



# Situating foodways and foodscapes

Dalla tavola al terreno

a cura di  
Roberta Cevasco  
Valentina Pescini  
Robert Hearn



*Giano Bifronte*

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è il marchio editoriale dell'Università di Genova



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*A Osvaldo Raggio (1951-2022)*





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**Foreward.**  
**The inextricably intertwining among gastronomy,  
landscape, and heritage**  
*Andrea Pieroni\**

What we call gastronomic sciences and studies is a complex umbrella of interconnected disciplines, which have their core in ‘what and how we eat’.

A crucial part of these studies is situated at the intersection between cultural heritage, geography, and ecology: in one word, foodscapes.

Foodscapes are therefore dynamic conglomerates that include the continuous coevolution of landscapes, actors, and biocultural processes linked to food ingredients, products, dishes, as well as their attached sociabilities.

This volume is the first comprehensive collection of contributions specifically dedicated to them and provides with very dense and inspiring chapters around this crucial concept that is at the very core of local food systems and also of every future sustainable food arena.

Local food, landscape, and heritage are interrelated and intertwined in a myriad of ways. The landscape shapes the type of crops, livestock, and wild food resources that can be acquired and the local heritage is the result of mutual interactions between the physical environment and its socio-cultural *òikos*: both influence what and how food is grown/collected/hunted/breeded, and how it’s prepared and consumed.

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The current volume includes prototypical case studies on human ecological, agricultural, and gastronomic practices and products that shape the landscape while also creating unique habitats for local wildlife and generating local foods and foodways.

Additionally, local food systems play a significant role in shaping complex socioecological systems, which in turn ‘generate’ specific food heritage (made by ingredients, products, dishes, and their processes, tools, and cooking techniques).

Moreover, the book wonderfully show how local food and heritage are often tied to the identity of a place and its people, what the ancient Romans called *genius loci*. Local foods provide a sense of place and belonging and serve as a way to keep the connections among local communities, their past, and their *òikos*.

The landscape and its local foods have been – especially in the two past decades – an extraordinarily source of pride for many areas of the globe and have served as a way to promote biocultural eco- and enogastronomic tourism.

This important contribution tells us that comprehensive historical ecological, geographical, and biocultural heritage-centred approaches are quintessential in the current discourse around gastronomic sciences and studies and that these complex intertwined components of foodscapes should be understood and treated holistically and especially helped to exercise their resilience for the challenges that the foodsystems are facing and will be faced with.

# **‘Situating foodways and foodscapes’.**

## **An introduction**

*Roberta Cevasco, Valentina Pescini, Robert Hearn\**

Foodways and foodscapes are intertwined in myriad ways and are central to multiple lifeworlds. Research into the diverse conceptual, theoretical and practical considerations that entangle food, space and place is innumerable in terms of the constituent disciplinary traditions (‘menus’), sources (‘ingredients’) and methodologies (‘recipes’)<sup>1</sup>.

However, much research has tended to flatten and simplify the intrinsically complex enmeshments that link foodways and foodscapes through the use of general and generalising ahistorical interpretative models that – moreover – often employ terminologies (‘identity’, ‘local’, ‘traditional’) that whilst easily ‘marketable’, readily comprehensible and seemingly suitable for the globalised industrial food systems are, in fact, of increasingly debatable or restricted utility when applied to a specific temporal and spatial context. In these ‘traditional’ and ‘local’ marketing operations, precisely what is intended to (re-)discover and (re-)enhance is instead lost. It is, therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> R. Feagan, *The place of food: mapping out the “local” in local food systems*, in «Progress in Human Geography», 31(1) (2007), pp. 23-42.

necessary to return and (re-)discuss the interpretative models, analytical methodologies, and associated terminologies in order to (re)place, (re-)localise, (re-)temporalise and (re-)spatialise ‘traditional’ local foods in their specific *‘liens au lieu’*<sup>2</sup>.

This book presents a different historical and environmental approach to the study of the links and relationships between foodways and foodscapes that is innovative to and in the rapidly ascending gastronomic sciences, underlining the importance of recognizing and re-inserting spatially and temporally specific environmental, social and cultural factors and values embedded in the study of local food heritage. The complexity of the *‘liens au lieu’* of local food productions – a relationship never ahistorical but made elastic by historical processes – is explored from by way of different but intersecting perspectives, spanning a broad remit of archaeological, cultural, ecological, political, and social approaches. Indeed, the sixteen case studies presented in this volume explores the multiple relationships existing between local foodscapes and their associated foodways drawing on a variety of different analytical tools and methodological approaches inspired by geographical-historical microanalysis, historical ecology, and the archaeology of environmental resources.

This volume is the result of long-lasting interdisciplinary collaborations between Università degli Studi di Genova, the University of Nottingham and Università di Scienze Gastronomiche di Pollenzo, co-producing research in the ‘common lands’ bridging geographical, historical and environmental studies applied to the characterization of local food heritage and their ‘individual’ landscapes. These investigations are motivated by the desire to study the practices of food production, the related eating habits and the local food landscapes – foodways and foodscapes, and in general the food systems – through a high-resolution spatial and temporal contextualization, perspectives

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<sup>2</sup> L. Bérard, P. Marchenay, *Les produits de terroir: Entre cultures et règlements*, CNRS Éditions, Paris 2004.

fundamental to a historical, geographical and environmental microanalysis. This microanalytic contextualization facilitates the exploration and recognition of the (im-)material relationships that have become deconstructed or rendered invisible over time, such as those between situated production practices, contextual knowledge and the historical ecologies of specific sites. The geographical stories that emerge from such an approach (re-)connect and (re-)situate foodways in their precise and particular individual and idiosyncratic foodscapes and their associated ecologies. It is the production and consumption practices of local foodways that have created the ecology of '*terroirs*' and individual rural landscapes over time and that are central components of the living heritage; inescapable (in)tangible cultural heritage.

However, in this new path emphasizing the historicizing processes that is here proposed, the theme of foodscapes does not appear without complications nor risks: in fact, human beings cannot be considered simple 'biotic factors' in the landscape or in the ecosystem, as currently it even assumes in the landscape ecology approach. The 'biotic factor' is not born out of social history: it is shaped and dominated by human history and action. In such a complex matter as developed by landscape ecology, it seems imperative that the gastronomic sciences seek to develop and clarify the very concept of local foodscape in a new and fully historical meaning, capitalising on the documentary possibilities recently offered by historical geography, historical ecology, and from the environmental resources archaeology.

As highlighted in several chapters of this book, the proposed historical approach differs greatly in terms of themes, method, and sources from the much of the 'conventional' histories of food – particularly those exploring food consumption – or gastronomy where the general modes of food consumption are modelled on the chronology and the action of general socio-economic histories and not on the observation of historical and environmental processes at the local, topographical, scale.

Furthermore, this volume also provides specific insights into the scientific discussion on the environmental impacts of food production

rediscovering and enhancing the quality of localized food production and the related positive environmental impacts (positive externalities) which should be taken into consideration in environmental policy and planning measures.

The historical and environmental characterization of the *'liens au lieu'* connects the different contributions presented in this book which are varied in terms of historical sources used. Archival documents, travel diaries and accounts, herbs, pollen spores, microcharcoals, historical cartographies, maps and photographs, recipe books, terraces, rural buildings, and oral histories are just some of the historical, geographical and archaeological traces of food heritages yet to be (re)discovered.

1. The contribution of Osvaldo Raggio (1951-2022) constitutes an important model of how a cultural micro-history of food, foodways and forms of sociality can be observed using specific archival sources. Raggio explores the private archives of some Genoese aristocratic families in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (*e.g.* Durazzo, Grimaldi, Pallavicini, Brignole Sale) providing detailed documentation on ceremonial food consumption and on the establishment of modern table manners (*manière de table*)<sup>3</sup>.

2. Valentina Pescini and Diego Moreno present an overview relating the archaeological study of food together with the main issues that food archaeologists have addressed in the last decades. At first, the authors highlight how archaeologists are very familiar with food, foodways, foodscapes and the relatives archaeological traces however noting how a specific research sector dealing with such a topic is still missing or

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<sup>3</sup> Osvaldo Raggio, to whom this volume is dedicated, wrote an important book on the Durazzo family: O. Raggio, *Storia di una passione. Cultura aristocratica e collezionismo alla fine dell'ancien régime*, Marsilio, Padova 2000, as well as on the history of rural society in *ancien régime* Liguria: O. Raggio, *Feuds and State Formation 1550-1700. The Backcountry of the Republic of Genoa*, Palgrave Macmillan, Londra 2019.



struggles to emerge clearly. The interpretative models, descriptive categories and analytical tools employed by archaeologists are presented and exemplified. Secondly a peculiar case study is presented dealing with the characterisation of the historical dynamics that affected the spatial distribution of habitats and herbs populations employed in disappearing food-gathering practices: the '*Gatafin*'. The tools of Environmental Archaeology and the approaches of Historical Ecology has been used and discussed: in this perspective the environmental effects/ externalities (activation) of localised food production and consumption practices become the center of the archaeological analysis and observable in unconventional archaeological sites (off-sites).

3. Reaching back into classical antiquity, Emlyn Dodd's chapter focusses on the extant archaeological evidence in illuminating the production of wine, the dominant beverage in Italian antiquity, the archaeological approach supplemented by contemporary ancient texts, including some, most importantly Cato the Elder, Pliny the Elder and Varro, from the Italian peninsular itself. Exploring archaeometric techniques, including geophysical and chemical analyses alongside traditional methods of survey and excavation, this contribution examines an area of the Italian peninsular during the Early Roman period to Late Antiquity (c. 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE to 600 CE), such temporal and geographical confines enabling the discussion of winemaking and its use for both domestic and export markets, tracing periods of prosperity and decline, on various scales and for a range of sociocultural groups, strata and purposes.

4. Antonella Campanini's contribution is part of the many studies she has dedicated to food as cultural heritage. In this case she proposes a critical analysis of some literary sources to explore the meaning of the localisation of food and gastronomic products (and their commercialisation), favoring the relationship between a single text and literary tradition with respect to the local genesis of arguments and gastrotoponyms. A sort of pleasant journey is carried out between the late Middle

Ages and the early Modern Age in regional and citizen gastrotoponyms linking food quality products to the places of production, in times still distant from marketing, to identify the changing meaning that gastrotoponyms acquire and the possible pitfalls connected to their use.

5. Practices of food consumption and sociality between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries are discussed in Giacomo Nervi's chapter, observing a context ideally distant from the aristocratic, worldly Genoese one: the Certosa di San Pietro in Varatella di Toirano (Savona). The contribution proposes a very interesting approach to monastic accounting in the Modern Age, based on the systematic examination of some documentary funds from the Ligurian archives. The author highlights the great variety of individual practices, eating habits as well as the quantity and quality of the products consumed (among which olive oil stands out). What emerges is the impossibility of identifying a codified local (traditional) 'Carthusian foodway'. The monastery's food and foodways change over time, intersecting with increasingly complex food supply chains, often extraneous to the local reality.

6. The chapter by Claudia Vaccarezza, Anna Stagno and Caterina Piu combines, geographical-historical sciences, applied natural sciences and archaeology with a microanalytical approach to reconstruct the history of two distinctive cultural landscapes of the Gulf of Tigulio hinterland (Genoa): the terraced hazelnut groves and the irrigated terraced chestnut groves, already included in the National Catalogue of the Historic Rural Landscapes. The studies highlight the complex relationships linking the food products to the systems of management of the environmental resources, included the 18<sup>th</sup> century long history of conflicts for the irrigation of chestnut groves in the Sturla valley. The problem of conservation and transmission of this rural and environmental heritage is discussed through the different local micro-institution involved in recent valorisation projects and actions on a local and regional scale.

