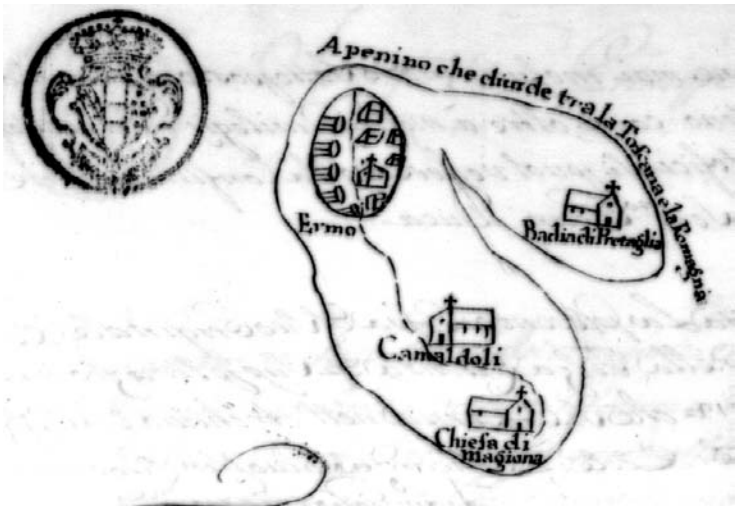
Settlement development in the Casentino Valley, Tuscany, 1000-1580. A new perspective on late medieval commercialisation and the relationship between city and countryside.*

by Daniel Curtis



I. Problem

The Casentino Valley, a mountain region in east Tuscany, was subject to two simultaneous settlement developments after 1300. The first was a transformation from dispersed, scattered houses into a landscape of concentrated villages. The second was the development of isolated farms known as *poderi*, which came into existence around the same time as the concentration of the villages. Two settlement forms co-existed side-by-side as seen in other parts of northern and central Italy.[1] I argue that the late Middle Ages were an important period for settlement change in the Casentino Valley. The influence of tenth and eleventh century *incastellamento* was minimal in encouraging concentration of habitation into villages in the Casentino, and throughout the early and high Middle Ages people lived in houses that were irregularly strewn

* Image taken from ASF, Consiglio di Reggenza, no. 40. Many thanks to Auke Rijpma for a critique on a longer version of the paper, though of course all mistakes and misinterpretations remain my own.

[1] For the co-existence of different settlement patterns in the Casentino see G. Di Pietro, 'Il paesaggio agrario contemporaneo della Toscana', *Città e Regione*, 1 (1976), 54. For elsewhere in Italy see E. Saracco Previdi, 'Habitat sparso e accentrato nell'entroterra della Marchia nei secoli XI-XIV', *AM*, 7 (1980), 367-73; R. Comba, 'La dinamica dell'insediamento umano nel Cuneese (secolo X-XIII)', *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino*, 62 (1973), 511-602; M. Quaini, 'Villaggi abbandonati e storia dell'insediamento in Liguria', in F. Giunta (ed.) *Atti del coloquio internazionale di archeologia medievale*, ii (Palermo, 1976), 170-7; A. Settia, 'Insediamenti abbandonati sulla collina Torinese', *AM*, 2 (1975), 237-328.

across the landscape.[2] My intention is to explain the development of settlement after 1300. Why did people begin to concentrate themselves more closely together in coherent villages, and at the same time why did these *poderi* emerge, separate from the main villages?

FIGURE 1. Tuscany and the Casentino Valley.

II. Argument

I argue that the concentration of settlement in the Casentino Valley in the late Middle Ages, alongside a simultaneous development of isolated farms separate from the villages, resulted from an intricate equilibrium of dynamic forces and structural continuity. Concentrated settlement was encouraged by increased commercialisation of an already wide economic portfolio for both elite landowners and smallholders. Small market centres and points of production became the focus for habitation in the valley: a totally organic process reliant on rural exploitation of urban demand for products and completely devoid of urban landownership, coercion or investment. Isolated *poderi* also grew in number during this time: in 1329 there were only six belonging to the large landowning monastery of Camaldoli, but by the end of the

[2] C. Wickham, *The mountains and the city: the Tuscan Appennines in the early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988).

fifteenth century they had over 30 in the valley. Like the concentrated settlements, these *poderi* had absolutely no link with urban investment, landholding or coercion into sharecropping agreements, but rather were relics of former administrative centres for directly managed agriculture. These were early medieval granges or *curtes* which had been divided by lay aristocrats or large ecclesiastical institutions like Camaldoli to create new farms which were indirectly exploited through leasehold. These new tenancies were testament to the flexible modes of exploitation, whereby ancient and new tenurial forms existed side-by-side.

III. Dispersed and isolated settlement, 1000-1250

Since I intend to show the importance of the late Middle Ages for settlement change in the Casentino, I must briefly outline the state of human settlement prior to these changes. In the early to high Middle Ages houses were predominantly scattered across the landscape. A series of charters belonging to the large landowning monastery of Camaldoli confirm that up until the mid thirteenth century at least, settlement was still very dispersed in the Casentino with houses often positioned out in the fields on their own toponym rather than confined inside the *castello* walls.

As settlement was so dispersed in the eleventh century, Chris Wickham has argued that the effects of tenth and eleventh century *incastellamento* in the Casentino Valley had no consequences for demographic and settlement change. The basic principle of the *incastellamento* thesis when first constructed by Toubert and Fossier was that the fortified residences and castles that appeared in parts of central Italy went hand in hand with the formalisation of a local *seigneurie* who forced rural dwellers to reside within the confines of a concentrated settlement.[3] Instead the *castelli* in the Casentino were built as an expression of social status and political control by *capitaneal* families looking to distinguish themselves as aristocrats from mere freemen. There was no wall between the social strata – freemen could aspire to aristocratic status through their actions, yet local power was still linked to landholding. Due to fragmented landownership networks, the founders of *castelli* only had partial control over them.[4] Thus castles in the Casentino were political symbols,

[3] P. Toubert, *Les structures du Latium medieval: le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IX siècle* (2 vols. Rome, 1973); R. Fossier, *Village et villageois au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1992).
[4] See the fragmented jurisdiction over the *castello* of Partina in 1258 in ASF, Diplomatico, Camaldoli, San Salvatore, 1 January 1258 & 19 January 1258. Also at Montecchio in 1164 in H. Appelt (ed.), *Friderici I diplomata inde ab a. MCLVIII usque ad a. MCLXII*, x (Hannover, 1979), no. 462.

and isolated aristocratic residences, but significantly they were rarely population centres and their demographic effect was negligible.[5] As Wickham concludes "[*castelli*] were simply small additions to a continuing network of dispersed settlement" and "*incastellamento* as a population movement had so far little effect on the zone".[6] The Casentino had numerous lords who failed to force people into their *castelli*. They had a function as a political symbol and an expression of social status but were not major economic centres as shown elsewhere.[7]

IV. Wide economic portfolios, a commercialising economy and the concentration of settlement in the late Middle Ages

By 1427 around two-thirds of the houses were situated in concentrated settlements in the Casentino Valley, leaving one-third of houses either dispersed or in isolated positions. This figure was a lot higher than in the eleventh century, when the level of dispersal was at least 55 percent.[8] The data from the *catasto* in 1427 represents an incomplete process, and through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries settlement became even more concentrated likely moving to levels of 75 percent.[9] The remaining number of isolated settlements is to be expected considering I argue for the simultaneous development of isolated tenant *poderi* later in the paper.

The late fourteenth and early fifteenth century was particularly important for settlement change in the Casentino. For example Marciano was recorded in a Florentine inspection of Aretine *castelli* in 1385 as having castle walls but only 12 'malcontent' residents.[10] By 1427 it had 43 houses which could mean as many as 190 inhabitants. I suggest this cannot have resulted from population increase alone. More likely it was the restructuring of scattered farmsteads across the landscape,

[5] For similarities elsewhere see E. Conti, *La formazione della struttura agraria del contado fiorentino,* i (Rome, 1965), 109-11.
[6] Wickham, *Mountains*, 269-306, q. 300.
[7] A. Settia, *Castelli e villaggi nell'Italia padana: popolamento, potere e sicurezza fra IX e XIII secolo* (Naples, 1984), 258-68; E. Fiumi, *Storia economica e sociale di San Gimignano* (Florence, 1961), 28-111.
[8] Levels of dispersal of housing are my figures taken from my database of L. Schiaparelli, F. Baldesseroni & E. Lasinio (eds.), *Regesto di Camaldoli* (4 vols. Rome, 1907).
[9] For example 44 out of 60 houses in Moggiona in 1574 were inside the *Castello* walls. See ASF, Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal Governo Francese, no. 39.
[10] U. Pasqui (ed.), *Documenti per la storia della città di Arezzo,* iii (Arezzo, 1889), no. 859. The poor state of Marciano may have been down to a series of exceptionally poor harvests. For example see ASF, Diplomatico, Olivetani d'Arezzo, 8 August 1346.

TABLE 1. Concentrated settlement, 1427

	Houses	*Huts*	*Concentrated in a castello (%)*	*Concentrated houses (%)*	*Dispersed or isolated houses (%)*
Banzena	17	13	53	53	47
Bibbiena	238	23	62	77	23
Campi	41	20	0	98	2
Corezzo	46	28	61	65	35
Dama	18	5	0	83	17
Del Palagio Fiorentino (Stia & Pratovecchio)	145	47	0	40	60
Frassineta	44	26	43	57	43
Gello	63	18	41	82	18
Giona	11	1	0	82	18
Gressa	28	0	32	90	10
Marciano	43	8	96	98	2
Montecchio	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Montefatucchio	81	32	14	42	58
Ortignano	82	10	4	57	43
Partina	34	2	71	80	20
Pezza	8	2	0	75	25

Raggiolo	62	22	55	69	31
Romena[11]	25	3	20	56	44
S. Agnolo a Cetica	135	2	2	52	48
S. Bartolomeo a Strapetognoli	12	1	0	75	25
S. Donato a Coffia	8	0	0	88	12
S. Donato a Garliano	55	2	0	42	58
S. Lucia a San Gilio	15	0	0	93	7
S. Margherita a Campi	15	5	0	13	87
S. Maria a Stia	17	5	0	53	47
S. Maria in Castello	10	1	0	90	10
S. Martino a Vado	104	4	0	72	28
S. Niccolo a Vado	1	1	100	100	0
S. Pancrazio a Cetica	97	5	0	32	68
S. Pietro a Romena	18	3	11	28	72
Serravallino	17	3	35	47	53
Soci & Farneto	56	16	66	75	25
Total	**1546**	**308**	**27**	**63**	**37**

Sources: ASF, Catasto, nos. 179-81, 246, 250, 330.

[11] Houses pertaining to other settlements were located in the *Castello di Romena*. Households within the walls of the *Castello di Romena* were subjects (‘*fideles e vassalli’*) of the Conti Guidi, while households outside the walls became administrative responsibility of Florence after a pact in 1383. See ASF, Capitoli, Protocolli, no. 11, cc. 201r.

whereby families began to move and orientate themselves in large concentrated market centres such as Marciano. Indeed the breakdown of other settlements such as Contra, which became a dispersed selection of *poderi* leased by the great landowning monastery of Camaldoli, had repercussions on settlement elsewhere – prompting owner-cultivators to orientate more and more on settlement concentrations.

Many of the settlements in the Casentino in 1427 were now concentrated inside the walls of *castelli*, as suggested by the frequent formula '*nel castello di…*', whereas in the eleventh century many of these same *castelli* existed, but the population had failed to move into them. These houses can be contrasted with other houses explicitly referred to as '*fuori di castello*', thus likely in an isolated position. Locating houses was helped by topographical information. Often houses were mentioned close to central '*corti*' or *piazze*, while certain designated areas of pasture or meadow became the focus for smaller groupings of houses or hamlets, since on a number of occasions houses appear together on toponyms such as '*prato*' or '*paglia*'.

