one another.

Commercial hunters were not burdened by lordly demands, performance anxieties, and hungry falcons. As local people, hunting for profit in habitats that they called home, they were however limited by socio-cultural, economic, and legal restrictions. As seen in Chapters 4 and 5, this involved paying for use, respecting other people’s activities and property as well as public domain, being limited to certain areas, and certain species, and being bound by organizational

⁶⁸PS 1483, undated.

⁶⁹Malacarne, 1998, for example 71; 78-79. Novati, 1888, 94-95 suggests that the falconry text was written by a falconer.

⁷⁰Scanlan, 1987, 19.

arrangements such as guild membership and the *societas* contracts. As Richard White implied, there were consequences for “unfinished” work. Certainly the court huntsmen carried heavy responsibilities, but these could be skirted without heavy personal consequences. If the falconers had not been paid, if they lacked equipment, or their horses were hurt, direct responsibility could be re-directed towards the court or to one’s master falconer, who re-directed it to the duke.⁷¹ Although they may have suffered hardship, these likely did not involve being cast out of court. Commercial hunters were personally responsible for themselves, their equipment (procurement, repair, maintenance, theft), the successful hunting procedure, and the work of others with them as is made clear in both the *statuto della Sambuca* and the commercial contracts. While both aristocratic hunters and their staff could delegate, commercial hunters could not, and if things did not go as planned, they were the ones to suffer in financial and social terms.

In part for these reasons, commercial hunting aimed at minimizing the risks and uncertainties inherent to hunting and to trade. As discussed in Chapter 4, assigning an individual exclusive rights to a certain area for at least a year, as the Fucecchiese *gabella* did, allowed individuals to learn an area’s environmental features reasonably well, thus assuring better results. Participating in *commenda*-type contracts divided up financial and labor burdens between several participants. Working with family or kin or within established local groups, as both the guild members in Venice and the fishermen/fowlers in Fucecchio did, added peace of mind and the option of addressing problems within the context (and pressures) of the local social infrastructure. As an added benefit participants could learn orally and experientially from kin and colleagues and maintain the knowledge within the community of practitioners.⁷² This finally created cohesion between humans and their local natural environments through work building cultural landscapes.

⁷¹ See for example the aforementioned cries of help from one such head falconer, namely Pietro da Birago in 1467. PS 1483.

⁷² This latter aspect would also have been true at least for the falconers. Milanese documents such as PS 1483, 21 January, 1495 involving an uncle and a nephew, both falconers, as well as Oggins’ observations point to the fact that the trade was at times passed down in families. Interaction with colleagues at court would similarly have favored learning.

Organized uncertainty was a factor of excitement in aristocratic hunting. Within a more or less choreographed setting, this may have been provided by the game animal doing something unexpected, but ultimately desirable, such as a deer crossing water or a boar becoming very aggressive. Aristocrats would likely not have appreciated such excitement without their retinues of huntsmen and trained dogs. Other forms of excitement, such as dogs getting away, or game doing the same, were less sought out and appreciated. For the commercial hunters, however, any such excitement would have been detrimental. In fact, as the hunting procedures employed by both Venetians and Tuscans attest, commercial hunting techniques aimed at predictability, repeatability, and unobtrusive interaction with the game. Commercial hunters exploited animal curiosity, hunger, and natural patterns of movement doing everything possible to avoid triggering flight instincts and aggression. Commercial hunters “pretended” they were working, and were careful not to leave footprints in the morning dew. Colonizing one’s hunting grounds with *pantherae* or snares was a fine way to negotiate environmental restraint, but it also saved human time and reduced uncertainty. Once found, successful locations could be used for some time as (game) animal behavior follows patterns as well as trodden trails. Sailing trips, difficulties, seasonal variation, and travel times, became thus more manageable for the human hunters. Predictable repetition rather than exciting uniqueness was part of commercial exploitation. Part of successfully developing “multi-professionals skills” upon which much commercial hunting was based, involved alertness to all the dynamic possibilities, variations, and limitations that an environment held. Long hours of work and observation in the local environments produced this. In Venice, for example, we may observe how environmental change was recorded with a degree of urgency different from (or absent in) that of hunters like the aristocrats and their men who could simply move to a different area, or requisition from outside. “Multi-professional skills” would also have included how to manage recurring fears and a strenuous physical activity in the context of landscapes known and experience through work. This was true for all hunters, but whereas the dukes could go home, and their huntsmen be more easily excused, commercial hunters had to remain in the field until they reached their quota, the measure of their success.