7. Nicola Gabellieri and Daniele Tinterri, in their contribution on the Val Bisagno area (Genoa, Italy), propose a critical analysis of documentary and cartographic sources originated by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century conflicts for the control of the water supply related to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century expansion of the Genoese public aqueduct in the higher Bisagno valley. It is thanks to these conflicts between various social actors, in particular the owners of the Genoese large estates villas in the lower Bisagno valley and the peasants of the higher valley, that it is possible to shed light, with details of great interest, on the 18<sup>th</sup> century systems of local production (and their individual landscapes) such as the system of orchards and vegetable gardens (*orti di villa*) in the lower valley and the irrigation system used mainly for chestnut trees and terraces cultivated with beans in the upper valley.

8. Drawing on extensive research into topographical art in northwest Italy, Pietro Piana, Charles Watkins and Ross Balzaretto chapter combines scrutiny of drawings and paintings by travellers and visitors made when visiting Italy together with their written accounts, exemplifying how such sources can provide useful insights to the history of viticulture and their styles of cultivation in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This richly illustrated contribution provides clear evidence that viticulture was widespread, including in places where it is now less common, the sources moreover creating expectations of what Italian viticulture was meant to look like, the ‘wild’ nature of Italian viticulture and the ‘picturesque’ nature of all the festooned vines helping to shape ideas that Italy was an exotic and romantic land, which helped in turn to attract readers for travel writing.

9. Rebekka Dossche’s study of the historical rural landscapes of the Val Borbera (Piedmont, Italy) explores the position and prominence of practices of apiculture, beekeeping and honey production in the context of intensive agro-silvo-pastoral systems in this area of northwest Italy, characterized by a high balance between human management, restrictive

environmental conditions and biological diversity. Such landscape moreover underwent destabilizations as large areas of land were abandoned and depopulated since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and converted from productive rural areas to those of remote low-fertility. Drawing on a combination of evidence gleaned from archival documentation and other written sources and thereafter contextualized in later oral sources, historical cartography and aerial photography, this interdisciplinary and multisource chapter discusses the temporal and spatial evolution of apiculture, beekeeping and the production from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the modern day in a specific case study area, highlighting the significance of these practices and their productions as valuable indicators of bio-cultural diversity and heritage in these parts of the northwest Italian Apennines, and indeed elsewhere across Europe.

10. Rebecca Ford's chapter presents the particular case of watercress in 19<sup>th</sup> century England, drawing on a rich combination of written and visual historical sources in local histories, professional and hobbyist agricultural and botanical journals, and newspapers. Presenting a microhistorical study of the Springhead watercress plantation on the outskirts of London, this chapter discusses the role played by watercress in the contemporary life of that city, its associations with an idealised countryside, and the symbolic space it held in the imagination. Discussing urban-rural contrasts in the depiction of cress, and of its gatherers, producers and sellers, Ford's contribution shows that over time, watercress became perceptually dislocated from the places where it was grown and became intertwined with the city of London, elucidating on why, in the Victorian era, there might have been a consumer desire to re-localise this leafy food, embedding it back in the countryside. Thereafter examining the emergence of the Springhead plantation as a visitor attraction and performative space, and how it was promoted in ways that echoed idealised imaginings of the cultures of cress, this chapter exemplifies the intricacies and fruitfulness of high resolution studies in local foods and foodways.

11. The historical geography of a peculiar foodscape emerges from the contribution of Carlo Gemignani and Luisa Rossi who reconstruct through iconographic and documentary sources the history of mussel farming in the Gulf of Spezia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the 'marine' of Canaletto and Fossamastra. The authors show us how a production considered traditional today was actually born in a precise context from the encounter between a brilliant entrepreneur, a scientist and a favorable localization. Even the relations between this production system and the employed vegetable resources are seen by the authors in terms of 'activation': of the chestnut coppices reaching the sea level that provided the wood for the poles of these sea vineyards, and of the wetlands of the *Stagnoni*, vanished during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the marsh grasses used for the ropes were collected.

12. Roberta Cevasco and Raffaella Bruzzone discuss Giuseppina Poggi's paper on the *Prebugiun*, a set of a dozen spontaneous herbs in the Recco valley (1997), and a subsequent work carried out in the same valley by Sabrina Bertolotto and Roberta Cevasco within the «Conservatory of Mediterranean Cuisine» project (1999), to underline a potential new interest for the gastronomic sciences/cultures of the (micro) historical perspective to the site ecology. The *prebugiun* gathering sites and practices of the Recco valley are relocated in the wider geographical-historical unit of the '*Montagna di Fascia*', whose 'ancient grasslands' are revisited as part of a historical foodscape and transhumant pastoral space. The historical ecology of the sites is reconstructed also thanks to 19<sup>th</sup> century herbal sources. The complexity of the local food systems, once historically re-situated, testifies to other models of environmental resource management, whose sustainability can be historically assessed (biodiversification processes) and put into play for the management of these foodscapes.

13. Between 'domestic' and 'wild', the herbs of the *Prebugiun* are at the center of Giuseppina Poggi's contribution published in 1997 and here

reproposed. Giuseppina Poggi, combining ethnobotanical and historical approach to interpret the current site vegetation cover, documents a complex production system in the family farm of Arbora (Genoa, Italy) which include around 12 seasonal practices of collection, mowing, pruning, etc. The collection of *prebugiun* is just one of the practices documented in the site. But the most relevant aspect is that the system has ‘activation’ effects on the local environmental resources, resulting in the site and slope peculiar ecology and rich biodiversity.

14. In the debate on the ‘global’ dimension of food history, Balzaretti’s study of the discussion and depiction of Ligurian ‘peasant’ cooking – or ‘*cibo povero*’ – in English travel books from *c.* 1840 to *c.* 1914, illustrates a hitherto underexplored dimension of these myriad works, highlighting the vitality of the writers’ descriptions of quotidian life of the Genoese. Whilst these commentators certainly divulged on the lives and traditions of the Ligurian ‘elite’ classes, these sources are moreover highly valuable sources detailing the lives of Italian peasants as ethnographic subjects, the food cultures cultivated often by necessity and hardship increasingly regarded as the true spirit and essence of quintessentially Ligurian cuisines, celebrated and conserved as the genuine gastronomic cultural heritage of this northwest Italian region.

15. Robert Hearn’s chapter on ‘*la cultura del cinghiale*’ presents a critical re-examination of oral histories conducted over a decade ago in the upper Vara valley in the northwest Italian region of Liguria. Whilst the use of insights into the histories and geographies of animals derived from oral testimonies and qualitative fieldwork interviews has been the subject of some deliberation in species history and (historical) animal geography research, the chapter explores the vitality of such methodological approaches in discussing the histories and geographies of wild boar in the gastronomy of this specific valley, the species (inter-) ruptured presence in the area and hybrid biologies problematising the animals’ meats’ perception as a ‘traditional’ and ‘local’ food.

16. Finally, Don Sandro Lagomarsini, Parish priest and curator of the Museo Contadino di Cassego in the same valley, invites, in his short contribution, to a history of food in the ‘Land of Varese Ligure’ starting from the «*Relazione*» by Antonio Cesena (1558 ) and by investigating family and parish registers. The attention to local productions and practices and micro phenomena opens up to reflections that concern wider, regional and national scales. The example of the chestnut tree is significant: the development that the chestnut grove has from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century onwards in almost all the hamlets of Varese Ligure, largely replacing the Turkey oak, is linked to the importance of the nutritional contribution of chestnut flour and can be connected to the rejection of wheat cultivation by the mountains of Varese, as well as by the entire Italian mountain, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, despite the pressures of agricultural economists. The food resources of the valley, including hunting and fishing products, represent a solid basis for resistance also to recurring epidemics. All these historical ties redesign the ‘land of Varese’ as an individual foodscape.





## Invito a nozze. Condivisione e competizione

Oswaldo Raggio\*

Il cibo è forse l'elemento più centrale e universale della storia degli uomini e delle società, dalla preistoria del *'big game'* ai fast food<sup>1</sup>. Il tema centrale in una prospettiva di storia sociale e culturale è la condivisione. Per le élites e i gruppi sociali privilegiati anche la distinzione attraverso il consumo cospicuo, la quantità e la qualità. Alla scala europea, tra il XV e il XVIII secolo, la nobiltà è il gruppo sociale che ha consumato in una misura mai più eguagliata in seguito, e ha costruito con le pratiche di consumo e della convivialità una nuova cultura materiale e sociale, e forse ha anche in parte forgiato l'individuo moderno.

Al centro di questo saggio ci sono i diversi banchetti organizzati dai nobili genovesi in occasione di uno scambio matrimoniale o dell'incoronazione di un doge; le cene a teatro e i pranzi in villa in Albaro, Polcevera, Cornigliano, Voltri, Pegli, nella lunga stagione della villeggiatura; i pranzi offerti agli ospiti stranieri; i convivi nelle sale di conversazione nei palazzi di città o in villa. Proverò a entrare all'interno di questi spazi per condividere (o non condividere) le virtù conviviali dei nobili

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<sup>1</sup> M. Jones, *Il pranzo della festa. Una storia dell'alimentazione in undici banchetti*, Milano 2009; F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Storia del cibo*, Milano 2012.

genovesi nel '700. I banchetti nuziali, le cene a teatro, i pranzi in villa definivano infatti le occasioni e gli spazi della condivisione del cibo e della socialità. I temi centrali sono quelli della cultura materiale e della cultura sociale, con l'idea che la cultura sociale è creata dalla cultura materiale (in questo caso, il cibo e gli spazi di condivisione del cibo).

1. La virtù conviviale – mangiare insieme – era stata celebrata dagli umanisti a partire dal '400, in un ambito di elaborazione che era definito da una parte dal rapporto con i classici e con l'etica degli antichi (Aristotele, Cicerone, Seneca) e dall'altra dagli ambienti di corte. Gli esempi più noti sono il trattato di Giovanni Pontano sulla *Virtù conviviale* (*De conviventia*) e *Il libro del Cortegiano* di Baldassarre Castiglione. In Pontano, la *conviventia*, la virtù e l'arte del saper vivere a tavola, è una forma del saper vivere moralmente e riguarda non solo il consumo del cibo in compagnia, ma anche i rapporti interpersonali e le forme della comunicazione<sup>2</sup>. Norbert Elias, nella *Civiltà delle buone maniere*, ha ricostruito la parabola della civiltà conviviale, il comportamento a tavola, tra XIII e XVIII secolo. Tra XVI e XVIII secolo, le trasformazioni dei comportamenti sono legate a un gruppo sociale ristretto (la nobiltà, una parte della nobiltà). E in questo lungo periodo c'è stata un'intensa elaborazione delle tecniche del consumo e in particolare delle regole da usare a tavola e delle forme di socialità conviviale. I trattati normativi consentono di ricostruire evoluzione e discontinuità di comportamenti sociali elaborati dalle società di corte, fatti propri dalla nobiltà e più tardi assimilati dalla borghesia e da altri strati sociali, tra costrizione esterna e interiorizzazione, tra sociogenesi e psicogenesi, sempre comunque in spazi densi di interazione sociale e di interdipendenza. Non c'è nulla di naturale o spontaneo nei comportamenti a tavola, nell'uso della forchetta, del cucchiaino, del tovagliolo, o nell'uso di diversi tipi di coltello (per la carne, per il pesce, per i dolci), o nel

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<sup>2</sup>G. Pontano, *I libri delle virtù sociali*, a cura di F. Tateo, Roma 1999.

considerare ripugnante lo scalco di una bestia a tavola, prendere il cibo con le mani o sputare nel piatto<sup>3</sup>.

Il mio interesse di ricerca è per le relazioni tra condivisione del cibo e forme della socialità, ovvero per le pratiche sociali dell'aristocrazia genovese nel '700, con al centro il cibo e le bevande, e un rito di passaggio fondamentale, il matrimonio. La base documentaria è costituita dagli archivi privati di alcune famiglie: Durazzo, Grimaldi, Pallavicini, Brignole Sale. Il tema è dunque conviti nuziali e altre occasioni conviviali. In conclusione dirò anche qualcosa sulle connessioni tra la cultura materiale e sociale del cibo e l'agricoltura di villa nel Genovesato: dalla produzione al consumo.