Elements of settlement hierarchy are discernable from the *catasto* record. For example in the *catasto* entry known as 'Soci and Farneta', most of the wealthier inhabitants lived outside the main concentrated village of Soci. Many of these people, some well-to-do peasant cultivators, had their own isolated farm complexes situated either in the tiny hamlet of Farneta or distributed somewhere across the landscape. Their houses were mini-complexes in the sense that they had a number of resources close at hand: often pasture, vines, a plot of arable, a moat and a garden. However this situation was at odds with other settlements in the Casentino where the wealthier inhabitants were more likely to be concentrated together in the centre of villages. Generally the pattern was that the most prominent economic contributors to the communities situated themselves at the centre of the settlements, which is more in line with other work on medieval settlement hierarchy in Italy.[12] Nonetheless the example of Soci reminds us that there is more than one way to express social and economic status through settlement choice.

I argue that late medieval concentration of settlement was linked to the close grouping together of inhabitants around small market centres and points of production, which was stimulated by increased marketing of diverse products to

[12] See the excavation of Montarrenti in F. Cantini, *Il castello di Montarrenti. Lo scavo archeologico (1982-1987). Per la storia della formazione del villagio medievale in Toscana (sec. VII-XV)* (Florence, 2003); R. Francovich & R. Hodges, 'Archeologia e storia del villaggio fortificato di Montarrenti (SI): un caso o un modello?', *AM*, 16 (1989), 22-38.

satisfy local, regional and urban demand. The take-off of a commercialised pastoral economy had an important role to play, yet its significance is not a simple case of counting animals. It depends on which animals were present and how they were used, for pastoral activity can be subservient to cultivation in a mixed-agriculture economy, improving the fertility of the soil for growing grain.[13] If there was a predominance of pigs, this would suggest pastoral activity was a mere side-project for the inhabitants of the Casentino, since pigs did not take much attention and could be left to roam in the forests feeding off of acorns. Also if there was a predominance of oxen, this would suggest the possession of animals was linked with the pulling of ploughs.

The *catasto* of 1427 lists each inhabitant's animals in the Casentino, even if it understates the amount somewhat. From the table we see that firstly a lot of people owned or had access to animals and secondly these animals were often sheep or cattle: animals associated with commercial or specialised pastoral operations.

TABLE 2. Animals, 1427.

Status of animal holder	*Owners (%)*
Cattle or sheep owner	33.5
Cattle or sheep renter	0.8
Cattle or sheep renter and owner	1.4
Owner of small beasts	7.9
Owner of 'beasts of burden'	10.1
Unknown	46.3

Sources: ASF, Catasto, nos. 179-81, 246, 250, 330.

Over half of the inhabitants had access to animals and a third of the inhabitants in the Casentino had sheep, cattle or both. It showed a clear difference from the sources of the early medieval period, as in the *regesto* there was no indication of a pastoral economy on the same scale (less mentions of animals) or in the same direction (more pigs, horses and oxen than cattle or sheep). The importance of animals was further indicated in the *catasto* by the fact their value quite often came near to, and sometimes exceeded that of inhabitants' landholding. For example Domenico Giovanni had 14 arable plots, five pieces of pasture and some vines at Giona in 1427,

[13] C. Wickham, 'Pastorialism and underdevelopment in the early Middle Ages', *Settimane di Studio*, 31 (1983), 401-55.

which totalled 38 florins, while his hoard of sheep and cattle came to 40 florins.[14] At Banzena the value of animals was 73 percent of arable, while at Giona the value was almost equal.[15]The value of animals in comparison to land was higher than elsewhere in Tuscany.[16]

The amount of pasture held by the inhabitants in the Casentino was also indicative of its importance. Both arable and pasture were generally held by households in small fragmented pieces judging by the small values of the plots, and there was no discernable difference between the two in terms of value. Out of a select pool of villages explored in more depth, I noted that total pasture and woodland plots recorded made up around 70 percent of total arable plots recorded, which is a very high proportion of pasture/woodland to arable ratio in comparison with other medieval rural societies.[17] Even though this was not based on actual size of individual holdings per se, information from other sources suggests this figure is not so far from the truth. In Monte in 1446, a *catasto* from the monastery of Camaldoli showed that out of all the inhabitants that held land of them, pasture was half the size of total arable.[18] In Moggiona in 1576 the total amount of pasture in the village was again half of the total arable.[19] However certain parts of the Casentino had more pastoral land in private ownership than others, since in Raggiolo there was almost twice as much pasture and woodlands than there were arable plots, and a similar figure for Ortignano.[20] Nonetheless the noteworthy aspect regarding pasture from the 1427 *catasto* was not just its size and frequency but despite its fragmentary nature, pasture was more often confined to specific areas of the Casentino, unlike arable whose spread of plots was far more irregular and random. This suggests a systematic reorganisation of pastoral land in the late Middle Ages around new pastoral centres, a clear sign of a specialising and more commercially-driven enterprise. Larger institutions like Camaldoli attempted to organise pasture into larger, more coherent blocks in the late Middle Ages. In 1446 they had created a 30 acre unit in the ‘Campo

[14] ASF, Catasto, no. 180, cc. 415r.
[15] ASF, Catasto, no. 180, cc. 410v-416v, cc. 331r-350v.
[16] D. Herlihy & C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their families: a study of the Florentine catasto of 1427* (New Haven, 1985), 120-1.
[17] ASF, Catasto, no. 179, cc. 257r-315r, no. 180, cc. 331r-350v, cc. 410v-416v, cc. 371r-405r, cc. 223r-248v, cc. 627-688, no. 250, cc. 449r-481r, cc. 338v-365r, no. 246, cc. 331r-354v.
[18] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 183.
[19] ASF, Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal Governo Francese, no. 39.
[20] ASF Catasto, no. 180, cc. 627-688, no. 179, cc. 161-252.

Drezzale' at Serravalle entirely of pasture, while at Moggiona in 1576 they had a coherent unit of around 25 acres at Siepi.[21]

Before 1300 no source material refers to transhumance in the Casentino. The system probably functioned during the Roman period but disappeared in the early Middle Ages as a result of demographic crisis, the breakdown of administrative structures to organise the process, and a breakdown of systematic economic relationships that long-distance transhumance requires. By the fourteenth century transhumance appears very clearly in the sources, an indicator of the rise of commercial, large-scale pastoral activity in the mountains. The lay *seigneurie* and large institutions saw they could profit from this development, enticing inhabitants into the system by offering transit rights and better regulation of grazing.[22] In 1419 it was noted that animals from the Casentino arrived en-masse to the winter pastures by the coast of the Maremma, and a permanent economic link between the two regions was thereby crystallised in the fifteenth century.[23] The increasing influence of transhumance in the Casentino meant that precious grazing rights became more rigorously guarded, as seen in Raggiolo in the sixteenth century, where a cap of 2000 was put on the number of animals that could pasture in the forests of the commune. Also one area of the forest was marked out as 'banned' and a charge was levelled on any unwanted animals found there, while an area known as the '*pastura di Prata*' in 1545 was reserved only for animals belonging to Raggiolo villagers.[24] The forested slopes around Pratovecchio became a contested space, which served as a meeting place for the people of Raggiolo, Carda, Calletta, Cetica and Garliano to discuss their grazing arrangements and the boundaries involved.[25] Similarly a charter from 1565 strictly forbid the monks of the hermitage to cut down trees in the forest without the consent of monastery first, and 29 comparable charters on this theme can be found in the Camaldoli archive between 1563 and 1575.[26] The increasing use of charters in the

[21] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 183, cc. 114v; ASF, Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal Governo Francese, no. 39, cc. 9.
[22] G. Cherubini, 'La società dell'Appennino settentrionale (secoli XIII-XV)', in *Signori, contadini, borghesi: ricerche sulla società italiana del basso medioevo* (Florence, 1974), 133.
[23] I. Imberciadori, (ed.), 'Il primo statuto della dogana dei paschi maremmani (1419)', *Per la storia della società rurale. Amiata e Maremma tra il IX e il XX secolo* (Parma, 1971), 123-4; D. Barsanti, *Allevamento e transumanza in Toscana. Pastori, bestiami e pascoli nei secoli XV-XIX* (Florence, 1987).
[24] ASF, Statuti delle comunità autonome e soggette, no. 696, cc. 49r-50v, cc. 18v, cc. 34v.
[25] M. Bicchierai, *Una comunità rurale toscana di antico regime: Raggiolo in Casentino* (Florence, 2006), 86-7.
[26] ACC, Atti Capitolari, no. 156, cc. 14v.

late Middle Ages to regulate pastoral resources in a more formalised manner has been noted for other mountain regions of Italy.[27]

Such was the demand for pasture that Camaldoli leased out the entirety of its meadows at Asqua in 1515 to inhabitants pursuing pastoral activities.[28] For Camaldoli, the *seigneurie*, and some well-to-do peasants, the scale of their pastoral operations was quite large. Even as early as 1239 one member of the locally important Gualdrada family inherited 4600 sheep, cattle and goats, after the assets of the Guidi family had been subdivided.[29] The Casentino became so-renowned for its large-scale pasturing activities that people from outside the area began to periodically graze their animals there too. One Florentine in 1419 put 600 sheep on Camaldoli pastures, which in that year was narrowly more than the monastery itself.[30]

It was this more systematic, regulated and larger scale approach to pastoral farming that went hand-in-hand with increased commercialisation. A vital piece of evidence for this notion was the concern of the urban guild of Prato in 1541 about the increasing number of woollen cloths introduced into the city which were made in the Casentino.[31] The Prato guild urged the Florentine guild to enforce a limit to the siphoning-off of this sort of production into the countryside, for they wanted to monopolise this activity as an urban privilege. The Prato guild eventually forbade the introduction of Casentinese cloth except for the time of fairs, despite the fact Casentinese merchants had always sold their products in that town and at Impruneta.[32] During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries concerted attempts were made to control production of Casentinese wool and its marketing.[33] Nonetheless we have evidence of a large sale to a merchant from Bologna in the thirteenth century and by 1400 Florentine citizens were doing the same, despite the increasing restrictions put on Casentinese wool by the city.[34] There were many instances of evasion of the

[27] M. Casari, 'Emergence of endogenous legal institutions: property rights and community governance in the Italian Alps', *J. Econ. Hist.*, 67 (2007), 191-225.
[28] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 123, cc. 173.
[29] R. Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, i (Florence, 1956), 1157.
[30] P. Jones, 'A Tuscan monastic lordship in the later Middle Ages: Camaldoli', *J. Eccl. Hist.*, 5 (1954), 180.
[31] ASF, Pratica segreta, no. 157, cc. 58v-64v.
[32] ASF, Arte della Lana, no. 15, cc. 54v-55r, 79r-81r.
[33] P. Malanima, *La decadenza di un'economia cittadina: l'industria di Firenze nei secoli XVI-XVIII* (Bologna, 1982), 154.
[34] ACA, Fondo di Murello, no. 1269, cc. 7; F. Melis, *Aspetti della vita economica medievali (Studi nell'Archivio Datini di Prato)*, i (Siena, 1962), 536-7.

restrictions imposed on Casentino cloth.[35] Arezzo was a key market for leather from the thirteenth century onwards but was also bought by important Florentines such as the Datini Company.[36] In a letter written to Giuliano di Tommaso of Poppi, they described a payment of 115 florins for the leather of 'hairy' buffaloes (highly revered).[37] The leather trade also stimulated a host of local shoemaking businesses which the *catasto* confirms, but also a register from a shoemaker from Poppi confirms his leather came from local sources.[38]