As members of communities in which knowledge transmission was predominantly oral, commercial hunters learned from observing their kin, practicing, and developing skills of observation and behavior molded upon the weather and landscapes of their small-scale local micro-environs. The information was very detailed and difficult to convey usefully in written form, but the ability to manage it and apply it was fundamental for the capture of the animals. De' Crescenzi's text makes it clear that hunting proficiently, even knowing the general use of a technique, meant much more than simply knowing where the animals were at any given time, or how they might behave. It may involve, for example, knowing how those same animals would react in different conditions of weather. Among the agronomist's devices, was an unnamed one used to capture herons, swans, and geese by connecting tall trees on both sides of a stream and suspending a net there. In sunny weather, roused birds would follow the shiny band of water. In such weather, men walking the banks could push them towards the nets, but not so in overcast weather, when the birds would have flown away from the stream.⁷³ Thus, to observant local practitioners focussed on a specific task, local landscapes provided a continuously developing pattern of opportunities and limitations that shaped their understanding, experience, and intervention in the natural world.

7.3 CONCLUSION: MEDIEVAL ITALIAN HUNTS

Medieval social rules dictated the degree and type of access each individual had to the natural world and its resource and the meaning attributed to them. Hunting was no exception. Hunting was one specific type of human-animal relationship geared towards the capture of relatively scarce game animals, sometimes, but not always, with the aid of animal assistants. For all its specificities, hunting and game played a prominent role in medieval culture. On the one hand, the activity was widespread among aristocrats and oft referenced in literary texts, on the other, game meats and fowl, the products of commercial hunts, were highly desirable for all

⁷³Richter, 1995, vol. 3, 183-84.

members of society from rich merchants to kitchen maids. For all this, not all consumers were hunters, and not all hunters consumers. This important difference deeply affected individuals' behavioral patterns around game and its landscapes. In the context of society, hunting was a matter of degrees of control over a scarce, but socially meaningful resource. To those in power, hunting and consumption established identity. This carried over into a control over natural environs and animal populations through the enforcement of exclusive access. The ability, sometimes exclusive, to both hunt and consume, bolstered a degree of confidence manifest in the use made of game, both when it was hunted, and when it was consumed. Aristocrats behaved as if material things were unimportant, mere playthings. However, play, at the table and in the woods, was the result of redirecting vast amounts of human and natural energy away from the community and toward a specifically contrived elitist performance.

Those lower down the social ladder, from the higher echelons of the urban mercantile class, to political elites, aspired to this privilege, but, unable to obtain it, settled for significant, but ultimately restricted, acts of consumption, a poor copy of aristocratic performance. Their control over natural environments and game was indirect, mediated by purchasing ability, or personification of state power. For others, hunting was a part of daily life, but not a privilege. Their skilled work provided the markets, or their lord's entertainment and feasting, but they were (mostly) excluded from consumption.