Il fuoco è sul '700, ma un riferimento sintetico introduttivo a una fonte cinquecentesca mi servirà per sottolineare il cambiamento della cultura sociale dei nobili genovesi in età moderna.

2. La fonte è il diario di Giulio Pallavicino degli anni 1583-1589<sup>4</sup>. Giulio Pallavicino documenta l'articolazione dei banchetti nuziali tra feste private e pubbliche, balli e veglie il giorno e la sera, veglie generali su tre-quattro giorni; tra socialità privata e socialità pubblica. Forme di socialità che in qualche caso si mescolano e che acquistano caratteri particolari col Carnevale, i tornei, le giostre. Tutte occasioni di socialità che nel '500 sono occasione frequente di litigi e violenze. E infatti Giulio Pallavicino annotava se banchetti e balli si erano svolti «con quiete», con «quiete grandissima», o se invece erano seguite questioni e si erano cavate le armi. Dei conviti nuziali Pallavicino ci dice la solennità e il concorso o meno di giovani e dame («la schiera delle belle»); se le porte erano aperte o serrate, se parte dei invitati erano in maschera, se il banchetto era ornato. Pallavicino non annota i cibi consumati, ma ricorda una cinquantina di banchetti nuziali e veglie

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<sup>3</sup> N. Elias, *La civiltà delle buone maniere*, Bologna 2009.

<sup>4</sup> E. Grendi (a cura di), *Invenzione di Giulio Pallavicino di scrivere tutte le cose accadute alli tempi suoi (1583-1589)*, Genova 1975.

tra il 1583 e il 1589; ci dice della tipologia di banchetti e del numero di invitati: un numero variabile tra 30 e 160 persone. Pallavicino conferma le articolazioni dello scambio matrimoniale in più fasi tra sponsali e matrimonio, a cui corrispondono altrettanti banchetti: i banchetti dei parenti, il banchetto offerto dallo sposo al momento della *traductio* della sposa, ovvero il momento culminante e più ritualizzato dello scambio, l'«atto del matrimonio» con l'incorporazione della sposa nella casa e nel parentado dello sposo. Il 9 giugno 1583 Gio. Cesare Lomellino invita «la sua sposa a un banchetto con 58 persone molto sontuoso [...] la sposa è portata in cadrega e accompagnata da molti gentiluomini»; lo stesso giorno Battista Lomellino offre un nuovo banchetto quasi alle stesse persone. Domenica 29 aprile 1584, «Giulio Sale condusse la sua sposa a casa con gran solennità con pasto de 160 persone si ballò tutto il giorno». Ma si può dare anche il caso opposto: mercoledì 25 gennaio, «Placidia Imperiale ha invitato il suo sposo a disnare seco, il quale ha fatto l'atto di matrimonio». Le forme diverse di *traductio* della sposa sono contenute in una cronaca di tre giornate di febbraio 1586. Domenica 2: «Giacomo Maria Spinola condusse questa sera la sua sposa a casa, con non altra cerimonia di 12 loro parenti, l'accompagnorno a una hora di notte; il giorno poi fece un bellissimo banchetto», e «Francesco Grimaldo ha condotto la sua sposa a casa e il giorno poi fece un banchetto di 70 persone»; martedì 4: «Fabio Squarciafico ha condotto la sua sposa a casa a hore 4, accompagnata da sei soi parenti», e il giorno successivo «fece un bellissimo banchetto a 55 persone e vi fu bellissima veglia tutta la sera sino alle 5 hore». Altre varianti in quattro esempi: il 16 febbraio 1585, Carlo Spinola Recardino «essendo venuta la sua dispensa ha fatto questa sera l'atto del matrimonio, e il padre della sposa diede un pasto a 40 persone ma non vi fu festa alcuna perché tennero le porte serrate senza voler aprire ad alcuno», un caso di convivio privato, a porte serrate, forse dettato dalla stretta endogamia dello scambio matrimoniale per il quale lo Spinola aveva avuto la dispensa. Due giorni dopo, Gio. Giorgio Marino «condusse [...] la sua sposa a casa accompagnata da 16 Gentil'huomini parte parenti del sposo e parte della sposa. Fece un pasto a 70 persone e alla sera poi vi fu un quietissimo ballo e veglia ornata

di bellissime Dame e vi fu diverse maschere ornate [in due compagnie di dame, seguono i nomi]». In questo caso un convivio solenne e aperto; la veglia comunque segue sempre al banchetto e ha un carattere più aperto, pubblico<sup>5</sup>. Lunedì 13 gennaio 1586, Maddalena Lomellini offre un sontuoso banchetto a 70 persone, «in vero il banchetto il più bello e più ornato che si sia veduto d'anni in qua, vi era sei spose con altre bellissime Dame, vi si ballò tutto il giorno e sera sino alle cinque hore». Pochi giorni dopo, Nicolò Imperiale offre un bellissimo banchetto di 40 persone alla sposa del nipote, «con grandissimo concorso di dame e maschere, vi seguì un poco di costione fra Giulio Doria e Francesco Spinola, del spingersi si cavò l'arme, ma non vi fu alcun male e si andò poi appresso al ballar». In un matrimonio autunnale in villa a Multedo, nel 1589, il banchetto è offerto a Gio. Tomaso Oliva dalla madre con invito a 76 persone e ballo aperto ai giovani. Il giorno dopo Gio. Tomaso riceve la benedizione, «e dormì poi la sera con la sposa, e ruppe le prime lancie». La cronaca di Pallavicino è un'etnografia dei processi di scambio e alleanza tra le famiglie della nobiltà genovese, con la visibilità pubblica dei cortei o parate per la *traductio* della sposa e soprattutto dei banchetti. Gli elementi centrali sono le dimensioni del gruppo (il numero di invitati e tra essi le dame), il livello di competizione socio-politica, il carattere aperto o chiuso del convivio, la durata, l'idea di 'ornato' e sullo sfondo forse l'idea di consumo ostentativo, anche se Giulio Pallavicino non descrive mai l'arredo, i cibi e le bevande consumati nei banchetti.

3. Una parte di questi dati sono confermati dalla documentazione settecentesca, ma nel '700 i conviti sembrano ormai deprivati della violenza che attraversava e segnava la vita sociale della città nel '500. A giudizio di Edoardo Grendi, nel mondo dell'aristocrazia la cultura dell'onore

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<sup>5</sup> Sulle veglie generali o *tempi megli* qualche annotazione moralistica in L.T. Belgrano, *Della vita privata dei genovesi*, Genova, Istituto Sordo-muti 1875, cap. LXXVIII.

che nel '500 si concretava soprattutto nei tornei o nelle battaglie del Carnevale, ha lasciato il posto alla conversazione, il teatro, la musica in nuovi spazi di intercorso sociale. Le nuove forme della *civilitas* e delle buone maniere hanno preso il posto di giostre, disfide, imprese e tornei, battaglie di Carnevale con le arance. È l'indizio della trasformazione della cultura sociale della nobiltà<sup>6</sup>.

Cominceremo dai nuovi spazi della convivialità per poi arrivare ai banchetti nuziali. Nella documentazione settecentesca il cibo occupa un posto centrale. Il tema del cibo è stato al centro di molte ricerche storiche, sociologiche, antropologiche e archeologiche dalla metà degli anni Settanta.

I percorsi disciplinari sono diversi, così come le categorie interpretative; ma il dialogo è possibile perché, come ha annotato Arjun Appadurai il cibo è «a highly condensed social fact», che include appropriazione della natura, produzione, tecnologie, scambi commerciali, mercati<sup>7</sup>. E così per esempio gli archeologi hanno studiato i resti dei banchetti seguendo i percorsi tracciati da antropologi e sociologi (Appadurai, Elias, Douglas)<sup>8</sup>. Si può fare la stessa cosa lavorando sulle fonti scritte settecentesche conservate negli archivi privati delle famiglie nobili genovesi che organizzavano i banchetti.

Cibo e socialità: ma quali cibi? Cibi diversi o preparati e addobbati in modi diversi in occasioni diverse? Proviamo a rispondere ad alcune di queste domande.

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<sup>6</sup> Si veda l'introduzione a *Invenzione*, e anche *Ipotesi per lo studio della socialità nobiliare genovese in età moderna*, in «Quaderni storici», 102 (1999), pp. 733-747.

<sup>7</sup> A. Appadurai, *Gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia*, in «American Ethnologist», 8 (1981), pp. 494-511.

<sup>8</sup> Sulla ricerca archeologica e antropologica si veda S. Pollock (a cura di), *Between Feasts and Daily Meals. Towards an Archaeology of Commensal Spaces*, Berlin 2015; S.W. Mintz, C.M. Du Bois, *The Anthropology of Food and Eating*, in «Annual Review of Anthropology», 31 (2002), pp. 99-119.

4. La cosa forse più interessante è che i conti di spesa per la preparazione dei banchetti sono individualizzati, senza differenze di genere ma con riferimento a spazi sociali diversi. Per le giovani dame, i conti personali sono la traccia della costruzione del sé nella famiglia e nelle relazioni sociali più ampie. Tra le spese personali di Teresa Grimaldi a fine '600 c'è il cacao, il maestro di ballo, «la mia parte alla festa di ballo in San Pier d'Arena», e «la mia parte al pranzo fatto all'osteria di Caminà». Laura Spinola, moglie di Francesco Grimaldi, registra negli stessi anni le spese per il cioccolato e per i «passatempi» e le feste<sup>9</sup>. Nel 1788, Maria Benedetta Grimaldi registra le spese per sorbetti e gelati (pesche e uova, caffè, latte)<sup>10</sup>.

Alcune cene a teatro sono organizzate dalle nobildonne e la documentazione sta sotto la voce spese personali: spese personali e domestiche per i cibi, le bevande e i fiori con una evidente individualizzazione del gusto. Vediamo alcuni esempi, e così arriviamo finalmente ai cibi. Le spese per le cene organizzate da Teresa Durazzo tra il 1779 e il 1780 al teatro di Sant'Agostino, nei mesi di gennaio e febbraio (cinque cene), ammontano a 283 lire<sup>11</sup>:

\*zuppa e fideli, galletto alla storiona [galletto cucinato con erbe aromatiche], pasticcio di vitella, capponi arrosto con tordi, carciofi e cavolfiore, composta, pane, frutta e dolce;

\*ravioli, arrosto di galletto e tordi, piatto freddo, pasticcio d'anatra, pollastre, insalata cotta, pane, composta, frutta;

\*zuppa, arrosto di pernici e tordi, pasticcio di vitella, carciofi e insalata, pane, composta, frutta; zuppa, pasticcio di vitella, arrosto di pernici, pollastre, galletto alla storiona, cavolfiore, pane, composta, frutta, pan di Spagna;

\*zuppa, pasticcio di polenta, arrosto di beccaccia, pernici, tordi e pollastri, pasticcio freddo, insalata, pane, composta, gelo di latte, frutta.

<sup>9</sup> Archivi Pallavicini (d'ora in poi AP), *Grimaldi Rezzo* 9.

<sup>10</sup> AP, *Grimaldi Oliva* 209 (8 agosto 1788).

<sup>11</sup> Archivio Durazzo (d'ora in poi AD), *Conti di scrittura* 446/242.

Sono cene a teatro e cene della stagione invernale. La carne è quella dei vitelli allevati nel Genovesato e dei vitelli piemontesi. Ma la maggior parte degli ingredienti vengono dalle attività venatorie e dall'orticoltura di villa. Tornerò in conclusione su questo punto.