With such an upsurge in scale and commercialisation of the pastoral economy in the late medieval Casentino, where did the main protagonists secure the capital to begin to orientate their enterprises towards the market? Cherubini suggested a supply of credit came from the banks and merchants of Arezzo and in part perhaps it did.[39] However the 1427 *catasto* also shows that local credit in the countryside was higher than one might expect.[40] For example four households from Banzena were waiting on debtors and these amounts were nearly as much as their own lands or animals.[41] Also wealthier inhabitants of the Casentino allowed surplus cash to filter down the social strata, as Spinello Salvetto was owed a large sum of money (133 florins) distributed between 146 individuals! Similarly Betto Cristiano in Partina lent money to people who were clearly co-villagers, and even the aforementioned creditor, Salvetto, borrowed a moderate sum from him.[42] Credit was also available from the small town of the Casentino, Bibbiena, and came from successful local tradesmen. Successful spice seller, Giovanni Guglielmo, lent the substantial amount of 1600 florins to 150 people from all over the valley, while another spice seller, Domenico Donato, lent 600 florins. Antonio Cecco, a local shoemaker, offered credit to 147 people from not just Bibbiena but also Frassineta, Mezano, Campi, Dama, Tremognniano, Gionpereta,

[35] G. Benadusi, *A provincial elite in early modern Tuscany: family and power in the creation of the state* (London, 1996), 88.
[36] Indeed the Casentino seems to follow Herlihy's belief that in the thirteenth century at least, cattle farming was more widespread than sheep or goats. D. Herlihy, *Pisa in the early Renaissance. A study of urban growth* (New Haven, 1958), 134-60.
[37] F. Melis, 'Momenti dell'economia del Casentino nei secoli XIV e XV', in M. Terenzi (ed.) *Mostra di armi antiche (Sec. XIV-XV). Poppi. Castello dei Conti Guidi* (Florence, 1967), 196-7.
[38] ?
[39] Cherubini, 'La società', 136.
[40] In contrast to what has been suggested in B. van Bavel, 'Markets for land, labor, and capital in northern Italy and the Low Countries, twelfth to seventeenth centuries', *J. Interdisciplinary Hist.*, 41.4 (2011), 517; R. Hopcroft & R. Emigh, 'Divergent paths of agrarian change: eastern England and Tuscany compared', *J. European Econ. Hist.*, 29 (2000), 16; J. Zuijderduin, *Medieval capital markets: markets for rents between state formation and private investment in Holland (1300-1550)* (Boston, 2009), 261-7.
[41] ASF, Catasto, no. 180, cc. 331, 333, 336, 340.
[42] ASF, Catasto, no. 180, cc. 242, 244.

Giona, Pangnolo, Montefattuchio, Monte Silvestro, Perneto, Sarna and Montalone.[43] Although credit extended down the social strata to smaller households, some creditors lent very large amounts. Lippo Giovani, a man of unknown status with four houses scattered across the landscape around Lontano, lent Cristofano Piero 104 florins and Romiti Gamaldo 224 florins.[44] Fluid lending eased the rise of the pastoral economy orientated towards the market, as larger herds could be compiled.

The growth of the pastoral economy and its commercialisation however had its greatest effects in creating local rural elites who converged around growing villages. A good example is that of Poppi which by the fifteenth century had actually blossomed into a small town. It was absent from the *catasto* because it was a Guidi family feudal stronghold until 1440, when Florentine forces marched in and wrested control.[45] From mediocre origins in the fifteenth century, a band of wool manufacturers, artisans, shopkeepers, notaries and petty landowners became a local ruling elite by the mid-sixteenth century.[46] These families used the burgeoning commercial production of wool to establish themselves a stranglehold over local administrative positions and politics. In the fifteenth century the marketing of pastoral produce created a new local elite in Poppi, which translated into political powers in the sixteenth century, and by the seventeenth century was used in a process of land concentration and polarisation (stimulated partly by the decline of the wool trade).

TABLE 3. Landholding in Poppi, 1517-1701

Landowners (acres)	*Land, 1517 (%)*	*Land, 1701 (%)*	*Land inside & outside Poppi, 1517 (%)*	*Land inside & outside Poppi, 1707 (%)*
Less than 7.5	15	7	5	2
7.5-24	27	19	7	3
25-74	34	39	15	10
75-247	24	35	62	27
More than 248	0	0	11	58

Sources: Adapted from Benadusi, *A provincial elite*, 146.

[43] ASF, Catasto, no. 180, cc. 99, 131, 156.
[44] ASF, Catasto, no. 179, cc. 471.
[45] F. Schevill, *History of Florence from the founding of the city through the Renaissance* (New York, 1976), 359-60.
[46] G. Benadusi, 'Rethinking the state: family strategies in early modern Tuscany', *Soc. Hist.*, 20.2 (1995), 157-72.

The concentration of the settlement of Poppi was linked undoubtedly to the improved economic fortunes of local inhabitants through the commercialisation of the pastoral economy.[47] Families from lowly backgrounds achieved success very quickly, establishing their enterprises in the heart of villages and marketing their produce in the same centres. Poppi may be an extreme example of this process because by the fifteenth century it had grown into a flourishing small town, but the same developments occurred across the Casentino in Soci, Partina, Stia, Pratovecchio and elsewhere. Indeed through the *catasto* we can plot the emergence of a local well-to-do stratum of inhabitants, many with multiple houses, converging on the villages and differentiated from the rest by high quantities of cattle and sheep they possessed

The development of concentrated settlements based on the marketing and productions of goods however was not limited to the late medieval commercialisation of the pastoral economy. There was a commercialisation of a wide variety of economic activities in the Casentino. Indeed the 1427 *catasto* suggests that over fifteen percent of the inhabitants in the area were classified as 'tradesmen', even if the high number of people with 'unknown' status makes the issue slightly less clear.

TABLE 4. Occupational structure, 1427

	Everyone included (%)	*'Unknowns' as 'peasant cultivators (%)*	*'Unknowns' prop. rep. (%)*
Peasant cultivator	21.5	83.5	56.6
Leaser	2.6	2.6	6.9
Sharecropper	0.9	0.9	2.3
Agricultural labourer	0.01	0.01	0.2
Servant	1.1	1.1	2.8
Tradesman	5.9	5.9	15.7
Rural noble	6	6	15.7
Unknown	62	n/a	n/a

Sources: ASF, Catasto, nos. 179-81, 246, 250, 330.

[47] In contrast to a notion of destitution argued for in G. Cherubini, 'Paesaggio agrario, insediamenti e attività silvo-pastorali sulla montagna tosco-romagnola alla fine del medioevo', in S. Anselmi (ed.), *La montagna fra Toscana e Marche* (Milan, 1984), 58-92; E. Baldari & S. Farina, 'Il Casentino. Una vallata montana dalleo sfruttamento feudale all'annessione al contado urbano', in E. Guidoni (ed.), *Città, contado e feudi nell'urbanistica medievale* (Rome, 1974), 64-99.

In fact the proportion of people employed in trades may have been even higher than what is suggested by the occupations explicitly recorded in the *catasto*. For example Bartolo Rampino of unknown status lived in Stia and had a shop there, while Antonio Cecco, a 'peasant cultivator', also had a smith's workshop by his house in the '*popolo di Salvatore*'.[48]

Furthermore it is unsurprising that six of the 10 wealthiest inhabitants in the Casentino in 1427 were 'tradesmen'. They owed their favourable economic fortunes to the exploitation of an upsurge in regional and urban demand for their diverse range of products, which they marketed in the concentrated village outlets. Indeed the top nine of these heads of households were resident in villages and small towns which had markets and frequent fairs. Some of the occupations were quite unusual, such as belt maker, and two of the top three wealthiest households sold spices. Meanwhile given the reputation of the Casentino as a 'feudal stronghold', it is interesting that no rural nobles were in the top ten, consolidating my later point about a weak and fragmented lay *seigneurie*.

TABLE 5. Wealthiest 10 people, 1427

	Taxable fortune (florins)	*Location*	*Occupation*
Cristofano Battista	861	Bibbiena	Spice seller
Giovanni Antonio	622	Bibbiena	Unknown
Landino Francesco	550	Bibbiena	Spice seller
Giovanni Antonio	526	Stia & Pratovecchio	Belt maker
Andrea Meo	505	S. Martino a Vado	Peddler (Merchant)
Piero Antonio	476	S. Martino a Vado	Smith
Franceschi Matteo	447	S. Niccolo a Vado	Smith
Stefano Giovannino	441	Stia & Pratovecchio	Peasant cultivator
Venturicci Niccolo	425	Bibbiena	Peasant cultivator
Nanni Niccolo	394	S. Maria in Castello	Peasant cultivator

Sources: ASF, Catasto, nos. 179-81, 246, 250, 330.

One of the most important activities in the late medieval Casentino Valley was not only the production of iron as a raw material using the many mills and forges

[48] ASF Catasto, no. 179, cc. 417, 471.

which were powered by the fast flowing Arno River, but also the manufacture of finished products out of the material. Two fifteenth century account books belonging to two ironworkers, Deo di Buono da Tracorte and his son Giovanni da Stia, provide a fantastic insight into this commercialised activity, and the relationship between iron production and manufacture of weapons, tools and machinery.[49] The premises of the two men were clearly situated in the heart of villages and served a commercial purpose. Indeed Giovanni built himself a tavern near to a shop which had just been constructed in Porciano.[50] He also had a shop in the centre of Stia. We are told that goods were sold at local fairs in Vado and other unspecified places, and at a local market in Pratovecchio.[51] A great variety of products were made out of iron according to the books, in particular axes and saws used by local woodcutters. Some of the products were made using old iron bought from inhabitants in the valley, which was reworked and reshaped into new objects. Interestingly the ironworkers did not rely on middlemen to provide them with the iron, for they were close enough to the foundries themselves to ensure a consistent supply.[52] Between January 13, 1469, and June 9, 1471, the duo received 1118lb of iron from Biagio di Piero di Lorenzo di Stia. The fifteenth century was the peak of iron production in the valley and numerous sources record forges which served this purpose. Three iron forges located close to the river and pertaining to the community of Raggiolo were in the hands of the Ubertini family in the fourteenth century.[53] The significance of iron to the Casentino was highlighted in the books of Arezzo merchant, Lazzaro Bracci, who talked of the '*ferro grosso di Casentino'* and how he had bought ample quantities from markets in Bibbiena.[54] Thus we see the close relationship between two commercialised enterprises in the valley: the raw production and the manufactured production of iron objects which served the needs of the local population but were also sold in the market centres to meet regional and urban demand.

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[49] ASF, Reale Arcispedale di Santa Maria Nuova, nos. 474-5. Attention brought to the source by L. de Angelis, 'Intorno all'attività di Deo di Buono, fabbro casentinese', *AM*, 3 (1976), 429-46.
[50] For the shop see ASF, RASMN, no. 474, cc. 19r, 24r, 34r, 53r, 62r, 71r, 75r, 98r, 102r. For the tavern see *Idem*, no. 474, cc. 79r, 87r, 94v, 113r, 124v, 143r.
[51] For Vado see *Idem*, no. 474, cc. 105r. For unspecified markets see *Idem*, no. 474, cc. 27r, no. 475, cc. 86v. For Pratovecchio see *Idem*, no. 475, cc. 78v-79r.
[52] A description of their positions is given in A. Barlucchi, 'La lavorazione del ferro nell'economia casentinese alla fine del medioevo (tra Campaldino e la battaglia di Anghiari)', *Annali Aretini*, 14 (2006), 169-200.
[53] M. Bicchierai, *Il castello di Raggiolo e i conti Guidi. Signoria e società di antico regime: Raggiolo in Casentino* (Raggiolo-Montepulciano, 1994), 65-71.
[54] Melis, 'Momenti', 195-6.