Consider two situations, one documented, and one hypothetical, involving the same deer, but two different consumers, and different possible, albeit undocumented, consumption scenarios. In the documented case, a 360lb deer was hunted by a friend of duke Ludovico il Moro.⁷⁴ In the hypothetical one, a similar animal was captured in the snares of one of deer hunters in the Cerbaie hills, let us call him Simon Mani. Although in both cases the deer ended up dead, the animal would have meant different things, and signified differently about the man who had captured it. Mani, who hunted for work, would have made a nice profit, while the friend

⁷⁴PS 1483, 6 August, 1471.

of the Sforza duke, whose hunt for play was done for entertainment, would have reinforced his status and that of his lord to whom the animal ultimately belonged. The latter's deer may have been roasted whole and served, perhaps, with gold-leaved antlers at an important banquet. The Fucecchiese specimen would more than likely have been sold piecemeal, and served, unadorned, but as the highlight of a meal perhaps among merchants and their notary friends. In the case of the duke's friend's deer, the hunt of the animal and its chase and kill would have been metaphorically carried into the banquet hall along with the animal itself. Indeed, the enactment of mythical scenes pertinent to the dish while it was being served may have emphasized its symbolic meaning centered around the person of the duke, his hunting peers, and guests. During the real banquet offered in 1489 in Tortona to honor Gian Galeazzo Sforza II duke of Milan and his bride, Isabel of Aragon, one enactment involved the goddess of hunting Diana presenting Achteon in the form of a deer to the dinner guests. What better fate, the myth/enactment suggests, could have befallen a man, changed into a game animal, than being served at Isabel's table?⁷⁵ On the basis of some of the letters, it appears that the Milanese sought out large animals. Larger and therefore more mature animals were probably more prestigious because they represented a bigger venatory challenge. Ironically, they may often have been older males and not very good to eat especially if they had been chased to exhaustion. There is no indication that antler sets were considered trophies in the Milanese in this period.⁷⁶ It was the animal body itself served whole perhaps only for *magnificenza* which functioned as a trophy. Rendering the caloric value of the meat moot completed the process of reinforcing the manhood of the hunter through a complete appropriation of the animal's body which ultimately negated its physicality at the very

⁷⁵Benporat, 2001, 259.

⁷⁶The emergence of taxidermy dates from the sixteenth century. So-called cabinets of curiosities and a growing fashion to collect natural specimens resulted in a growing market of such goods. As a consequence, "the temporary use of animal bodies within the ceremonial setting of the hunt, which characterized medieval seigneurial culture, was increasingly complemented by their preservation as trophies." These were seen as "testaments to personal prowess and memory of the hunt." Aleksander Pluskowski, "Communicating Through Skin and Bone: Appropriating Animal Bodies in Medieval Western European Seigneurial Culture," in *Breaking and Shaping Beastly Bodies. Animals as Material Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Aleksander Pluskowski (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 44.

moment when its anthropogenic exaltation reached its apex.

Such connection between the ecosystems and the cultural dining performance was severed in the hypothetical example in which we imagine the 360lb deer captured by Simon Mani. The animal was still meaningful as an object of status and its larger size may have rendered it more profitable, although, much like with bovines, the meat of older animals did not taste as nice as that of younger specimens. However the lack of connection between the dinner host who had bought the game at market, and the ecosystem of the deer ultimately gave a different meaning to both his masculinity and the basis of his power. The autocratic duke procured himself amorally and likewise consumed. He ate the game meat because he alone could procure it. His control of the deer and its habitats were functional to his play at the chase and echoed his activities on the battle field and in the halls of his court where he respectively fought and ruled. His success at all these activities earned him his manhood. The merchant was in a vastly different relation to the game and the natural world. His ability to serve up and eat the deer hinged upon his purchasing power. This he had earned himself through his work which was both the symbol and the material basis for his masculine independence and social status, both of which he reinforced before his guests. Through the consumption of game and within different systems of meaning, the two men were performing a ritual in which they imitated themselves in recurrent repetitions.