Mary Douglas, in *Deciphering a Meal*, ci ha insegnato a mettere in relazione tra di loro le diverse occasioni conviviali nell'arco del tempo quotidiano, settimanale, stagionale, e con riferimento al ciclo di vita e ai riti di passaggio<sup>12</sup>. I conti di spesa dei nobili genovesi, e specialmente i conti giornalieri, consentono di ricostruire le spese per l'alimentazione quotidiana e i consumi domestici; ma i casi che sono al centro di questo saggio riguardano sempre banchetti, conviti, pranzi sontuosi (*feast/feasting* nella letteratura antropologica e archeologica)<sup>13</sup>, condivisione di cibi e bevande tra riti di passaggio, socialità e competizione politica. Nel Settecento possiamo collocare i banchetti nuziali in un continuum, in spazi diversi, che va dalla conversazione (le sale di conversazione in città o in villa) ai banchetti per l'elezione dei dogi.

5. Una sontuosa cena nella casa di Gio. Carlo Pallavicini nel luglio 1756 costa 500 lire e include oltre le carni (manzo e galline per brodi, filetti, vitella, fegato, pollastri, anatre e piccioni), prosciutti, pesci, molluschi (ostriche e datteri) e crostacei, un dessert di sorbetti, gelati al latte, al cioccolato e al caffè, gelati di frutta o marmellate di frutta (cedri, limoni, arance, limoncello, amarene), mandorle e pistacchi. Nei conti di spesa anche la minestra, la vitella e il pane per i servi. È un pranzo estivo, con una straordinaria profusione di sorbetti e gelati, e

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<sup>12</sup> M. Douglas, *Deciphering a Meal*, in «Daedalus», 101 (1972), pp. 61-82.

<sup>13</sup> Si vedano i lavori di Michael Dietler e Brian Hayden, con presentazione e discussione di diverse prospettive teoriche e metodologiche: M. Dietler and B. Hayden (eds.), *Feasts. Archaeological and ethnographic perspectives on food, politics and power*, Washington DC, 2001. Cfr. anche T.L. Bray (ed.), *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires*, New York 2002.



grandi quantità di zucchero: lo zucchero addolcisce e decora, dà forma e piacere visivo nelle sculture e nei trionfi. E sorbetti e gelati erano fatti con i frutti dei giardini e degli orti di villa, e con la neve delle neviere appenniniche (una voce ricorrente nei conti di spesa)<sup>14</sup>. Molti ingredienti della cena estiva di Gio. Carlo Pallavicini sono consumati anche in un pranzo dogale nell'inverno del 1753: zucchero, mandorle, pinoli, composte, cedri canditi, arance, limoni, e neve. Anche in questo caso, i frutti sono quelli dei giardini Grimaldi: un conto dello stesso anno dei frutti venduti dai Grimaldi elenca arance, limoni, cedri, bergamotti<sup>15</sup>.

I sorbetti e le limonate, insieme con l'orzata, erano anche il nutrimento e le bevande della conversazione (in città e in villa) e nei giardini in estate, erano per l'appunto il nutrimento della *civilitas*, il segno della sobrietà e della temperanza nella conversazione e nell'intrattenimento (come il tè?)<sup>16</sup>. Uno splendido esempio figurativo è un quadro di Alessandro Magnasco, 1740 ca., forse su committenza dei marchesi Saluzzo (Fig. 1) e che ripete un tema già in un dipinto di Magnasco di cinque anni prima a Parigi (Fig. 2).

Nelle nuove forme della socialità i frutti dei giardini e degli orti hanno un significato perspicuo, così come i fiori: i fiori d'arancio, i fiori dei cedri e dei bergamotti particolarmente apprezzati per i profumi, e i fiori recisi che sono presenti in tutti i conti di spesa per i banchetti matrimoniali.

Le nuove forme della *civilitas*, in parte su modelli francesi importati a partire dalla fine del '600 e in particolare dagli anni Trenta-Quaranta del

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<sup>14</sup> La neve era conservata in città e in villa nelle ghiacciaie rivestite di porcellana, e c'era una gabella della neve (ovviamente la neve non era utilizzata solo per fare sorbetti e gelati): A.M. Stagno, *Un esercizio di contestualizzazione del patrimonio rurale: le neviere del Monte Antola e il commercio della neve a Genova (XVII-XXI secolo)*, in A.M. Stagno *Gli spazi dell'archeologia rurale*, Firenze 2018, pp. 141-167.

<sup>15</sup> AP, *Grimaldi Granada* 43.

<sup>16</sup> Grendi, *Ipotesi per lo studio della socialità nobiliare genovese* cit.



Fig. 1 Uno spazio conviviale su una terrazza con sullo sfondo gli orti. Alessandro Magnasco, *Trattenimento in un giardino di Albaro*, (1740 circa), particolare; olio su tela, 86,3 x 198 cm. Genova, Palazzo Bianco



Fig. 2 Alessandro Magnasco, *Banquet nuptial de Bohémiens* (1730-1735); olio su tela, 86 x 118 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre

'700<sup>17</sup>, sono pure documentate dai registri di conto e dai conti di spesa personali: i trattati sulla *civilté* e le opere di Corneille e Racine nelle biblioteche, le spese per i maestri di musica e ballo per le figlie, ma anche le spese personali per le gite, i bagni termali, e il barcheggio con le colazioni in mare<sup>18</sup>. Sono i materiali e le esperienze dell'educazione, della nuova formazione culturale e sociale, e delle discontinuità del gusto e della sensibilità.

La temperanza lasciava il posto alla magnificenza nell'allestimento dei banchetti ufficiali. Il decoro e l'ornato sono una delle voci di spesa (in tutto 6.864 lire) più rilevanti per l'incoronazione di Gio. Carlo Pallavicini nel 1786. I trionfi sono disegnati da Santino Tagliafichi, e tra le voci di spesa ci sono anche il lavoro dei falegnami, dei fabbri, degli indoratori per montare i trionfi e il conto di un fioraio per la «provvista di erbe verdi»<sup>19</sup>. I trionfi erano anche al centro del banchetto dato per l'incoronazione di Gio. Francesco Brignole Sale nel 1746. I dolci sono acquistati da un pasticciere. Un banchetto a palazzo del doge Ridolfo Brignole Sale è documentato dal conto di Gio. Batta Parodi, un imprenditore della ristorazione nobiliare capace di fornire tutto il necessario dalle tovaglie alle stoviglie ai panni per lucidare gli argenti, e attraverso altri fornitori i cibi e le bevande<sup>20</sup>.

6. I banchetti nuziali e le veglie conservano però un significato centrale. Nei banchetti nuziali i confini tra privato e pubblico sono estremamente sfumati e porosi: il matrimonio è uno scambio tra famiglie e parenti ed è accuratamente scrutinato, rivela solidarietà, suscita invidie, rivalità, sollecita giudizi morali. I banchetti accompagnano in parte le

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<sup>17</sup> O. Raggio, *Variazioni sul gusto francese. Consumi culturali a Genova nel Settecento*, in «Quaderni storici», 115 (2004), pp. 161-94.

<sup>18</sup> AD, *Archivio Sauli* 903. Sul barcheggio, l'iconografia di Cornelis De Wael.

<sup>19</sup> AP, *Grimaldi Granada* 38.

<sup>20</sup> Archivio Storico del Comune di Genova, *Archivio Brignole Sale* 51; A. Meta, *Il dodicesimo banchetto*, elaborato scritto per l'esame di Storia moderna, 2017.



Fig. 3 Banchetto, Scuola genovese, XVII secolo

quattro tappe del matrimonio individuate da Christiane Klapisch<sup>21</sup>. Lo scoprimento dei parentadi (della sposa e dello sposo) si manifesta e si concreta nei diversi banchetti dei parenti e nei regali. L'abbondanza e lo splendore sono per questo i caratteri più evidenti di un rito di passaggio centrale nelle storie individuali e familiari e per questo solenne. I banchetti (Fig. 3) sono occasione di consumo cospicuo, ostentazione e distruzione di ricchezza, una sorta di *potlach* aristocratico, un consumo non più regolamentato da leggi suntuarie (le leggi che limitavano le spese voluttuarie e di lusso nei vestiti e negli ornamenti, ma che regolamentavano anche i banchetti, i battesimi, le nozze e i funerali, per contenere l'emulazione dei comportamenti e dei privilegi nobiliari).

Un caso e un esempio molto documentato è quello dei matrimoni delle sorelle Giulia e Anna Maria Durazzo nel 1736 e 1738: il matrimonio di Giulia con Pier Francesco Grimaldi e il matrimonio di Anna Maria con Gio. Batta Negrone. I documenti relativi a questi matrimoni

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<sup>21</sup> Ch. Klapisch-Zuber, *La maison et le nom. Stratégies et rituels dans l'Italie de la Renaissance*, Paris 1990.

e ai relativi banchetti sono una traccia rara per completezza negli archivi privati genovesi: rara per la ricchezza delle informazioni che ci offrono. Sono infatti conservati i capitoli matrimoniali e le polizze dotali, le conferenze tra i parenti e il discoprimiento dei parentadi; in particolare per il matrimonio del 1736 sono conservate le liste degli invitati dai Durazzo e le liste degli invitati dai Grimaldi; i biglietti di invito al banchetto dei parenti, al banchetto dei senatori e alle veglie; gli inviti ai parenti per vedere i regali; gli inviti alla veglia e a un banchetto dato da un Grimaldi; le liste degli invitati al pranzo dei parenti (54 invitati), alle veglie (72 invitati), al banchetto nuziale (71 invitati); l'elenco delle 'figlie' (le dame più giovani) per le quali i complessi cerimoniali dello scambio matrimoniale costituivano una sorta di apprendistato e di educazione sentimentale<sup>22</sup>. I nomi delle diverse liste ovviamente non coincidono: ogni lista focalizza una rete di relazioni, parentali e non, che solo in parte si intreccia e si sovrappone alle altre. Nelle diverse liste c'è una evidente selezione degli invitati in relazione all'evento (banchetto dei parenti, veglia, invito per vedere i regali ecc.). Sono conservati i biglietti di invito<sup>23</sup>, e tra le carte c'è anche una lista delle persone «da omettersi», ovvero da non invitare.

Giulia e Anna Maria erano due delle tre figlie di Giuseppe Maria Durazzo. Giuseppe Maria non aveva figli maschi, e forse proprio per questo motivo il matrimonio delle figlie aveva un significato denso. Tutte le fasi, tutte le scene del matrimonio sono comunque dominate dagli oggetti, dalle cose: cose commissionate, acquistate, donate, esposte, consumate. Sono i materiali attraverso i quali sono costruite o riaffermate le reti delle relazioni sociali. Le stoffe per i vestiti sono commissionate e acquistate a

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<sup>22</sup> La traccia documentaria è in un pacchetto di lettere e biglietti scambiati tra giovani dame: per esempio «Capricci di Marina [Maria Ignazia Durazzo] per la collocazione d'Annetta [sorella di Marina]».

<sup>23</sup> Un esempio: «Li Signori Maria, e Marcello Serra sono pregati dalla Signora Lilla Durazzo di favorirla in sua casa al ricevimento de Parenti mercoledì 12 settembre a h 22»

Lione. Le fogge e i colori diversi dei vestiti (verde smeraldo, rosa giunchiglia con argento, giallo oro, rosa chiaro, verde chiaro, bianco operato, bianco «ondato» e ricamato, «fondo verde smeraldo a colori di vago disegno»), con ricami e guarniture conformi all'ultima moda, sono distinti secondo i diversi tipi di cerimonia: le vesti per il primo «complimento con lo sposo», per il ricevimento dei parenti, per lo spozalizio. Il modello degli abiti femminili è l'Andrienne 'à la française'. I colori e le forme caratterizzano specularmente i fiori e il decoro: il decoro è fatto con sessanta spalliere legate e sciolte, con nastri verdi e rosa, con mirto, fiori grandi, mezzani, piccoli e minuti, e con uno straordinario insieme di bacili di frutti (cedri, limoncelli, pesche, pere, azarole, pistacchi) e frutti canditi.