The number of mills in the Casentino increased in the late Middle Ages, a sure sign of increasing commercialisation of production, and although many were associated with iron foundries, mills were needed for crushing grain, grapes and olives. Seigneurial monopoly of the rights over mills was a trait common in much of western European society from the tenth century onwards, and the Casentino was no different in that regard.[55] A pool of evidence shows various mills belonging to high status seigneurial families. Commonly mills were rented to local inhabitants who then acted as millers for the communities close by. For example Niccolo di Iacopo da Muglio rented a mill in Partina from the Guidi family for a period of two years in 1350, which allowed him the monopoly of milling activities not just for Partina but also Lierna and Ragginopoli. The miller took a cut of the profits but provided 18 *staia* of grain to the Count every month, which probably amounted to one *staia* of grain from every inhabitant of the three settlements mentioned per year.[56] Other mills were leased out by the Guidi in the fourteenth century in the Casentino, while Camaldoli did the same for its mills in Soci and Partina.[57]

Another significant commercial venture was the timber trade, as the Arno River allowed for the transportation of this produce. Lumber cut by saw mills in the area was put on rafts and floated down the river to buyers.[58] The monastery of Camaldoli was also prominent in the timber trade and offered a concession on 3000 pieces of wood to Florentine Guiduccio Tolosini for 2000 florins in 1317.[59] They also demanded some of their rents to be in wood on their *poderi* at Monte, Lonano, Bucena and Contra.[60] Some wood was used locally by tradesmen however, who crafted tools out of beech and heated their homes during long, hard winters.[61] Already mentioned were the charters which limited the cutting down of the forest, measures intended to preserve the pool of timber as much as the grazing lands of animals. Florence became increasingly concerned that they were missing out on the lucrative profits to be made from the timber trade and thus in the sixteenth century tried their utmost to control the

[55] For the seigneurial monopoly on mills across Europe see D. Lohrmann, 'Antrieb von getreidemühlen', in U. Lindgren (ed.), *Europäische technik im Mittelalter, 800 bis 1400: tradition und innovation: ein handbuch* (Berlin, 1990), 221-32.
[56] G. Cherubini, 'La 'bannalità' del mulino in una signoria casentinese (1350)', in *Signori*, 225.
[57] ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, nos. 92-4; ASF, Camaldoli, no. 125, cc. 55r, no. 136, cc. 1v.
[58] ASF, RASMN, no. 475, cc. 81r-82v.
[59] G. Cacciamani, *L'antica foresta di Camaldoli. Storia e codice forestale* (Arezzo, 1965), 56.
[60] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 589, cc. 13.
[61] P. Ciampelli, *Badia Prataglia antica e moderna* (Bagno di Romagna, 1910), 49-50; R. Zagnoni, 'Comunità e beni comuni nella montagna fra Bologna e Pistoia nel medioevo', in *Comunità e beni comuni dal medioevo ad oggi* (Pistoia, 2007), 2.

resources. For example Raggiolo had a long history of autonomous control over its communal woodland resources. However in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a long series of battles between the Conti Guidi and the Florentine administration over the jurisdiction to Raggiolo caused great disruption to the community.[62] If first hand tales are to be believed, by 1440 (after Florence had wrested control of the commune) the urban administration had caused great devastation on the villagers, because in fear of taxation and reprisals they had sided with the Guidi family.[63] Soldiers were sent in to burn houses and violently subjugate the inhabitants, even resorting to hanging 'rebellious' sorts.[64] From this point the city increasingly tried to gain dividends from the wood trade by heavily taxing the sale of beechwood.

The trade in wood from the forest also stimulated other local industries such as charcoal burning, an important resource for blacksmiths. Casentinese wine was also highly prized and found a willing urban market. Of all the goods recorded in the assets of households in the *catasto*, barrels of wine were the most valuable, and the large number stored by some families indicates these were intended for sale.[65] Vineyards were very common in the valley and were generally the highest valued of all lands in the *catasto*. Unlike the fragmented pieces of arable and pasture, these were more often coherent units kept *in clausura* and formed part of an isolated *podere*, or alternatively were attached to the houses and walls of the concentrated *castelli*. Camaldoli also saw the commercial sense in producing good wine and kept vineyards in demesne well into the sixteenth century, such as the '*Vigna dei Romiti*' at Pratovecchio.[66] Another commercial pursuit was the sale of bees and the production of honey. Hives were everywhere in the Appennines and the Casentino was no exception.[67]

The production of chestnuts, important in the early Middle Ages, continued to be important, and while this activity leaned more towards peasant self-sufficiency rather than market production, evidence suggests the activity became at least partially

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[62] M. Bicchierai, 'La lunga durata dei beni comuni in una comunità Toscana: il caso di Raggiolo in Casentino', in Zagnoni (ed.), *Comunità*, 45-60.
[63] C. de la Roncière, 'Fidélités, patronages, clientèles dans le contado florentin au XIV siècle', *Ricerche Storiche* 15.1 (1985), 37.
[64] E. Bellondi (ed.), *Cronica volgare di Anonimo Fiorentino dall'anno 1385 al 1409 già attribuita a Piero di Giovanni Minerbetti* (Città di Castello, 1915), 127-8. Recent scholarship has suggested this was an over-exaggeration, for example S. Cohn, *Creating the Florentine state: peasants and rebellion, 1348-1434* (Cambridge, 1999).
[65] Niccolo Nanni stored 70 barrels at his farm at S. Maria in Castello in ASF, Catasto, no. 179, cc. 67.
[66] Jones, 'Camaldoli', 179.
[67] ACA, Fondo di Murello, no. 1269, cc. 27r.

commercialised. Collecting chestnuts was a risky and difficult task which involved climbing trees. Many richer proprietors of the chestnut trees decided to give this work to day labourers and in the Casentino an owner paid men a hefty rate to collect and clean the chestnuts.[68] Many workers got paid in chestnuts. Another commercial activity in the Casentino was the 'growth industry' of wet-nursing and the foster care of children from foundling homes in Florence. Other scholars have used the archives of urban charitable institutions to show the development of this micro-economy in the mountain regions to the east of Florence.[69] Castello San Niccolo in the Casentino was mentioned by 24 separate wet-nurses in documents of the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* in Florence, suggesting that institution had set-up a network of contacts for this village.[70] Popular lyrics frequented alluded to the association between the Casentino and wet-nursing.[71] A final commercial activity undertaken in the Casentino in the late Middle Ages was the sale of trout caught in the Arno River. We know the frequency and scale of this activity thanks to legislation from Florence, who was concerned not only about losing a potential supply of food upstream but also the poisoning of the river.[72] In 1450 the city threatened the people of the Casentino with substantial fines if caught poisoning the river with lime and nut shells.[73] 'Priests, clerks or other religious lay brother and the like' were revealed as guilty parties, showing it was not the act of desperate peasants but the organised actions of ecclesiastical institutions like Camaldoli, who then sold the fish at market. Indeed the whole *raison d'etre* of the legislation was that Florence was growing increasingly restless as they failed to profit from commercial ventures undertaken in the Casentino in the late Middle Ages.

Thus to summarise, I have provided evidence for the wide economic portfolios that characterised Casentinese society in the late Middle Ages and the increasing commercialisation of these activities in response to greater regional and urban demand. It is through this process that we can explain the simultaneous concentration

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[68] Cherubini, 'La civiltà', 274.
[69] See C. Klapisch-Zuber, 'Blood parents and milk parents: wet nursing in Florence, 1300-1550', in *Women, family and ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1985), 132-64; T. Takahasi, 'I bambini e i genitori-'espositori' dello spedale di Santa Maria degli Innocenti di Firenze nel XV secolo', *Annuario dell'Istituto Giapponese di Cultura*, 25 (1991), 35-57; R. Trexler, 'The foundlings of Florence, 1395-1455', *Hist. Childhood Quart.*, 1 (1973), 259-84.
[70] P. Gavitt, *Charity and children in Renaissance Florence: the Ospedale degli Innocenti 1410-1536* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 227.
[71] C. Singleton (ed.), *Canti carnascialeschi del Rinascimento* (Bari, 1936), nos. 29, 94.
[72] See R. Trexler, 'Measures against water pollution in fifteenth-century Florence', *Viator*, 5 (1974), 462-7.
[73] ASF, Provvisioni Registri, nos. 175-6.

of settlement. Markets and fairs were born in various villages in the valley with shops and dwellings increasingly huddled together and focused on the *piazza* which served as the market centre. Some of these markets were in existence at an early date such as the eleventh century in the case of Soci or the twelfth century in the case of Bibbiena, however most of the evidence for other markets or fairs is from the late medieval period for Poppi, Pratovecchio, Stia, Strada, Porciano, Romena and Castel San Niccolò.[74] The concentrated villages also served as points of production, where numerous tradesmen such as ironworkers situated their premises and benefited from being close to both supply of raw materials and the markets themselves. My conclusions totally contradict a view that the Casentino 'never established significant protoindustries'.[75]

The question remains however, why did this occur in the Casentino? I argue that it was the high levels of autonomy that characterised the communities of the Casentino in the late Middle Ages, for it gave the inhabitants the freedom and opportunity to exploit the wide range of resources available, without fear of losing their property or having to give up the surpluses they made to social superiors. The concentration of settlements in the Casentino was an organic process, initiated by local inhabitants as a response to their changing economic fortunes and direction. Therefore the high levels of autonomy which encouraged commercial activity in the Casentino, and in turn settlement concentration, was maintained via three key factors: the lack of urban landowning and investment, the high and resilient level of local farmer landownership, and the fragmented and weakened seigneurial powers by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The first two factors were interrelated. In the areas closer to Florence where the *mezzadria* contract flourished, peasants and smallholders lost their lands to Florentines in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and became tenants or migrated to the city. Such developments never occurred in the Casentino. Over half the households were recorded as local cultivators who owned their own land, while a substantial proportion of the rest was made up of local tradesmen and rural nobles. However this does not mean that over 50 percent of land was in the hands of these

[74] For early evidence of markets see RC, i, nos. 559-60, 705, ii, no. 1063. Later markets and fairs see ASF, RASMN, no. 474, cc. 27r, 105r, no. 475, cc. 86v, 78v-79r. Some of the market centres with a distinctive triangular design have been dated by archaeologists to the fourteenth century such as Pratovecchio and Stia in Cherubini & Francovich, 'Forme e vicende', 875.
[75] S. Epstein, *Freedom and growth: the rise of states and markets in Europe, 1300-1750* (London, 2000), 142.

landowning farmers. Camaldoli was a massive landowner in the region.[76] As an estimation from the manuscripts I suggest that around 35 percent of land in the Casentino was in the hands of ecclesiastical institutions, 45 percent in the hands of local farmers and tradesmen, 15 percent in the hands of rural nobles, while the small remainder was made up of sharecroppers, leasers, and some very minor urban landowning – mainly in the south of the valley by burghers from Arezzo. Elio Conti using material from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had a slightly different property structure: 60 percent of land in the hands of local farmers, 20 percent in the hands of ecclesiastical institutions and 20 percent in the hands of urban institutions.[77] Both sets of figures are likely correct, the difference being that Conti focused on an area of the Casentino further to the south and nearer to Arezzo, where Camaldoli had less landownership and Aretine citizens had slightly more.[78] Nonetheless the important point was that urban landownership was fairly marginal, particularly in relation to the Florentine territory as a whole, where with 14 percent of the state's population, Florence declared 65 percent of the total taxable wealth.[79] Only a few Florentines could be identified in the *catasto* records for the Casentino. The situation continued through to the sixteenth century as for example just two acres of meadow out of a total 797 acres of land recorded in Moggiona in 1576 was attributed to a Florentine owner.[80] Samuel Cohn, who looked at a high number of notarial charters to trace the workings of the Florentine land market, found almost no mention of urban landholding as far out as the Casentino in the eastern mountains.[81]