Affirmation of social identity through consumption of game is also visible in the larger management structures of government. In ducal Lombardy in the fifteenth century and Tuscany in the sixteenth, commercial hunting for work was rendered mostly moot by the coming into being of hegemonic aristocratic exercise of power reserving large swaths of territory, procuring game, and building parks to ensure a steady supply of animals for play. Republican governments, whether the democratic one of Florence or the aristocratic one of Venice had no such ambitions. While their social elite, such as fifteenth century Lorenzo de' Medici, hunted their own estates and beyond, and the noblemen of Ammiana hunted ducks over decoys for play in the lagoon, governments of Florence or Venice saw no need to limit what 'economic hunting' existed on

public lands and waters. In the case of Venice, that government was especially keen on avoiding erosion of the public waters by private users. Republican governments, the commercial hunters, and the market-using consumers all joined in a similar view of the natural world based on attempts at shared and redistributed (albeit at a price) exploitation. This recognized the social, economic, and to some degree environmental value of things. Nature did matter, but as an economic resource. Chapters 4 and 5 detailed how commercial hunters and their operations were increasingly framed by rules for resource extraction over which they had little influence. While the municipalities may have tried to ensure somewhat ecologically sound practices and, as in Sambuca, may have understood what these meant for individual game animal species, there were no guarantees for success. Medieval people sometimes pressed too much against those ecological limits they themselves recognized.

Different medieval hunters were variously framed by changing societal and cultural strategies, some of which they could control, and some which they could not. Once the hunters stepped into their natural landscapes, they were subject to ecological limitations. All the hunters we have met in the previous pages show a fundamentally similar understanding of *Natura*. When they thought about *Natura* they thought of multiple and dynamic connections between game animal behavior and habitat, weather, and change. These they had learned through observation. Their techniques, or actions as we see them in hunting manuals and in documentary sources, reflect this thought clearly by translating it into hands-on procedures. The cultural meanings attributed to the hunting activity and the game were later additions. At the moment of the hunt, there was no gap between the human hunter, his knowledge and techniques, and the environment he hunted. Differently designed techniques all show human hunters willingly positioning themselves, their contraptions, and, at times, their trained assistants, within the immediate ecological flow and logic of natural things in time and space. De' Crescenzi covering nets with dirt, Gaston Phoebus systematically organizing his mass of hunting knowledge, Frederick II selecting falconers on the basis of their personality, Boccamazza carefully timing when to let dogs off leashes, but also Lucchesi hunters refraining from swearing in the woods, or their

Sambuchesi counterparts staying together until the hunt was all over demonstrate through their actions that they understood what hunting entailed. They all demonstrate how they constructed meaning and understanding of their natural worlds through dynamic, immediate and observant interaction with them, poor execution and unforeseen circumstances notwithstanding. Hunting was always uncertain business.

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APPENDIX A
TABLE OF SPECIES¹

AVIFAUNA

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)
 Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)
 (Eurasian) Widgeon (*Anas penelope*)
 Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)
 Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)
 (Common) Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)
 (Common) Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*)
 Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
 White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*)
 Raptorial birds, for example:
 Sparrow Hawk (*Accipiter nisus*)
 Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)
 Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)
 Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*)
 Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*)
 Lanner (*Falco biarmicus*)
 Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)
 Coot (*Fulica Atra*)
 Waterhen (*Rallus aquaticus*)
 (Common) Crane (*Grus grus*)
 (Northern) Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)
 Waders, for example (Common) Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) and (Eurasian) Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)
 Pigeons (*Columbidae*), for example (Common) Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*)
 Doves, for example (Eurasian) Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) and Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*)
 Larks (*Alaudide*), for example (Common) skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and
 Thrushes (*Turdidae*), for example Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and (Common) Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)
 Starling (*Sturnidae*), for example (Common) starling (*Turdus vulgaris*)

MAMMALS

Wolf (*Canis lupus*)
 Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*)
 Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
 Boar (*Sus scrofa*)

¹Svensson, 2009 (second edition), MacDonald, David W. and Priscilla Bartlett *Mammals of Europe* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 1993).

Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*)
Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*)
Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)
Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*)
European Beaver (*Castor fiber*)
Brown Hare (*Lepus europaeus*)
Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)