Le liste delle portate per il banchetto sono distinte tra «piatti reali» e «piatti bastardi», e sono associate alle liste dei vini. E, ancora, le liste dei fiori, dai garofani al gelsomino notturno ai fiori di bosco.

Mi sembra che un elemento centrale sia nell'intreccio tra magnificenza e raffinatezza del piacere visivo. Ed è l'elemento forse più importante di discontinuità rispetto al '500, con l'enfasi sul gusto, la raffinatezza e il raffinamento del gusto, la moda. Discontinuità, ma anche elementi di continuità nell'articolazione delle diverse fasi dello scambio matrimoniale, nelle liste dei regali e degli omaggi degli invitati al banchetto. Vorrei focalizzare questa voce che mi sembra centrale, anche perché gli omaggi sono personalizzati e i doni sono alimentari<sup>24</sup>, sono disposti a guisa di trionfi e di gruppi, sono guarniti e accomodati. Ansaldo Grimaldi dona duecentosei cedri e trenta botti di Borgogna; un Durazzo due damigiane di claretto di Francia e sei botti di Don Pedro Ximénez; Anna Fieschi un trionfo di canditi ornato di fiori di Chiavari;

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<sup>24</sup> Una breve annotazione di Marcel Mauss mi sembra perspicua: «la chose donnée elle-même forme un lien bilatéral et irrévocable, surtout quand c'est un don de nourriture»: M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, in M. Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris 1980, p. 249. Sui doni alimentari a Roma nel '600, R. Ago, *Il gusto delle cose: una storia degli oggetti nella Roma del Seicento*, Roma 2006.

Gio Antonio Raggi un cinghiale, quattro fagiani, quarantanove tortore, quattordici pernici in gabbia e quattro fiaschetti di tokaj; Marcello Serra due trote; un Brignole sei pavoni vivi; Anna Gerolama Fieschi due trionfi canditi figurati a fortezza pentagona; Ugo Fieschi due caprioli e due cinghiali (poteva essere il dono di un cavaliere medievale!). E poi una trentina di gruppi figurati, di canditi e fiori, forse sui modelli dei gruppi in porcellana, consegnati da ventuno invitati.

Nei registri di conto dei Grimaldi per il matrimonio tra Maria Benedetta Grimaldi e Gio. Batta Grimaldi (endogamia di parentado) nel 1769, ci sono le spese per l'allestimento di un palco in giardino; ci sono tantissimi fiori per bacili e gruppi, fiori finti, tantissimi frutti freschi (pere, pesche, azarole, meloni, uva, fichi, mandorle), canditi e confetture, e sedici cantari di neve, e anche le spese per lumiere, ceri e ceriotti per le veglie<sup>25</sup>.

Nei banchetti, squisitezza e splendore devono essere coniugati con l'abbondanza. Abbondanza e raffinatezza delle vivande e varietà dei cibi e delle portate; splendore nell'allestimento, nella suppellettile e nel decoro della casa, nell'abbigliamento dei servitori<sup>26</sup>. E questi ultimi aspetti sono evidenziati dalla documentazione genovese; ma non sembra esserci una distinzione netta tra quantità e qualità. Come dicevo, il matrimonio sollecita giudizi morali. Nel 1751, Angela Lomellini racconta di essere andata a un banchetto di nozze e sottolinea come il suo pranzo «non potesse dirsi eccedente, né gourmand, una minestra, un bollito, un biscotto condito bene stagionato e un po' di luganega sulla brace non ponno

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<sup>25</sup> AP, *Grimaldi Oliva* 178 e 202.

<sup>26</sup> Questi concetti sono in Pontano, con riferimento specifico ai banchetti nuziali. È un modello umanistico alto di convivialità, che a fine '400 registra e orienta le trasformazioni del gusto, e include anche l'idea di evoluzione dalla quantità alla qualità, un tema che è stato al centro di molte ricerche sul cibo. Si veda M. Van Der Veen, *When is food a luxury?*, in «World Archaeology», 34 (2003), pp. 405-427. Sulla base delle ricerche etnografiche l'autrice distingue tra quantità e qualità in relazione alla stratificazione sociale, e come mezzi per creare legami sociali o per affermare la distanza sociale.



oppormi alle 10 ostriche che pensavo di mangiare prima di partire, ma vi basti così non accrescere la dote»<sup>27</sup>. Un giudizio in una corrispondenza privata che stabilisce un nesso tra qualità e abbondanza del banchetto e dote, tra modestia del banchetto e accrescimento della dote.

7. Nei banchetti e nei regali ci sono le produzioni e i beni di un mercato europeo, ma ci sono anche o soprattutto le produzioni degli orti delle ville. In generale, sullo sfondo, dietro i consumi alimentari dell'aristocrazia, c'era la produzione, l'agricoltura e l'orticoltura di villa. Fin dal '400<sup>28</sup> un'orticoltura specializzata fuori delle mura della città, a Ponente, a Levante e in Polcevera, di cui ci sono tracce anche nella documentazione iconografica (un riferimento può essere ancora una volta al quadro di Alessandro Magnasco, Fig. 1); un'orticoltura e arboricoltura sostenute da vivaisti specializzati che vengono in piena luce nel '700. Nel '700 i conduttori delle ville, i manenti e i giardinieri assicurano i prodotti per la villeggiatura (che in molti casi dura fino a San Martino), per la cucina di città nell'intero arco dell'anno, e per il mercato. I contratti agrari negli obblighi a conduttori, manenti e giardinieri, coniugano l'utile e il dolce, le produzioni che sono utili, che hanno un valore economico e che soddisfano il gusto e danno un piacere estetico. Questa strettissima associazione tra utile e dolce è sottolineata da Thomas Jefferson nel suo diario di viaggio nel 1787, ed è al centro delle rime e delle cantate dei poeti arcadi per le nozze di nobili genovesi<sup>29</sup>. I due concetti sono anche al centro del trattato di Gallezio sugli agrumi<sup>30</sup>. Gli

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<sup>27</sup> AP, *Grimaldi Granada* 73. Le ostriche sono una delle voci della cena di Gio Carlo Pallavicino nel 1756.

<sup>28</sup> I verzieri, viridari e pomarii descritti da Antonio Astesano nel 1431 nel *Carmen de varietate fortunae*.

<sup>29</sup> Per esempio le rime di Giovanni Battista Ricchieri (Genova 1753) o la cantata di Luigi Corvetto per le nozze tra Paolo Gerolamo Pallavicino e Maria Giovanna Durazzo nel 1784, intitolata *Il Giardiniere di Cornigliano*.

<sup>30</sup> G. Gallezio, *Traité du Citrus*, Paris 1811.



agrumi sono in effetti la produzione più specializzata e che meglio esprime i nessi tra utile e dolce. Gli agrumi in vaso e a spalliera adornano i giardini e assicurano una cospicua produzione per il consumo e per il mercato. Ma i nessi tra utile e dolce sono evidenti in tutte le coltivazioni nelle ville: le siepi che circondano la vigna servono da difesa e ornamento e assicurano le fascine o il foraggio; i fiori adornano i giardini e adornano i banchetti. L'immagine, bellissima, di Gio. Domenico Peri in un testo del 1651, *I frutti d'Albaro*, è quella di «giardini che rendono pittrice l'agricoltura». La trama dei giardini era in parte disegnata da aranci e limoni coltivati a spalliera e in vaso, e gli agrumi disegnavano spazi particolari come il giardino degli aranci o il boschetto dei cedri (uno spazio ideale per la conversazione grazie al profumo dei fiori).

Tutti i contratti specificano gli obblighi per la villeggiatura, e una parte delle semine sono fatte calcolando l'arrivo in villa dei nobili<sup>31</sup>. Nella villa di Cornigliano, ma anche nel castello di Gabiano in Monferrato. Nel 1791 il castellano scrive a Giacomo Filippo Durazzo: «Ho prevenuto il giardiniere del tempo in cui l'E.V. pensa di qui trasferirsi acciò possa preparare, e fornire il giardino di tutte le erbe, che abisognar possino per la cucina»; e la preparazione del giardino-orto è accompagnata dalla preparazione della ghiacciaia<sup>32</sup>.

I conti di spesa (per le sementi e le piante da frutto), i contratti di conduzione delle ville, i registri di conto delle entrate e gli estimi degli orti ci mostrano una straordinaria varietà di colture: carciofi e asparagi (colture eminentemente nobili, con un valore d'estimo e un valore commerciale molto alto), cavoli neri, cavoli lombardi, broccoli precoci e tardivi, cavoli garbusi, cavolfiori, cavoli cappucci e gabbiette, navoni, fave e piselli, aglio e cipolle, carote, scorzonera, rape, bietole, fagioli, scarole. Tra i frutti ricavati dal giardino dei Durazzo a Cornigliano,

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<sup>31</sup> Archivio di Stato di Genova, *Notai antichi*, Notaio Michele Domenico Pescetto, 11775-11779; AD, *Libro de' conduttori di Cornigliano* 561 (1758-1813).

<sup>32</sup> AD, *Lettere* 898/79382-79384.

nel 1768 ci sono 53 dozzine di carciofi, 1250 arance, 290 limoni, 170 cedri, cardi, piselli, cipolle, insalate, fragole, uva e fieno<sup>33</sup>. Altre colture e altri frutti erano alla base dei consumi e della socialità: amarene e giuggiole per i sorbetti, fragole e meloni, una straordinaria varietà di fichi. E la campagna intorno alle ville con le terre affidate ai manenti era un'estensione dei giardini.

E infine ancora i fiori: in un registro di conto dei Pallavicini, ci sono 20 varietà di garofani; 19 varietà di ranuncoli; peonie; tulipani; giacinti; anemoni; giunchiglie (i bulbi erano acquistati ad Amsterdam). Mi pare che ne emerga un raffinatissimo interesse per le varietà nei colori (e forse nei profumi). Le note dei fiori, acquistati da fiorai, presenti nei conti dei Pallavicini e dei Grimaldi, evidenziano i colori, le variazioni, le ibridazioni, le associazioni e le composizioni: garofani, ranuncoli, tulipani «soprafini d'Olanda». I colori dei fiori sono finemente dettagliati, per esempio i garofani: bianco puro e bianco con verde in mezzo, color di rosa col verde e color di rosa naturale, bianco macchiato di sangue, cremisi, scarlatto, scuro quasi nero, arlecchino con foglia scarlatto. I fiori abbellivano i giardini e insieme con i fiori d'arancio o di cedro e bergamotto e i frutti servivano, come abbiamo visto, per fare i bacili (quelli che possiamo vedere in tante nature morte del XVII-XVIII secolo) e le *corbeilles* che decoravano i banchetti.

L'agricoltura e l'orticoltura di ville e giardini aveva a sua volta alle spalle i vivaisti (per gli agrumi in particolare i vivaisti di Nervi), e molte ville erano dotate di vivaio per gli agrumi in serre di vetro. Ma è ampiamente documentato anche l'acquisto di piante da frutto a Torino o in Savoia (peri, meli, peschi, albicocchi, ciliegi). La scelta delle piante, per esempio nel caso molto documentato dei Durazzo, è finalizzata sia al decoro e alla gradevolezza, ovvero il piacevole, il dolce, sia all'utile con la scelta di frutti la cui maturazione è scaglionata su tutto il lungo, lunghissimo periodo della villeggiatura, tra maggio e ottobre.

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<sup>33</sup> AD, *Libro di Cornigliano* 560 (1758-1789).

Un utile era ricavato anche dalla vendita di piante. Le piante di agrumi dei vivaisti di Nervi erano parte delle reti commerciali di nobili e mercanti sicuramente nel '600, e sono vendute a Parigi nel '700. Giacomo Filippo Durazzo a fine '700, attraverso i suoi agenti di commercio, fa avere piante (fichi e peri in questo caso) ai giardini di Federico II a Potsdam. E anche questo è un pezzo della cultura materiale e sociale dell'aristocrazia.