The notion of a high level of peasant or local farmer landownership is further supported in that so much of the land recorded in the *catasto* for the Casentino was in the hands of people with houses in the area. Very few places had much absentee landownership; the only exceptions were Ortignano and S. Niccolo a Vado. In sum, a large quantity of land was in the hands of local cultivators in the late Middle Ages, and this was very stable and persistent. Even the *catasti* from the nineteenth century still revealed a high level of peasant land ownership in the Casentino.[82] Neither the

[76] ASF, Catasto, no. 191.
[77] E. Conti, *I catasti agrari della Repubblica fiorentina e il catasto particellare toscano (sec. 14-19). La formazione della struttura agraria moderna,* iii (Rome, 1966), ?
[78] See the two *poderi* held by an Aretine in the southern Casentino in G. Cherubini, 'La proprietà fondiaria di un mercante toscano del Trecento (Simo d'Ubertino di Arezzo), in *Signori*, 342-3.
[79] Herlihy & Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 94-100.
[80] ASF, Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal Governo Francese, no. 39, cc. 172.
[81] Cohn, *Creating*, 22-4.
[82] See ACA, Catasto Generale della Toscana, BIBBIENA.

lay *seigneurie* nor any of the monasteries attempted to remove peasants from their holdings. Indeed while Camaldoli made sporadic attempts at land accumulation in certain places, such as at Soci in the thirteenth century, they were content to receive a steady income of fixed census payment in the early Middle Ages and then increasingly a steady income of rents in money and kind in the late Middle Ages.[83]

Thirdly independence was not curtailed by seigneurial repression. The local inhabitants had high autonomy over their economic and agricultural activities because the *seigneurie* was a fragmented force both in the early and late Middle Ages. Much of the weakness of the big families in the Casentino such as the Guidi was caused by their inheritance practices. Instead of consolidating their land through primogeniture, the Guidi fragmented their properties by dividing equally between heirs.[84] It had the effect of splitting the family into four factions, Porciano, Battifolle, Dovadola and Romena, who were constantly at war with one another.[85] Many of the smaller lay aristocrats in the valley also had the same attitude towards inheritance, and while it appeased heirs in the short-term, it created structural problems for the families in the long term. The castles built by the aristocrats in the eleventh century did not have the demographic effect of pulling inhabitants into concentrations because the *seigneurie* had weakened landowning portfolios.[86] No family had total control over landholding around a settlement, and castles merely added to a layer of higher status isolated settlement.

The fragmented and weak powers of the seigneurial families continued into the late Middle Ages and allowed the local cultivators the room to develop their own commercialised agrarian, craft and trading activities. If anything the lay elites needed to strike up favourable relations with local communities to preserve their increasingly tenuous hold of jurisdictions in the Casentino, given rising Florentine interference in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even though many areas of forest were in private seigneurial hands, the *seigneurie* realised the importance of allowing communities control over their operation and regulation.[87] Elsewhere in an episode of

[83] Jones, 'Camaldoli', 169.
[84] E. Sestan, 'I conti Guidi e il Casentino', in *Italia medievale* (Naples, 1966), 356-78; de la Roncière, 'Fidélités', 35-59.
[85] R. Rinaldi, 'Le origini dei Guidi nelle terre di Romagna (secoli IX-X)', in *Formazione e strutture dei ceti dominanti nel Medioevo: marchesi conti e visconti nel Regno italico (secc. IX-XII),* ii (Rome, 1996), 211-40; T. Casini, 'The minor rural aristocracy and great lords in thirteenth-century Tuscany: three cases from the entourage of the Guidi counts', *J. Med. Hist.*, 30 (2011), 4.
[86] Wickham, *Mountains*, 269-306.
[87] Zagnoni, 'Comunità', 17-44.

peasant insurrection in 1391 in Raggiolo, inhabitants of the village who were newly incorporated into the *contado* of Florence petitioned the troops of the feudal lords of Pietramala to assist them in regaining control of the village.[88] Life as feudal subjects to the Guidi family before 1357 was not always sweet, but there was less onerous taxation than under the Florentine administration. With their aid they regained the castle but the victory was short-lived as Florentine troops stormed in and burnt it to the ground. It is this episode which shows not only the concessions that seigneurial families had to make to local communities to hold power, but the increasing interference of Florence also shows the marked demise of the feudal powers in the late Middle Ages.[89] In 1440 when Florence achieved victory at Anghiari over the Duchy of Milan, this led to the almost total expulsion of Guidi interests in the Casentino.[90] Autonomy of the local inhabitants in the fifteenth century was not curtailed by the Florentine administration however. Florence brought more settlements into the orbit of the *contado* in the fifteenth century, yet failed to have a significant influence on the economic direction and decisions made in the valley because it lacked the foundations of a strong landownership base to do it.

The seigneurial families were losing their grip almost everywhere in the Casentino, which was most visible in the fourteenth century. Pratovecchio surrended to Florence in 1343, while the Guidi family lost Castel San Niccolo five years later. Even the Bishop of Arezzo was not immune to this crisis, and Bibbiena, which had been held in fiefdom since the tenth century, passed to Florence in 1359. While feudal powers often cooperated with village communities to maintain their ever weakening grip on the Casentino, the example of Bibbiena in contrast showed the assertiveness of some village communities in casting off the shackles of more repressive lordships. Documents show that the inhabitants of Bibbiena outright refused to support the dominion of the Pietramalesi family, and were willing to elect mayors to present their submission to the city of Florence.[91] Even where the Guidi family managed to hold

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[88] Cohn, *Creating*, 125.
[89] For the general process in Tuscany see P. Jones, 'Economia e società nell'Italia medievale: la leggenda della borghesia', in R. Romano & C. Vivanti (eds.), *Storia d'Italia. Annali. Dal feudalesimo al capitalismo*, i (Turin, 1978), 185-372. For incursions into the east Tuscan mountains see A. Vasina, 'Romagna e Toscana prima della Romagna fiorentina (secc. V-XIV)', in N. Graziani (ed.), *Romagna Toscana. Storia e civiltà di una terra di confine*, ii (Florence, 2001), 711-46. For the demise of the two key families, Guidi and Ubertini, see P. Pirillo, 'Signorie dell'Appennino tra Toscana ed Emilie Romagna alla fine del Medioevo', *Reti Medievali Rivista*, 5 (2004), 1-15.
[90] Bicchierai, *Una comunità*, 13.
[91] Pasqui (ed.), *Arezzo*, iii, no. 827. The Pietramalesi submit to the will of Florence in *Idem*, no. 832.

onto their jurisdictions, they still faced a battle with the city of Arezzo, and made key concessions when pacts were drawn up to keep control over the *castelli* of Ragginopoli and Partina.[92] In a long running battle with Camaldoli, Ugolino Guidi ended up selling all their rights they owned in Partina, Serravalle and elsewhere.[93] The same went for the Ubertini family in the late fourteenth century, who made significant concessions to Florence, such as the recognition of the city's right to extract profit from their lands, to hold onto their weakening jurisdiction over Chitignano, Rosina and Taena.[94] Finally, the decision of Count Francesco Guido to align himself with Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, led to the loss of Poppi in 1440 once the Florentine army took it by force.

Local inhabitants drew strength from the security and durability of ownership over their land, crystallised by the lack of urban investment and landownership in the area, and further supported by the fragmented power and declining fortunes of the seigneurial families. If anything the fragile position of the feudal lords directly helped lay the foundations for settlement concentration as early as the thirteenth century, as markets and *piazze* grew thanks to a number of concessions and the offer of local lordly protection.[95] In effect all this was translated into a local autonomy and independence, which paved the way for unhindered economic exploitation of a wide range of natural resources in the Casentino. Through this series of developments we can understand the emergence of concentrated villages in the late Middle Ages, centred on markets and production points geared towards urban and regional demand.

V. The absence of urban landholding and investment, the relics of agricultural organisation, and the formation of isolated *poderi* in the late Middle Ages

As seen from the tables, there were many *poderi* in the Casentino in the late Middle Ages, and many more than were observable from before 1300. Midway through the fourteenth century there were still only six *poderi* that belonged to Camaldoli in the Casentino Valley, yet by the late fifteenth century there were over 30. In fact there were more in the Casentino Valley because this list only takes into account those

[92] *Idem*, nos. 795-6.
[93] RC, ii, no. 1270; ASF, Diplomatico, Camaldoli, San Salvatore, 1 January 1258.
[94] G. Cherubini, 'La signoria degli Ubertini sui comuni rurali casentinesi di Chitgnano, Rosina e Taena all'inizio del Quattrocento', *ASI*, 126 (1968), 151-69.
[95] P. Pirillo, 'Il paesaggio dell'Alpe. Per una storia della viabilità fra la Romagna ed il territorio fiorentino', *Studi Romagnoli*, 44 (1993), 539-70.

leased out by Camaldoli. Lay seigneurial families leased out such farms in the same way to tenants. Many occupied isolated positions away from main concentrated settlements such as *Podere Bocci*, which is still visible today detached from the small settlement of Farneta, and one of many given a special name. The *Podere del Prato* was also referred to as '*Podere Grande'*, to distinguish it from a smaller neighbouring farm known in 1500 as '*Podere Piccola*'. However some of the *poderi* were also situated in the centre of villages, such as *Podere di Camaldoli* in Moggiona, and thus cannot be taken as a totally accurate index of dispersed or isolated settlement.

TABLE 6. *Poderi* belonging to Camaldoli, 1349[96]

	Rent						
	Grain (staia)	*Bread (loaves)*	*Eggs*	*Wood (cells)*	*Chicken*	*Farro (staia)*	*Oil (bottles)*
Mausolea	106	6	30	2	1	10	0
Monte	100	0	900	12	0	30	2
Lonano	80	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agna	60	0	0	0	0	0	0
Romena	70	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bucena	140	0	0	0	0	0	0
6 *poderi*	**556**	**6**	**930**	**14**	**1**	**40**	**2**

Sources: ASF, Camaldoli, nos. 117-8.

[96] For measurements, *staia* where not specified. 'P' for pounds and 'B' for barrels.

TABLE 7. List of *poderi* belonging to Camaldoli, 1446

	Rent		
	Grain (staia)	*Labour works (days)*	*Tenant or user*
Bucena	46		Granus Agnoli
Bucena (Campo Castaldi)	21		Granus Agnoli
Pratale	40		Iohannis de Pratalia
Moggiona		unspecified	Camaldoli
Contra	unspecified		Blasius Iacobi
Contra	23		Blasius Iacobi
Contra	67		Blasius Iacobi
Mausolea	21		Camaldoli
Montecchio	21		Pistarius
Montecchio	28		Pistarius
Montecchio	79		Beneventus de Florentia
Serravale	30		Camaldoli
Serravale (Campo Drezzeta)	70		Camaldoli
Agna	60		Guido Inta
Pozzena	21		Antonius Bartoli
Soci	100		Camaldoli
Soci in Camprena	21		Antonius Pieteus
Farneta (Bocci)	23		Riccius de Ragginopoli
Partina (*Podere del Romuolo*)	78		Piero Fattino
19 *poderi*	**749**	**unspecified**	

Sources: ASF, Camaldoli, nos. 183, 589.

TABLE 8. List of *poderi* belonging to Camaldoli, 1481

	Rent										
	Grain (staia)	*Wine (btl.)*	*Eggs*	*Wood (cells)*	*Pork (lb)*	*Legumes (cells)*	*Florins*	*Chickens*	*Labour (days)*	*FBF*[97] *(staia)*	*Oil (btl.)*
Soci (*Podere del Prato*)	215	12	200					3			
Contra	110		150	1	400			2			
Agna	unsp.	200	200		33						
Fontechiaro	250					1	20	2		62	
Montecchio	30	unsp.	50			1	10.75	2			
Montecchio	unsp.										
Castegiori	15										
S. Maria da Porena	24									10	
Ventrina	90		100					2			
Partina	74	4	80						2		
Serravalle	50									4	
Freggina	135		200	1		3		2		30	
Capanura a Porena	60		200		400			2		10	
Monte (*Podere Cutrino*)	170		200	1	300			2		18	

[97] Farro, barley and fava.

Podere Zacho al Pozo & Podere Castaldo	180		100	1	300			2		24	
Ragginopoli (*Podere Bocci*)	30						17				
Farneta	15										
Montecchio	100	4				0.5				18	
Oci	unsp.										
Romena	50	12	200					2		4	
Fileto (*Podere Acolina*)	10	10									
Moggiona	110		200					4		54	
Sparena	65	6	100					2	8	18	
Porina	80		100					2	8	16	
Pratale	70										
Pratale	30										
Corte di Foiano (Sanchiriro)	260							2			
Corte di Foiano (*Podere Spezato*)	120							2			
Perarmi	14										14
Soci (*Podere Piccola*)	100									3	
31 *poderi*	**2493**	**44**	**1880**	**4**	**1433**	**6.5**	**47.75**	**31**	**10**	**271**	**14**

Sources: ASF, Camaldoli, no. 136.

With such a wide expanse of land ownership, it is no surprise that Camaldoli had formed *poderi* all across the Casentino. That is not to say they were big consolidated units in the Casentino. Actually most were fairly small or moderate units, vaguely consolidated where the residence would stand, with also a few scattered holdings appertaining to the farm. The rents payable to the monastery increased from the mid to late fifteenth century, as they became larger and more consolidated over time. Many tenants leased more than one *podere*, such as Blasius Iacobi. Perhaps by accumulating three *poderi* in Contra, he created a much bigger consolidated holding. The rents for the *poderi* were typically varied reflecting Camaldoli's diverse economic approach. Some were composed of a high cash payment, although most consisted of rent in kind. The produce was typically varied, and although much may have been sold at market, the provision of goods such as fava beans or eggs suggests that the rents from *poderi* were also needed to sustain the large monastic community of the hermitage. The length of the leases was also entirely variable; some being as short as six months, while others were leased *in perpetuum*. The most common lease period was three years.

A pattern of isolated compact farms in central Italy has been explained through the rising levels of urban landownership and investment in the countryside. It is a model which suggests the landscape of the countryside was significantly reorganised through decisions made by city dwellers. In my work on the Casentino Valley however, urban investment and landownership was decidedly absent and yet isolated *poderi*, which were leased out to tenant farmers, still developed in the late Middle Ages. It is on this point that I challenge the traditional model which suggests that urban domination over the countryside was a necessary precondition for the development of *poderi* and the perpetuation of dispersed or isolated settlement in central Italy.

The lack of urban landownership in the Casentino has already been discussed. Many *poderi* were associated with the monastery of Camaldoli as opposed to any sort of urban landowner. Although sharecropping was not entirely absent in the 1427 *catasto*, for example a number of *mezzadria* households were noted for the village of Montecchio,[98] the short term lease was a more frequent contractual form in this area. Before the late Middle Ages local cultivators held land from Camaldoli through very

[98] ASF, Catasto, no. 250, cc. 502-11.

old censuses which were fixed and quite insubstantial. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the short-term lease became more in vogue, either in kind or in money, but more increasingly in kind, and the level of the rent was linked more to the actual value of the land. Most of the *poderi* were leased out by Camaldoli on short or medium, fixed-term leases, although the ancient rents never completely went away in the valley and were still present into the sixteenth century.

The farms leased by the monastery of Camaldoli to local tenants were based largely on sites where the institution had previously undertaken direct exploitation of agriculture. That is to say the *poderi* of the late Middle Ages were actually sub-divided units which made up former *curtes*, granges and demesnes. Demesne farming was never very large-scale or coherently arranged in the early medieval Casentino, and there was nothing like the classic bi-partite arrangements characteristic of many parts of north-western Europe.[99] Nonetheless demesne farming can be traced all the way back to our earliest sources from Camaldoli in the eleventh century, and while direct exploitation was not large-scale, Camaldoli exploited numerous very small demesnes administered through a network of granges and *curtes* over a wide area of the Casentino.[100] These sites served as the pick-up points for rents, the organisational centres for agriculture and the storage points for agricultural produce. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the monastic community at Camaldoli numbered around 300, and it was important that they could be self-sufficient to put food on the table.

The term *curtis* was commonly employed in early medieval documents of the Casentino and refers to an estate composed of a central complex or building which was the point of administration for perhaps multiple small demesnes. The actual centres were referred to in the formulae as '*casa et curtis dominicata*', and were often situated *in clausura* with hedges or stone walls.[101] The isolated farms which developed in the late Middle Ages were either the central buildings of the *curtis* readapted, or were situated on subdivided and reorganised blocks of demesne land.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries Camaldoli had demesne in a wide range of places in the valley but it was more common in the south, while less frequently

[99] As iterated in P. Jones, 'From manor to mezzadria: a Tuscan case-study in the medieval origins of modern agrarian society', in N. Rubinstein (ed.), *Florentine studies: politics and society in Renaissance Florence* (Evanston, 1968)', 193-241.
[100] Wickham, *Mountains*, 222-31.
[101] RC, i, nos. 110, 123, 144, 292, 503.

mentioned in the middle Archiano area around Partina.[102] Thus unsurprisingly while Camaldoli in the late Medieval period had a large amount of landholding in the Partina area, the majority of its leased *poderi* were located elsewhere in the valley. Of course there were exceptions since Contra was one village quite near Partina that had a lot of demesne (and unsurprisingly a large quantity of leased *poderi* in the fifteenth century).[103] The direct exploitation of these demesnes was organised through a series of *curtes* or grange centres, which were administered by officials known as '*castaldi*', often lay *conversi*.[104] Each unit was its own agricultural complex complete with gardens, enclosures, vineyards, and then the main manorial dwelling with separate buildings for animals, produce and servants. Examples of working *curtes* include those which belonged to the monastery of Prataglia (before it came into the hands of Camaldoli in the twelfth century), at Prataglia, Aioli near Corezzo, and Ventrina. These places served as centres for organising labour on the demesnes, collecting rents, and even administered private monastic justice.[105] On some of the estates labour services were still required even in the thirteenth century, for example at Moggiona, where works were performed on the *curtis* there but also inhabitants worked demesne at Camaldoli itself.[106] Nonetheless by the late Middle Ages works on most demesnes were commuted for rents, and many demesnes stopped being exploited directly and were leased out to local farmers. It is from this point that we can trace the rise of the isolated *poderi*. Nearly all of the late medieval *poderi* belonging to the monastery of Camaldoli appeared in areas where Camaldoli had committed to demesne farming such as Bucena, Moggiona, Ventrina, Romena, Mausolea, Contra, Monte, Montecchio, Corezzo and Prataglia. Meanwhile *poderi* seemed to be entirely absent from areas where demesne farming was not as important in the early Middle Ages such as Marciano, Bibbiena, Partina, Campi, Gello, Giona, Gressa, Pezza and Frassineta.

The point is reinforced through the names of the *poderi*. At Monte there was a farm leased out to a tenant called the '*Podere di Castaldi'*, while at Bucena a *podere* was situated in a field known as '*Campo Castaldi*'. These structures existed in the

[102] See RC, i, nos. 50-1, 180, 224, 376, 384, 503, 535, II, nos. 713, 1231; Pasqui (ed.) *Arezzo*, i, nos. 138, 169.
[103] RC, i, nos. 94, 106, 170, 215, 266, 368, 503, 535.
[104] M. Modigliani, 'Studi e documenti ad illustrazione degli statuti del comune di Anghiari', *ASI*, 6 (1880), 229-30.
[105] RC, i, nos. 50-1, 60, 100, 106, 123, 129, 154.
[106] Jones, 'Camaldoli', 171.

TABLE 9. Early *poderi* and their tenants

	Tenant, 1328	*Tenant, 1334*	*Tenant, 1337*	*Tenant, 1340*	*Tenant, 1349*
Mausolea	C. Mucius	C. Mucius	C. Mucius	C. Mucius	Tino di Corezzo
Monte	C. Benedenti	C. Benedenti	C. Benedenti	Benuccio Cesily	Benuccio Cesily
Lonano	C. Naldus	C. Renectus	C. Renectus	C. Renectus	S. Stella Relicta Menchi di Lontano
Agna	Boninus Percuia	C. Cecco	C. Cecco	C. Cecco	Guido Pincus di Romena
Romena	C. Bonventura	C. Vivanius	C. Vivanius	C. Vivanius	Domina Vivanius di Romena
Bucena	C. Biccius	C. Biccius	C. Biccius	C. Biccius	Camaldoli

Source: ASF, Camaldoli, no. 117, cc. 123-43. ('*Castaldi*' written as 'C').

early Middle Ages and were farmed in hand by Camaldoli through the administration of *castaldi*, and were simply reorganised in later centuries to lease to tenants. Indeed the first tenants were *castaldi*, as seen from the table below. Although by the late fifteenth century there were dozens of *poderi* in the Casentino belonging to Camaldoli, in the mid fourteenth century there were still only six traceable from the rentals. Each of these original farms had former *castaldi* as tenants, emphasizing how they had simply been converted from demesne farms managed in hand. By 1349 however, the tenants were not obviously recognisable as former *castaldi*, although they may have been relatives, such as at Romena.

Why were so many late medieval *poderi* situated on former estate structures pertaining to Camaldoli? First the relative power of the monastery of Camaldoli was so great in the Casentino, that their economic decisions inevitably had an influential role to play in re-shaping the local landscape. Second the formation of isolated *poderi* was linked directly to the flexible and diverse modes of exploitation that Camaldoli undertook. The institution could easily switch from direct exploitation to different forms of leasehold very quickly (and vice-versa), which enhanced their capacity to divide up *curtes* and demesnes for tenants if necessary.

Camaldoli was exceptionally powerful in the Casentino in the late Middle Ages, which intensified the effect of their economic actions on the development of settlement after 1300. Settlement development was highly sensitive to their modes of exploitation and agricultural organisation because by the fourteenth century, there was a power vacuum in the valley. Florentine landownership was almost absent, the seigneurial families were firmly on the decline, rival ecclesiastical institutions had everywhere fallen into ruin, while the Bishop of Arezzo had failed to grasp jurisdiction back from the monastery over huge swaths of forest.[107] The only potential counter-force against Camaldoli were the communities of the valley themselves, who lacked large capital to encroach onto the monastery's landed property and yet proved to be a useful and flexible local workforce when called upon. Camaldoli even benefited from the decline of other ecclesiastical institutions such as Prataglia in the twelfth century, by incorporating them into their own property portfolio.[108] The power vacuum was consolidated by the almost complete lack of late medieval land reclamation in the Casentino, where trees often made way for cultivable arable. The tenacious maintenance of the common resources and the negotiation between monastery and communities on the preservation of valuable woodlands meant that potential rival forces such as seigneurial lords did not benefit from land reclamation.