Un dato evidente e rilevante è nelle connessioni tra produzione, distribuzione, preparazione e consumo: un dato centrale nella cucina dell'Eurasia dall'età del bronzo, che sarà trasformato e superato dalla produzione industriale del cibo<sup>34</sup>.

8. Potremmo anche entrare nei palazzi e negli spazi della convivialità attraverso gli spazi destinati alla conservazione e alla preparazione dei cibi. La documentazione consente infatti di entrare nelle dispense e nelle cucine, e negli inventari possiamo ritrovare i contenitori utilizzati per la preparazione e la consumazione di cibi e bevande, i contenitori per le nuove bevande, per esempio le chicchere per la cioccolata (i materiali che rendono visibili i banchetti alla ricerca archeologica). Ma una parte dei recipienti, contenitori, piatti di portata, porcellane, argenti e cristalli erano presi in prestito, scambiati con altre famiglie nobili o forniti da imprenditori della ristorazione.

In sintetica conclusione: le esperienze sociali che ho ricostruito sono state peculiari di un gruppo sociale molto piccolo (2-3% della popolazione); un gruppo sociale che alla scala europea tra il XV e il XVIII secolo ha consumato in una misura mai più eguagliata in seguito, e ha costruito con le pratiche di consumo e della convivialità una nuova cultura materiale e sociale, e forse ha anche in parte forgiato l'individuo moderno. Ma su questo punto la discussione è aperta.

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<sup>34</sup> J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class. A Study in Comparative Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982.



# The characterization of local gastronomic heritage: why Environmental Archaeology matters

Valentina Pescini, Diego Moreno\*

## 1. Introduction

Among the most popular diets in the world there is the so-called ‘Palaeolithic diet’ (from here on Paleo diet) also known as the ‘stone age diet’ or ‘caveman diet’. It aims to return to eating as early humans (hunter-gatherers) did. It was theorized in the 1970s by gastroenterologist Walter Lyle Voegtlin<sup>1</sup> and subsequently became popular thanks to Loren Cordain’s book<sup>2</sup>. In 2013 this food regime had between 1 and 3 million followers in the United States<sup>3</sup>. Paleo dieters consume

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<sup>1</sup> W.L. Voegtlin, *The Stone Age Diet: Based on In-Depth Studies of Human Ecology and the Diet of Man*, Vantage Press, New York 1975.

<sup>2</sup> L. Cordain, *The Paleo Diet*, John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey 2002; L. Cordain, *The Paleo Diet Revised: Lose Weight and Get Healthy by Eating the Foods You Were Designed to Eat*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, USA (Revised edition December 7, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> E. Barclay (December 30, 2013), *Was 2013 Really The Year Of The Paleo Diet?* [Radio broadcast] NPR, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2013/12/27/257669972/was-2013-really-the-year-of-the-paleo-diet>

abundant amounts of meat, fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds but limited legumes, dairy products, and cereals<sup>4</sup>. These latter products, which emerged with farming practices in the most recent phase of human history, are identified as genetically unfit for the human body<sup>5</sup>. Many of the estimated three million American Paleo dieters not only follow the dietary prescriptions, but also adopt the social, moral, and philosophical aspects of the Palaeolithic way of life<sup>6</sup>. The medical scientific community has researched the benefits and drawbacks of such a diet, sometimes with mixed results<sup>7</sup>. But such medical and social debate per-

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[Last access: 12/05/2022].

<sup>4</sup> <https://thepaleodiet.com/> [Last access: 04/03/2022]

<sup>5</sup> Such idea is also known as ‘discordance hypothesis’: genetically, we have not evolved to cope with the modern diet and lifestyle, which results in ‘diseases of civilization’ (*i.e.* obesity). On this topic see M. Konner, *Evolution and our environment: will we adapt?*, in «The Western Journal of Medicine», 174(5) (2001), pp. 360-361. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1071403/>; M. Konner, S.B. Eaton, *Paleolithic nutrition twenty-five years later*, in «NutrClinPract», 25 (2010), pp. 594-602. It is also interesting the use of this narrative to improve patient education for a specific lifestyle: A.J. Basile, M.W. Renner, B.H. Hidaka, K.L. Sweazea, *An evolutionary mismatch narrative to improve lifestyle medicine: a patient education hypothesis*, in «Evolution, Medicine, and Public Health», 9(1) (2021), pp. 157-163. <https://doi.org/10.1093/emph/coab010>

<sup>6</sup> On the myth of the return to the golden age and the necessary rapprochement with nature for the improvement of human quality of life, see A.R. Johnson, *The Paleo Diet and the American Weight Loss Utopia, 1975–2014*, in «Utopian Studies», 26(1) (2015), pp. 101-124. <https://doi.org/10.5325/utopianstudies.26.1.0101>

<sup>7</sup> U. Masharani *et al.*, *Metabolic and physiologic effects from consuming a hunter-gatherer (Paleolithic)-type diet in type 2 diabetes*, in «European Journal of Clinical Nutrition», 69 (2015), pp. 944-948; R.L. Pastore, J.T. Brooks, J.W. Carbone, *Paleolithic nutrition improves plasma lipid concentrations of hypercholesterolemic adults to a greater extent than traditional heart-healthy dietary recommendations*, in «Nutrition Research», 35(6) (2015), pp. 474-479.

haps no longer has any reason to continue given recent research in the Environmental Archaeology and Palaeobotany.

Indeed, a recent publication in *Nature* suggests that the hunter-gatherer diet was actually rich in carbohydrates<sup>8</sup>. Through the study of the grinding stones and the marks left on them, the analysis of food residues in the pottery and microscopic observations of charred seeds, archaeologists are demonstrating that people in the ancient past used to eat more grains and starch than previously thought.

Evidence from Göbekli Tepe, one of the most impressive archaeological sites dating back to 11,600 years ago, suggests that its main frequenters, bands of hunter-gatherers, did not only eat meat but «were fuelled by vat-fulls of porridge and stew, made from grain that the ancient residents had ground and processed on an almost industrial scale»<sup>9</sup>. A growing body of research indicates that cereals (and more generally plants rich in starch) were a staple food long before farming took hold<sup>10</sup>.

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See also L. DeSoto, (RDN, LD on December 29, 2021), *Paleo diet: Is there any evidence that it benefits health?*, Medical News Today, available at: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/paleo-diet-is-there-any-evidence-that-it-benefits-health>

<sup>8</sup> A. Curry, *How ancient people fell in love with bread, beer and other carbs*, in «Nature», 594(7864) (2021), pp. 488-491. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-021-01681-w>

<sup>9</sup> L. Dietrich *et al.*, *Cereal processing at Early Neolithic Göbekli Tepe, southeastern Turkey*, in «PLoS ONE», 14 (e0215214) (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0215214>

<sup>10</sup> A. Arranz-Otaegui *et al.*, *Archaeobotanical evidence reveals the origins of bread 14,400 years ago in northeastern Jordan*, in «Proc Natl AcadSci U S A», 115(31) (2018), pp. 7925-7930. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1801071115>; S. Florindi *et al.*, *Porridge for a Palaeolithic dinner: experimenting the multistep processing of oats*, in «Rivista di scienze preistoriche», LXXI (2021). A. Revedin *et al.*, *Making flour in Palaeolithic Europe. New perspectives on nutritional challenges from plant food processing*, in: P. Pedersen *et al.* (eds.), *Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Association of ground stone tools research*, Copenhagen, Archaeopress, Oxford 2021, pp. 1-17.

In this chapter we will explore the potential of Environmental Archaeology in the study of foods and foodways in the past and how its results can help untangle the historical and environmental processes that underpin a situated present gastronomic heritage.

First, a brief overview relating the archaeological study of food will be presented together with the main issues that food archaeologists have addressed. A specific focus will be given to the innovations in the field of laboratory investigations, with particular attention to those relating to the archaeological study of plant and animal remains. Research questions, theory and analytical methods dealing with this sector of ancient diet studies will be considered as well as its interest for present foods and foodways characterisation. Finally, through the presentation of a specific multidisciplinary case study, an attempt will be made to reconstruct the historical dynamics that affected the spatial distribution of habitats and herbs populations employed in disappearing food-gathering practices.

## **2. The archaeological study of foods and foodways: an overview**

Since the '80s, food systems have been the subject of extensive archaeological research largely with the aim of reconstructing ancient diets. During excavations, archaeologists have unearthed multiple evidence indicating the types of food consumed at different prehistorical and historical context, the techniques of production and collection of food resources, the processing, the storage, the preparation, the serving as well as the modalities in which food was disposed. In the most fortunate cases, archaeology has been able to bring to light the spaces linked to the culinary habits of past communities, with some of them still visible also nowadays<sup>11</sup>. Even during the excavation of a tomb, archaeol-

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<sup>11</sup> See one of the most recent discoveries made by archaeologists in the excavation of Pompeii: the *Thermopolium* (snack bar) of Regio V, <http://pompeiisites.org/en/>



ogists might come across food, which was often placed as an offering to the deceased or preserved following specific religious rituals<sup>12</sup>.

Archaeologists have questioned how to explore this complex subject, in particular with which descriptive categories, interpretative models and analytical tools<sup>13</sup>. Although research on food has profoundly characterised the history of archaeology on a global level, a specific research sector dealing with such a topic is still missing. Archaeologists have been often collaborating with anthropologists, botanists, zoologists, and historians, thus generating many approaches and ways to tackle the 'food topic'. Therefore, information on food and foodways in the past is found in diverse publications and research journals<sup>14</sup>.

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[comunicati/the-thermopolium-of-regio-v/](#). On the discoveries concerning food in Pompeii, see also <https://www.storieparallele.it/archeologia-cibo-pompei/>.

<sup>12</sup> A.R. Williams, (April 5, 2015), *Packing Food for the Hereafter in Ancient Egypt*, *National Geographic*, available at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/packing-food-for-the-hereafter-in-ancient-egypt/>; Y. Hamilakis, E. Konsolaki, *Pigs for the gods: Burnt animal sacrifices as embodied rituals at a Mycenaean Sanctuary*, in «Oxford Journal of Archaeology», 23(204), pp. 135-151.

<sup>13</sup> K. Reed, *Food systems in archaeology. Examining production and consumption in the past*, in «Archaeological Dialogues», 28(1) (2021), pp. 51-75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203821000088>

<sup>14</sup> K.B. Metheny, M.C. Beaudry (eds.), *Archaeology of food: an encyclopedia*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham 2015; C. Smith (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, Springer 2014; S. Yona Waksman (dir.), *Multidisciplinary approaches to food and foodways in the medieval eastern Mediterranean*, MOM Éditions, Lyon 2021. Articles of this volume are downloadable at <https://books.openedition.org/momeditions/10099>; specialised journal on archaeology of food are quite few but exceptions are nevertheless present: see *i.e.* *Archaeology of "Food and Foodways"* available at <https://journal.equinoxpub.com/AFF/article/view/21427>; other journals focus more on history of food, such as «Global Food History» published by Taylor & Francis or «Food & History» published by the European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food (IEHCA - <http://iehca.eu/en/publications/food-history>).

Food has often been discussed within very broad themes, which were frequently connected to each other, characterising the history of archaeological research. Among these latter, is the well-known debate on the domestication of plants and animals<sup>15</sup>: when, where, how and why we learned to cultivate and raise animals? What tools and strategies humans used? What were the effects of domestication on plants, animals as well as on the environment? Within this line of research, some researchers specifically focused on reconstructing the *chaîne opératoire* of food production and processing. Among these studies, the Experimental Archaeology<sup>16</sup> played a role. Through the experimental reproduction/replication of the ways of food production and processing (often through the recreation of the objects used in the past), experimental archaeologists intended to verify the reliability of their theories and hypotheses<sup>17</sup>.