The strength of Camaldoli in the Casentino in the late Middle Ages was curious given the general decline of monasteries not only in east Tuscany, but across the whole of central Italy at this time.[109] How did they do it? Certainly the local power vacuum helped, but it was also a function of their economic and political decision-making. One important point was that they did not sow potentially debilitating seeds in the early and high Middle Ages in contrast to other institutions such as the nearby Benedictine monastery of S. Fiora which fell into trouble between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.[110] S. Fiora, like many other ecclesiastical institutions in the region, conceded land to vassals for military protection and to build political

[107] A typical dispute between Arezzo and Camaldoli can be found in Pasqui (ed.), *Arezzo*, ii, no. 638.
[108] RC, ii, no. 1123.
[109] C. Cipolla, 'Une crise ignorée: comment s'est perdue la propriété ecclésiastique dans l'italie du nord entre le XIe et le XVIe siècle', *Annales: ESC*, 2 (1947), 317-27; D. Herlihy, 'Church property on the European continent 701-1200', *Speculum*, 36 (1961), 98; G. Chittolini, 'Un problema aperto: le crisi della proprietà ecclesiastica fra Quattro e Cinquecento', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 85 (1973), 235-92. Note I refer to the decline of monasteries and not ecclesiastical institutions in general. While landownership of monasteries decreased in the later Middle Ages, landownership for hospitals and fraternities increased as they became the main beneficiaries of charity. (Auke Rijpma's clarification).
[110] See P. Grossi, *Le abbazie benedettine nell'alto medioevo italiano* (Florence, 1957), 114-25; G. Penco, *Storia del monachesimo in Italia* (Rome, 1961), 430.

networks, but later was caught in a culture of debt leading to the alienation of great swaths of property.[111] S. Fiora frequently owed money to Aretine banks and citizens of Florence.[112] Camaldoli had no such problems in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and even strengthened its position in the Casentino. It never got involved in the early medieval spate of castle-building and never en-feoffed land away to *milites*, so centuries down the line it kept its lands very much intact. While S. Fiora was reduced to a handful of monks in the late thirteenth century, Camaldoli had a thriving community of over 100 monks and *conversi* in 1427.[113] Camaldoli sold off land during hard times, but this was more a policy of efficient economic organisation rather than true bouts of crisis: giving up distant peripheral lands at Borsemulo in 1319, where profits were insufficient to make it worthwhile.[114] More frequently, the monastery leased out these distant lands, as seen in Romagna.[115] Camaldoli in general maintained their strong position well into the early modern period, in some places increasing their portfolio of landownership such as at Moggiona where an *estimo* from 1777 showed they had 45 acres more land than in 1576.[116]

Often the decisions taken by the monastery in one area had repercussions for settlement in another. For example the subdivision of demesne in Contra and the creation of isolated *poderi* leased out to prominent local tenants impacted on other nearby settlements. While Contra devolved into just a few scattered tenant farms, those local smallholders who owned land converged into the concentrated settlement of Marciano. In the Florentine inspection of *castelli* in 1385, Marciano was noted as having just 12 'malcontented' inhabitants.[117] By the time of the *catasto* in 1427, the village had 43 households and around 190 inhabitants.[118] Marciano likely took in inhabitants from across a wide area in the Casentino, not just from Contra. The actions of Camaldoli also achieved the opposite settlement development: although the Casentino was going through a period of settlement concentration in the late Middle Ages, there were a few cases where former concentrated settlements devolved into a

[111] G. Cherubini, 'Aspetti della proprietà fondiaria nell'aretino durante il XIII secolo', *ASI*, 121 (1963), 7.
[112] ACA, S. Fiora, no. 704; Pasqui (ed.), *Arezzo*, ii, no. 481.
[113] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 191, 255v.
[114] G. Mittarelli & A. Costadoni (eds.), *Annales Camaldulenses ordinis S. Benedicti*, ix (Venice, 1773), 271.
[115] ASF Camaldoli, no. 590, cc. 53, 56v, 137v, 138v.
[116] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 951, cc. 1v-11v.
[117] Pasqui (ed.), *Arezzo*, iii, no. 859.
[118] ASF Catasto, no. 180, cc. 255-90.

mere scattering of houses. For example in 1385 it was noted that Sarna was a very strong *castello* containing 50 people, who all swore fidelity to the palace. However in the same source we are also given an impression of imminent decline, suggesting the walls were falling into ruin and the status of the settlement reduced to that of 'villa'. The 1427 *catasto* shows the reasons for this, as there was barely a home-owner amongst the inhabitants: all the land had been divided up into *poderi* and leased out to tenants. The former concentrated settlement had collapsed into a loose distribution of tenant farms under the direction of Camaldoli.

The isolated *poderi* situated on the former *curtes*, granges and demesnes of Camaldoli were encouraged by the institution's flexible attitude towards direct and indirect modes of exploitation. Camaldoli had a host of scattered tenancies, some ancient with onerous obligations, alongside newer tenancies which were linked more to the market value of the land with rents paid in either cash or kind. Alongside these tenancies the monastery had demesnes which it farmed directly, and *poderi* which it leased out on a sharecropping or more frequently a fixed-term lease. The monastery used diverse modes of exploitation to stave off potentially debilitating crises, and its flexibility meant that it adapted to whatever economic situation it faced. The development of isolated farms was linked to monastic decision-making. Their roots lay in Camaldoli's network of granges and *curtes* which were testament to the monastery's commitment to a level of direct exploitation, but also only came into being through Camaldoli's decision to sub-divide these structures and indirectly exploit them through various leasing arrangements. Rents were paid in whatever the monastery wanted most, or were adapted to the *poderi* in question. In the fifteenth century tenants paid in cash, piles of wood, grain, legumes and more. Camaldoli could sub-divide structures very quickly, aided by the fact that their demesnes well already small and numerous, and be turned into individual farms of whatever size needed. Similarly *poderi* were switched back and directly farmed just as quickly. The *podere* at Monte for example was worked by a former *castaldo* as a tenant in 1328, in 1332 it returned to the monks at the herimitage, and then in 1334 it once again was worked by the same tenant, the former *castaldo* Benedicti.[119] Similarly the farm at Mausolea consistently switched between leasehold and direct demesne management well into the sixteenth century. Some structures were more stable however and the monastery

[119] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 117, cc. 123-43.

kept certain farms in demesne constantly into the sixteenth century, such as at Moggiona, where labour works were performed.[120]

VI. First contribution to wider debate. Demographic decline

The late Middle Ages, particularly after the Black Death, has been characterised as a period of population decline and prolonged stagnation. Indeed the Florentine *catasto* of 1427 may have reflected an all-time population nadir.[121] However in contrast to population decline and stagnation, my work which shows late medieval settlement concentration suggests that population figures in the Casentino were resilient during this period. Either the Black Death did not hit this region very hard (unlikely)[122], or that Casentinese society recovered very quickly from these disruptions and did not go into a long period of decline and stagnation.

It has been suggested that after the Black Death, Florence (although badly hit) experienced less of a population decline than the rural environs.[123] Rural people lost their land and fled to the city in great numbers, thus cancelling out the demographic hit of the Black Death in Florence, but at the same time creating a decimated rural landscape with the collapse of concentrated settlement structures and the abandonment of numerous plots.[124] This story has been sown into another tale of harsh fiscal oppression, Florentine territorial expansion and the dominion of the city over the countryside. Such events do not fit with my evidence from the Casentino Valley. By the 1427 *catasto* the area had been transformed into a landscape of

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[120] ASF, Camaldoli, no. 183, cc. 13.

[121] D. Herlihy, 'Population, plague and social change in rural Pistoia, 1201-1430', *EcHR*, 18 (1965), 225-44; *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia: the social history of an Italian town, 1200-1430* (New Haven 1967), 64-6; Herlihy & Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 60-92; E. Fiumi, 'La popolazione del territorio volterrano-sangimignanese ed il problema demografico dell'età comunale', in *Studi in onore di A. Fanfani* (Milan, 1962), 248-90; 'La demografia fiorentina nelle pagine di Giovanni Villani', *ASI*, 108 (1950), 78-158.

[122] See G. Cherubini, 'La carestia del 1346-7 nell'inventario dei beni di un monastero del contado aretino', in *Signori*, 503-20.

[123] C. de la Roncière, *Florence: centre économique régional au XIVe siècle,* ii (Aix-en-Provence, 1976), 656-8.

[124] D. Herlihy, 'Santa Maria Impruneta: a rural commune in the late Middle Ages', in Rubinstein (ed.), *Florentine studies*, 242-76; Conti, *I catasti*, iii, 78; L. Kotel'nikova, 'Tendenze progressive e regressive nello sviluppo socio-economico della Toscana nei secoli xiii-xv (campagna e città nella loro interdipendenza)', in A. Guarducci (ed.), *Sviluppo e sottosviluppo in Europa e fuori d'Europa dal secolo XIII alla rivoluzione industriale* (Florence, 1983), 124-7; G. Niccolini di Camugliano, 'A medieval Florentine, his family and his possessions', *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, 31.1 (1925), 16; C. Klapisch-Zuber & J. Day, 'Villages désertés en Italie', in R. Romano & P. Courbin (eds.), *Villages déserté et histoire économique, XIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1965), 419-59; C. Klapisch-Zuber, 'Villaggi abbandonati ed emigrazioni interne', *Storia d'Italia*, 5 (1973), 311-69.

concentrated settlements, and the *Regesto di Camaldoli* suggests that this process was in motion at least in the thirteenth century. There was no devastation of settlements here, and it did not suffer the same demographic crisis. Florentine taxation was harsh on the mountain regions further away from its core in comparison to its closer *contado*, but the notion of mass migration to the city as a result of impoverishment is dubious.[125] Rather than a countryside which was subordinate to Florence, the inhabitants of the Casentino exploited the city through its need for produce, as it is well-known that the people of Florence were struggling to feed themselves in the fourteenth century.[126] It is through this that settlement converged in local commercial centres. Similarly dubious is a view that rural notables, the well-to-do, and the skilled migrated in great numbers to Florence.[127] Within the market centres of Marciano, Poppi, Bibbiena Pratovecchio and Stia, local elites began to emerge through the increasing scale of their commercial ventures (particularly in leather and wool), and it was these improving economic fortunes which translated themselves into the monopoly of local political power later in the sixteenth century and beyond.

Instead of dismissing the notion of rural-urban migration entirely, I offer a three-tiered explanatory framework for the medieval Tuscan economy, which included the city of Florence, the nearby *contado*, and the distant *distretto*. In the twelfth century Florence was still the least important of all the major Tuscan cities. It was only in the thirteenth century that it grew in size and importance, which was linked to its structural reorganisation of the *contado*, and led to the migration of rural inhabitants into the city. Between 1175 and 1300 the rural *contado* only increased in

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[125] The same opinion in Cohn, *Creating;* 'Insurrezioni contadine e demografia: il mito della povertà nell montagne toscane (1348-1460)', *Studi Storici*, 36 (1995), 1023-49. The notion of a mass rural-urban migration is argued in W. Day, 'The population of Florence before the Black Death: survey and synthesis', *J. Med. Hist.*, 28.2 (2002), 93-129; C. de la Roncière, *Prix et salaires à Florence au XIVe siècle (1280-1380)* (Rome, 1987), 661-75.