If on the one hand some archaeologists have been interested in the characterization of the technical steps involved in the production and processing of food, on the other hand, several scientists (not only archaeologists but also anthropologists) have dealt with the study of the

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<sup>15</sup> D. Zohary, M. Hopf, E. Weiss, *Domestication of plants in the Old World: The origin and spread of domesticated plants in Southwest Asia, Europe, and the Mediterranean Basin (4th ed)*, Oxford University Press, New York 2012; M.K. Jones, X. Liu, *Origins of agriculture in East Asia*, in «Science», 324(5928) (2009), pp. 730-731; W. Van Zeist, W.A. Casparie, *Plants and Ancient Man*, A.A. Balkema, Rotterdam 1984.

<sup>16</sup> See some of research results presented during the 84<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology held at Albuquerque (NM) in 2019, contents are available here: <https://core.tdar.org/collection/69594/farm-to-table-archaeology-the-operational-chain-of-food-production>

<sup>17</sup> Experimental researches in food archaeology are numerous, see e.g. V. Aldeias *et al.*, *Shell we cook it? An experimental approach to the microarchaeological record of shellfish roasting*, in «Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences», 11(2) (2019), pp. 389-407. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12520-016-0413-1>

past socio-cultural meaning of food<sup>18</sup>. How and to what extent did food and foodways intersect with the socio-cultural background of people, such as ethnicity, gender, status, and religion?<sup>19</sup> In this framework, social diversity was also an issue addressed through the lens of food<sup>20</sup>: «Social diversity is therefore a key theme in current archaeological food studies, with scholars exploring how production, cooking, eating, storage, and discard behaviours reflected, constructed, and challenged past cultural norms»<sup>21</sup>.

How food practices created, maintained and negotiated various forms of social identity? What is the role of food in the formation of individual identities? What role does food play in establishing social differentiation or solidarity? What are the social and symbolic implications of changing eating habits? In this field anthropology has flanked archaeology, often providing categories and interpretative models of the archaeological record.

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<sup>18</sup> K.C. Twiss, *The Archaeology of Food. Identity, Politics, and Ideology in the Prehistoric and Historic Past*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108670159>; C.A. Hastorf, *The Social Archaeology of Food: Thinking about Eating from Prehistory to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017.

<sup>19</sup> C.A. Hastorf, *Gender, space and food in prehistory*, in J.M. Gero, M.W. Conkey (eds.), *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*, Blackwell, Cambridge 1991, pp. 132-159.

<sup>20</sup> K.T. Twiss, *The archaeology of food and social diversity*, in «Journal of Archaeological Research» 20(2) (2012), pp. 357-395. It is also interesting the reconstruction made by Twiss of the history of archaeological studies on this theme and the change of perspective between processualists and post-processualists. Another peculiar line of research dealing with food identity and food diversity is that of food-taboo and faith-based culinary proscriptions (see e.g. the Judeo-Muslim pig taboo: B. Hesse, P. Wapnish, *Pig use and abuse in the ancient Levant: Ethnoreligious boundary-building with swine*, in S.M. Nelson (ed.) *Ancestors for the Pigs: Pigs in Prehistory*, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1998, pp. 123-135).

<sup>21</sup> Twiss, *The archaeology of food and social diversity* cit. p. 358.

In the study of food systems, Environmental Archaeology and Bioarchaeology<sup>22</sup> have also played a leading role in the study of the raw materials used in food systems. What plants and animals did people eat in the past? To answer this question a vast amount of research dealing with the study of flora and faunal assemblages/evidences found in archaeological sites (the so called on-site) (*e.g.* charred seeds and fruits, animal bones and teeth, arthropods, molluscs, etc.) has been carried out through approaches and tools of Archaeobotany, Palaeobotany and Zooarchaeology. Furthermore, the relationship between environmental resources and human activity has been often approached through the study of other contexts of archaeological discovery (the so-called off-site, *e.g.* soils, lakes, peat bogs etc.) and bio-stratigraphic markers (*e.g.* pollens, non-pollen palynomorphs, phytoliths etc.)<sup>23</sup>.

In recent years, however, the most frequently trend observed in Environmental Archaeology and Bioarchaeology, and more widely in the archaeological study of food, is the use of more advanced scientific methods and analysis (Microarchaeology)<sup>24</sup>. As already observed in the introduction of this chapter, new laboratory techniques and technologies allow archaeologists to study various issues related to food in the past with a resolution never achieved before. For example, the analysis of stable isotopes (*e.g.* carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and strontium)<sup>25</sup>, chemical elements, organic mol-

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<sup>22</sup> In the present work we consider Bioarchaeology as the study of all the biological evidences from the archaeological sites (thus including botanical, animal and human remains).

<sup>23</sup> Several manuals have been published in the last decades on tools and approaches of archaeological study of botanical and animal remains, see *e.g.* E. Reitz, M. Shackley, *Environmental Archaeology*, Springer, London 2012.

<sup>24</sup> S. Weiner, *Microarchaeology beyond the visible archaeological record*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Many of these methods use human or animals (*e.g.* dogs and pigs) skeletal and dental remains as sources of primary data. M.P. Richards, *Isotope analysis for diet studies*, in M. Richards, K. Britton (eds.), *Archaeological Science: An*

ecules and compounds (e.g. enzymes, blood residues), and genetic material (e.g. DNA, RNA). Such analytical tools have become fundamental to studying ancient human diets, providing new important insights into what humans and animals consumed on daily bases.

In the next section some of the tools and approaches typical of Environmental Archaeology (e.g. pollen analysis) will be used to identify the agro-sylvo-pastoral practices related to the preparation of a specific Ligurian dish. These tools will be guided by a historical approach to the study of environmental resources (Historical Ecology) and by a topographical scale of observation of the archaeological evidence.

### **3. The *Gatafin* edible herbs: a legacy of lost grasses and pastoral practices**

In the Cinque Terre area (Liguria, NW Italy), and in particular between the Monterosso and Levanto municipalities, the *Gatafin* or *Gat-tafin* (local Genoese dialect) is considered one of the ‘traditional’ local dishes. It consists of pastry dough rolls filled with seasonal herbs freshly blanched in water and then fried in olive oil. Nowadays, in most of the local restaurants, the *Gatafin* follows a generalized recipe<sup>26</sup>.

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*Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2020, pp. 125-144. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139013826.006>; E.J. Guiry *et al.*, *Integrating Stable Isotope and Zooarchaeological Analyses in Historical Archaeology: A Case Study from the Urban Nineteenth-Century Commonwealth Block Site, Melbourne, Australia*, in «International Journal of Historical Archaeology», 18(3) (2014), pp. 415-440.

<sup>26</sup>The web hosts a variety of recipes dedicated to the Levanto’s *Gatafin* with particular variations, even though there is a program of valorizations aimed at regulating the Levanto’s recipe. In this work we follow the preparation according to Fabio Nicora, restaurateur from Levanto, who kindly described and showed us his *Gatafin* preparation in September 2019. The recipe used by Fabio (whom we thank again for his kindly availability) is the one used in his own family in the ’70s, albeit with some minor changes.

For the pastry: a Lasagna-type thin puff dough prepared with flour, water, olive oil, salt. For the vegetable filling: chard (and/or the seasonal herbs), white onions, marjoram, Parmesan cheese (grated in the filling), eggs (10 for 5-7 kg fresh vegetables). The separate preparation of the pastry and the vegetable filling takes place in the following steps: steamed chard, squeezed, coarsely chopped, will be sautéed in a pan with olive oil (and onions), marjoram, eggs and cheese are added. This vegetable mixture is distributed in small portions on the pastry which is cut out and folded in the shape of a crescent<sup>27</sup> finally it is deep fried in olive oil.

In this section we will try to (re-)place, and (re)spatialize this traditional local food in its historical '*liens au lieu*'.

This exercise of rediscovery the *Gatafin*'s '*liens au lieu*' is grounded on the results obtained during the Cinque Terre Environmental Resource Archaeology (5T.ERA) project<sup>28</sup>. In this project the cross-check-

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<sup>27</sup> According to the domestic preparation, the *Gatafin* has a size of 14 x 6 cm approx. In restaurants it come in a smaller format to accompany aperitifs. *Gatafin* can be frozen for 2 days (blast chilled) defrosted and fried at the moment. It can be eaten hot, cold or heated.

<sup>28</sup> The 5T.ERA project was funded by the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, the Cinque Terre National Park and the Fondo Ambiente Italiano (FAI) and carried out by the Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History of the University of Genoa (see the official webpage at <https://5tera.jimdofree.com/>). The project was devoted to the historical and environmental characterisation of different study areas in the Cinque Terre landscape. Results has been described and presented in several publications, see e.g. N. Gabellieri, V. Pescini (eds.), *Biografia di un Paesaggio Rurale. Geografia, Storia e Archeologia Ambientale per la Riqualificazione di Case Lovara (Promontorio del Mesco – La Spezia)*, Oltre Edizioni, Sestri Levante 2015; V. Pescini, C. Montanari, D. Moreno, *Multi-proxy record of environmental changes and past land use practices in a Mediterranean landscape: The Punta Mesco cape (Liguria - Italy) between the 15th and 20th century*, in «Quaternary International», 463 (2018), pp. 376-90 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2017.03.060>; N. Gabellieri, A. Panetta, V. Pescini, *Bridging research with application: the "5T. ERA" project and the Cinque Terre landscapes and historical-environmental*

ing of archival documents (e.g. historical maps and texts), archaeological and environmental evidence (e.g. bio-stratigraphic markers) and oral sources (e.g. interviews with dwellers) allowed us to identify the plant species used to make *Gatafin* in the past domestic preparation together with the herbs harvesting sites ecology and, overall, the local agro-sylvo-pastoral practices connected with land management. Many of the components of this food production have changed over historical time, especially the local environmental resources used.

Through the evidence produced by the 5T.ERA project, the ecology of harvesting sites located near Levanto (specifically, at the Punta Mesco cape<sup>29</sup>) will be discussed highlighting how it was inserted in a long and complex environmental management history. These management activities have been traced regressively through Late Middle Age although it shows a profound, almost irreversible, transformation during the last century especially regarding the vegetation cover of the foraging site.

Research results show how the practice of collecting herbs was located in available open spaces (with differentiated land uses) in which

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*heritage*, in «Quaderni Storici», 164 (2020), pp. 311-341 <https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.1408/99410>. The Cinque Terre landscape has also been subjected to further researches in 2003: Lasa, 2003, *Siti Lemmen e Caginagora (Riomaggiore-Sp). Studi e Ricerche Finalizzati alla Identificazione delle Dinamiche Storiche dell'area, Effetti delle Pratiche Agro-Silvo-Pastorali e Dinamiche Post-Colturali della Copertura Vegetale, Progetto Pilota di Recupero Ambientale nel Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre*, (Università degli Studi di Genova, Dipartimento di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea (DISMEC-LASA), Soprintendenza per i Beni Architettonici e per il Paesaggio della Liguria). Unpublished Report; C. Molinari, A.M. Stagno, *Insedimenti e risorse dell'allevamento nell'Appennino Ligure (XVII-XX secolo)*, in M. Avanzini, I. Salvador (eds.), *Antichi pastori: sopravvivenze, tradizione orale, storia, tracce nel paesaggio e archeologia*, MUSE, Trento 2014, pp. 9-30.

<sup>29</sup> Punta Mesco (or Mesco) is a promontory that extends into the Ligurian Sea reaching an altitude of 467 m a.s.l. (Mount Vè) between the towns of Levanto and Monterosso.

the cape's habitats and their herbs species distribution appears totally controlled by a number of productive activities.