[126] G. Pinto (ed.), *Il libro del biadaiolo: carestia e annona a Firenze della metà del '200 al 1348* (Florence, 1978), 78, 317; 'Firenze e la carestia del 1346-47: aspetti e problemi delle crisi annonarie alla metà del '300'', *ASI*, 130 (1972), 3-84; D. Compagni, *Dino Compagni e la sua cronica*, i ed. I. del Luogo (Florence, 1879), i; H. Lucas, 'The great European famine of 1315, 1316, and 1317', in E. Carus-Wilson (ed.) *Essays in economic history*, ii (London, 1962), 49-72; G. Villani, *Cronica*, ed. I. Moutier, v (Florence, 1826), 212; (vi), 5; (x), 118; G. Boccaccio, *Decameron* (trans. G. McWilliam, London, 1972), 50-8; M. Tangheroni, 'Di alcuni accordi commerciali tra Pisa e Firenze in material di cereali (1339-1347)', in *Studi in memoria di Federigo Melis*, ii (Naples, 1978), 211-20; de la Ronci□re, *Prix et salaries*, 628-38; L. Palermo, 'Carestie e cronisti nel trecento. Roma e Firenze nel racconto dell'Anonimo e di Giovanni Villani', *ASI*, 142 (1984), 343-75.

[127] View asserted in D. Osheim, 'Rural population and the Tuscan economy in the late Middle Ages', *Viator*, 7 (1976), 329-46; M. Daniel Nenci, 'Ricerce sull'immigrazione dal contado alla città di Firenze nella seconda metà del XIII secolo', *Studi e Ricerche*, 1 (1981), 139-77; J. Plesner, *L'émigration de la campagne à la ville libre de Florence au XIIIe siècle* (Copenhagen, 1934).

population by a ratio of two and a half, while the city of Florence went from around 10,000 inhabitants to 110,000, an increase of eleven-fold. Such an increase in population however, made the city more reliant on the importation of goods and produce.[128] To overcome this problem, Florence had to become more self-sufficient, and better equipped to feed itself. Most scholars have focused on the reorganisation of the *contado* through sharecropping and *poderi* in connection with this problem. Few have focused on the relationship between Florence and the regions outside the sharecropping zones that circle the city, such as the mountains of the Casentino. In response to increased demand from the city of Florence, the inhabitants of the Casentino were able to commercialise production, and plug themselves into urban and regional markets. The concentration of settlement in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was connected with demographic developments elsewhere – namely the rise of Florence and the simultaneous flight from the *contado*. Thus on the cusp of the late Middle Ages in Tuscany we can plot a *contado* whose inhabitants were increasingly migrating to Florence, a city whose need for food and products was ever increasing as a result of this rural-urban migration, and finally a *distretto* (for example the Casentino) which experienced some steady upturns in economic fortunes as a result of this heightened demand, and as demonstrated through settlement concentration around market centres, a stable or even increasing population. Hopefully I have added some nuance to a story of urban domination over the countryside which has been etched in stone into the historiography of medieval Tuscany by the likes of Epstein et al.[129]

VII. Second contribution to wider debate. *Mezzadria,* urban landowning and *appoderamento*

It has been argued that dispersed and isolated settlement in central Italy in the late

[128] For imports see G. Cherubini, *Scritti toscani: l'urbanesimo medievale e la mezzadria* (Florence, 1991), 201; G. Dahl, *Trade, trust, and networks: commercial culture in late medieval Italy* (Lund, 1998), 118-9; E. Hunt, *The medieval super-companies: a study of the Peruzzi company of Florence* (Cambridge, 1994), 44-57; P. Jones, 'Medieval agrarian society in its prime: Italy', in M. Postan & H. Habakkuk (eds.), *The Cambridge economic history. The agrarian life of the Middle Ages*, i (Cambridge, 1966), 384-5; G. Pinto, 'Coltura e produzione dei cereali in Toscana nei secoli XIII-XV', in *Civiltà ed economia agricola in Toscana dei secoli XIII-XV: problemi della vita delle campagne nel tardo medioevo* (Pistoia, 1981), 283; D. Abulafia, 'Southern Italy and the Florentine economy, 1265-1370', *EcHR*, 34 (1981), 377-88. Prices referred to in R. Goldthwaite, 'I prezzi del grano a Firenze dal XIV al XVI secolo', *Quaderni Storici*, 10 (1975), 5-36.

[129] Most important works are listed in S. Epstein, 'Cities, regions and the late medieval crisis: Sicily and Tuscany compared', *P&P*, 130 (1991), 3-50; 'Town and country: economy and institutions in late medieval Italy', *EcHR*, 46.3 (1993), 453-77.

medieval period was linked to *appoderamento*, and this process of land consolidation was stimulated by the proliferation of *mezzadria* encouraged by high levels of urban landownership, which in turn was stimulated by the need for urban residents to be self-sufficient in produce.[130] This story again emphasises urban dominance over the countryside, as urban investment reorganised and re-ordered the landscape and settlement structure.

My example of *appoderamento* in the Casentino goes against this idealised picture. Instead of urban landownership the *poderi* belonged to a large ecclesiastical institution (and lay aristocrats), and instead of *mezzadria* contracts, farms were leased out on (mostly) fixed-term arrangements. The *poderi* were not formed through urban rearrangement of land but were actually remnants of much older structures, relics from the direct management of agriculture. The late medieval *poderi* were actually subdivided *curtes*, granges and demesnes of the early and high Middle Ages.

Nonetheless how does my work on the Casentino help us on a general level? Could it be that the Casentino was simply an anomaly and different to the general pattern of processes evident in central Italy? I suggest not. First I want to get away from describing a general pattern of dispersed or concentrated settlement in central Italy in the period before the fourteenth century. Scholars have shown that Tuscany had a wide variety of settlement forms from the early Middle Ages: in some places concentrated villages and other places scattered farms.[131] Thus my work instead helps

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[130] See C. Klapisch-Zuber, 'Mezzadria e insediamenti rurali alla fine del medio evo', in *Civiltà*, 149-64; G. Cherubini, 'Qualche considerazione sulle campagne dell'Italia centro-settentrionale tra l'XI e il XV Secolo (in margine alle recherché di Elio Conti)', *Revista Storia Italiana*, 79 (1967), 111-57; C. de la Roncière, *Florence: centre économique régional du XIVe siècle*, iii (Aix-en-Provence, 1976), 793; G. Pinto, *La Toscana nel tardo medio evo: ambiente, economia rurale, società* (Florence, 1982), 161-2; L. Kotel'nikova, *Mondo contadino e città in Italia dall'XI al XIV secolo. Dalle fonti dell'Italia centrale e settentrionale* (Bologna, 1975); E. Sereni, *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano* (Bari, 1961), 139-40; G. Piccini, *'Seminare, fruttare, raccogliere': mezzadri e salariati sulle terre di Monte Oliveto Maggiore (1374-1430)* (Milan, 1982), chp 2; G. Cherubini & R. Francovich, 'Forme e vicende degli insediamenti nella campagna Toscana dei secc. XIII-XV', *Quaderni Storici*, 24 (1973), 873-903; R. Emigh 'Labor use and landlord control: sharecroppers' household structure in fifteenth-century tuscany', *J. Hist. Sociology*, 11 (1998), 37-73; J. Brown, 'The economic 'decline' of Tuscany: the role of the rural economy', in C. Smyth & G. Garfagnini (eds.), *Florence and Milan: comparisons and relations* (Florence, 1989), 103; Herlihy & Klapsich-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 117-9; I. Imberciadori (ed.), *Mezzadria classica Toscana con documentazione inedita dal IX al XIV sec.* (Florence, 1951); van Bavel, 'Markets for land', 520; S. Epstein, 'Tuscans and their farms', *Revista di Storia Economica*, 11 (1994), 111-23; 'Moral hazard and risk sharing in late medieval Tuscany', *Revista di Storia Economica*, 11 (1994), 131-7; F. Galassi, 'Tuscans and their farms: the economics of share tenancy in fifteenth century Florence', *Revista di Storia Economica*, 9 (1992), 77-94; 'Tuscans and their farms: a rejoinder', *Revista di Storia Economica*, 11 (1994), 124-30; R. Emigh, 'The spread of sharecropping in Tuscany: the political economy of transaction costs', *Amer. Sociological Rev.*, 62 (1997), 423-42.

[131] G. Pinto, *Campagne e paesaggi toscani del Medioevo* (Florence, 2002), 7-73; C. Wickham, *Comunità e clientele nella Toscana del XII secolo* (Rome, 1995), 232-3.

explain **how** settlements developed in medieval central Italy. Scholars recently have dismantled the *incastellamento* thesis by showing large parts of Tuscany already had concentrated hill-top villages as early as the seventh century.[132] *Incastellamento* merely added to an existing pattern of villages. It is through my work on the *poderi* of the Casentino that I wish to make a similar style of argument but dismantling the *mezzadria* thesis by showing that large parts of Tuscany already had isolated farm structures in place.[133] The reason why there are more isolated *poderi* in the 'classic sharecropping areas' around Florence has nothing to do with *mezzadria*, and can be explained simply by the fact that cultivation was more important here – far more important than in for example the Casentino. Sharecropping farms close to Florence were merely laid over the top of an existing pattern of irregularly shaped and distributed manorial demesnes, granges and *curtes* of a small size (*système dispersé*). Often these sites had a fortified character.[134] It seems that structural continuity was extremely high in Tuscany. The key to the organisation of settlement and agriculture in central Italy from the late Middle Ages through as far as the nineteenth century was not the story of rural subjection to urban power but actually rooted in structures inherited from the early Middle Ages. We must increasingly go back this far to explain more recent developments.

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[132] R. Francovich & R. Hodges, *Villa to village* (London, 2003), 61-74; R. Francovich, 'The beginnings of hilltop villages in early medieval Tuscany', in J. Davis & M. McCormick (eds.), *The long morning of medieval Europe: new directions in early medieval studies* (Aldershot, 2008), 55-82; 'Changing structures of settlements' in C. La Rocca (ed.), *Short Oxford history of Italy: Italy in the early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2002), 144-67; M. Valenti, *L'insediamento altomedievale delle campagne toscane* (Florence, 2004); C. Wickham, *Framing the early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), 514-8; M. Costambeys, 'Settlement, taxation, and the condition of the peasantry in post-Roman central Italy', *J. Agrarian Change*, 9.1 (2009), 102-7.

[133] Supported by independent research for northern Italy in R. Comba, 'La dispersione dell'habitat nell'Italia centro-settentrionale tra XII e XV secolo. Vent'anni di ricerche', *Studi Storici*, 25 (1984), 765-83; *Metamorfosi di un paesaggio rurale. Uomini e luoghi del Piemonti sud-occidentale dal X al XVI secolo* (Turin, 1983); 'Le origini medievali dell'assetto insediativo moderno nelle campagne italiane', in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, viii (Turin, 1985), 386; E. Occhipinti, *Il contado Milanese nel secolo XIII. L'amministrazione della proprietà fondiara del Monastero Maggiore* (Bologna, 1982), 229; A. Settia, 'Tra azienda agricola e fortezza: case forti, 'motte', e 'tombe' nell'Italia settentrrionale. Dati e problemi', *AM*, 7 (1980), 31-54.

[134] Supported elsewhere by G. Molteni, 'Il contratto di masseria in alcuni fondi milanesi durante il secolo XIII', *Studi Storici*, 22 (1914), 213-21; E. Saracco Previdi, 'Grange cistercensi nel territorio maceratese: insediamenti rurali monastici dei secoli XII e XIII', *Proposte e Ricerche*, 7.1 (1981), 16, 22; G. Sciolla, *L'arte a Trino e nel suo territorio* (Vercelli, 1977), 101-3; A. Settia, 'L'esportazione di un modello urbano: torri e case forti nelle campagne del nord Italia', *Società e Storia*, 12 (1981), 273-97; 'Lo sviluppo di un modello: origine e funzioni delle torri private urbane nell'Italia centro-settentrionale', in *Paesaggi urbani dell'Italia padana nei secoli VIII-XIV* (Bologna, 1988), 157-71.