The livestock activities structured in a multiple agro-sylvo-pastoral system have driven the whole system ecological dynamics. Such a statement is generally accepted in the history of North Mediterranean coastal terrestrial ecosystems/landscapes but the environmental issues are broadly dated to classical or even prehistory ages. We can get more accurate results by adopting a topographical scale of observation: focusing the environmental effects that pastoral practices have had on vegetation cover and especially on the herb layers in the Punta Mesco slopes. As we will see those environmental effects (due to the pastoral practices externalities that activate the herbs population ecology) were connected to a multiple system of common land access that began to rapidly disappear in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.1 Cooking herbs and etymology of *Gatafin* in the oral sources

The transcription of oral sources (interviews)<sup>30</sup> made it possible to highlight important discontinuities in modern knowledge relating to the preparation of the *Gatafin*, its components, its etymology and thus its intergenerational transmission.

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<sup>30</sup> Oral sources (mostly direct interview with local inhabitants) have been collected throughout the 5T.ERA project (2014-2019) by Camilla Traldi, Diego Moreno and Roberta Cevasco (Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History – LASA, University of Genoa). Transcriptions of the interviews are still unpublished (see C. Traldi, 2017, *Raccolta di testimonianze orali per la storia delle pratiche e dei saperi geografico ambientali localizzati nel Promontorio del Mesco e nelle Cinque Terre*, University of Genoa, Unpublished report) although some excerpts are present in R. Cevasco, D. Moreno, *Fonti orali*, in Gabellieri, Pescini (eds.), *Biografia di un paesaggio rurale* cit., pp. 180-188. It should be noted that the testimonies on *Gatafin* were produced in the context of interviews aimed at other specific research objects. They involved inhabitants of at least three different generations, all with more or less long and specialized farmers/breeders experience and who had been eating *Gatafin* from their early childhood and had collecting herbs experiences.



All the interviewees agree in considering that the *Gatafin* eaten today (that became very fashionable in the '90s due to the development of the mass tourism visiting the Cinque Terre National Park) is a different food from that of their memories or personal experience. While in the present day it is served in restaurants all year round, at an earlier stage it was a seasonal domestic preparation; furthermore, it was prepared with different ingredients from those used today.

In local memory the *Gatafin* was prepared collecting a group of 'wild' (weeds) edible herbs. Among these herbs the following are frequently mentioned: *Hyoseris radiata* L., *Reichardia picroides* L. (dial. *scréppue*), *Leontodon hispidus* L. (dial. *tagiainétti*)<sup>31</sup>.

The informers specify the harvesting sites for these herbs: they are all located in the surrounding of Levanto but peculiarly in the southern slopes of Punta Mesco: these places retain a great reputation in the living memory of the surroundings dwellers. They also provide interesting information on the etymology of *Gatafin*. The place name (*Rio della Gatta*) of a small stream flowing in the extreme southern part of the Punta Mesco cape would have provided the origin of the dialectal name of the meal: a colloquial/intuitive etymological reconstruction which bizarrely has also been successful among gastronomy historians.

We just quote this as a case of 'invention of a tradition' apparently based on the facts that, in the living memory, it is considered the food par excellence for workers going daily to *Rio della Gatta* area quarrying sandstone till 1950's<sup>32</sup>. Oral sources describe often the link between the dialectal name of the meal and the supposed major daily consumers of this food: the *Gatafin* is indeed considered the packed lunch for the

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<sup>31</sup> See Cevasco, Moreno, *Fonti orali* cit.

<sup>32</sup> On the quarrying activities and relative archaeological and historical evidences see Gabellieri, Pescini, *Biografia di un Paesaggio Rurale* cit. and Pescini, Montanari, Moreno, *Multi-proxy record of environmental changes and past land use practices in a Mediterranean landscape* cit.

Mesco quarry workers as well as feasting food for sharecropping families in the Levanto area.

Otherwise a reasonable etymology has been reconstructed through philological research<sup>33</sup>. Based on written evidence (a series of printed Italian cookbooks from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century) the results offer a chronology in the development of the recipe for this regional (Genoese) preparation. The first occurrences of the name *Gattafura* is dated in texts of vulgar/regional Italian to the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: it means distinctively a sort of Genoese cheese pie. *Gattafura* would derive from the ancient French *gâteau fouré*. Consequently the local name *Gattafin* appears as vernacular outcome (a diminutive noun) of this linguistic exchange with old French cuisine terminology<sup>34</sup>. Such an exchange appears consistent with the historical social stratification of Riviera di Levante coastal settlements (as is the case of Levanto) which have seen the development of a landowner bourgeoisie and a local aristocracy sharing an international commercial relationship since almost the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3.2 Pastures and multiple land use systems in the Punta Mesco-Case Lovara site: the palynological evidence**

During the 5T.ERA project a total of seven soil and sediment profiles (off-site archaeology) located in different part of the Mesco cape have been sampled and analyzed for pollen and microcharcoal in order to identify the plant species present at Punta Mesco and their dynamics over time. Thanks to radiocarbon dating of some of these profiles, it was possible to identify the chronology of the variations of the vegetation cover between the Late Middle Ages up to the contemporary age.

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<sup>33</sup> W. Schweickard, *Gattafura*, in «Studi linguistici italiani», 32(1) (2006), pp. 105-108.

<sup>34</sup> This linguistic hypothesis is due to Aldo Viviani, the keeper of the Material Culture Permanent Exhibition of Levanto. Aldo is greatly acknowledged for its help during the project field researches.

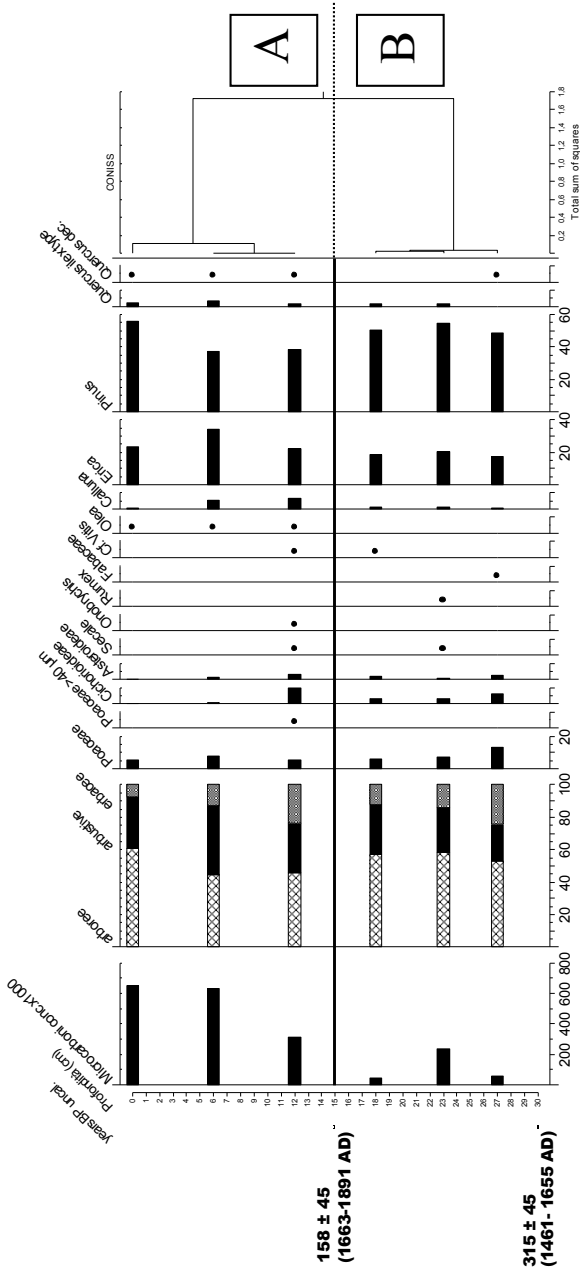


Fig. 1 Synthetic palynological diagram deriving from Tr2 coring (from Cevasco *et al.* 2015, p. 165). A: agro-forestry regime; B: agro-sylvo-pastoral regime.

Among these palynological samplings, a more in-depth analysis was made for TR2 profile<sup>35</sup> a pollen core extracted from a shelf of the *Rio della Gatta* seasonal stream. This area – as stated before – corresponds to that frequently mentioned in oral sources as one of richest harvesting sites for *Gatafin* herbs. The soil sample consisted of a 30 cm core of sandy-silty sediment with very little organic content. The catchment site is today characterized by the presence of swamp vegetation – *Holoschoenus australis* (L.) Rchb., *Juncus conglomeratus* L., *Cyperus* sp., *Isolepis setacea* (L.) Rbr. – in a zone with rushes near a reed population (*Arundo donax* L.). The pollen diagram is shown in Fig. 1.

In the diagram the main elements of the vegetation dynamics useful for comparison with other historical sources are highlighted<sup>36</sup>. The horizontal subdivision line identifies two (A and B) main historical phases of management: the oldest (B) characterized by an agro-sylvo-pastoral regime and the most recent (A) of an agro-forestry type, that is a phase of progressive decrease in pastoral activity. These phases can be related to a switch in the historical environmental dynamics of the vegetation cover. Two radiocarbon dating have been obtained respectively at 15 cm (1663-1891 AD) and 30 cm (1461-1655 AD) deep in the pollen sample (Tab. 1). It was thus possible to date this switch has occurring during the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A constant presence of both woody (most *Pinus pinaster* Aiton and *Erica arborea* L.) and herbaceous species (most Poaceae, Asteroideae, Cichorioideae, Cyperaceae) are documented all along the profile. Herbaceous species reach 20% in the sample at 12 cm (corresponding to the transition from phase A to phase B) and even 25 % in the sample

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<sup>35</sup> M. Guido *et al.*, *Archeologia ambientale*, in Gabellieri, Pescini, *Biografia di un Paesaggio Rurale* cit., pp. 137-159; Pescini, Montanari, Moreno, *Multi-proxy record of environmental* cit.

<sup>36</sup> For a more in-depth analysis and discussion of the palinological results see Pescini *et al.* *Multi-proxy record* cit.

Study area / Profile	Depth (cm)	Lab. Code	14C BP	14C AD calibrated; 2 $\sigma$
Punta Mescocase Lovara	15	LTL15002A	158 $\pm$ 45	<b>1663AD (77.1%) 1891AD</b> 1909AD (18.3%) 1950AD
Tr2	30	LTL15003A	315 $\pm$ 45	<b>1461AD (95.4%) 1655AD</b>

Tab.1 Radiocarbon determination and calibrated ages with probability of some selected charcoal particles from Tr2 pollen profile. The selected age intervals are marked in bold.

at 27 cm. The high concentration of herbaceous plants in phase B (to which the Fabaceae are added, see the peak at 27 cm) was attributed to the presence of more open areas than in the subsequent phase<sup>37</sup>.

Amongst the shrubs, heather (Ericaceae) prevail, within which ling (*Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hull) was always found, sometimes with percentages relatively high, taking into account its low pollen production. According to oral sources, *Erica* and *Calluna* in their juvenile stages were considered an excellent forage for sheep and cattle. For this purpose, until the 1960s they were subjected to mowing by the late promontory dwellers. *Calluna's* progressive disappearance during phase A can be interpreted as an environmental effect of the abandonment of the regular mowing, fire and browsing practices<sup>38</sup>. On the contrary, during phase B this habitat management permitted the constant presence of the species and a stability with the herbs layer in the site since (at least)

<sup>37</sup> On the link between Cichorioideae and open habitat see A. Florenzano *et al.*, *Are Cichorieae an indicator of open habitats and pastoralism in current and past vegetation studies?*, in «Plant Biosystems - An International Journal Dealing with all Aspects of Plant Biology», 149(1) (2015), pp. 154-165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11263504.2014.998311>

<sup>38</sup> J. Schellenberg, E. Bergmeier, *The Calluna life cycle concept revisited: implications for heathland management*, in «BiodiversConserv.», 31 (2022), pp. 119-141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-021-02325-1>

the Late Middle Ages. *Calluna's* pollen shows a peak in the transition phase and then – similarly to the most herbaceous *taxa* populations – disappears giving way, in the most recent period, to other high maquis shrubs and *Pinus*.

Apart from this, the palynological diagram offers an interesting record (see the microcharcoals concentration column in Fig. 1) in term of managing the scrubland vegetal cover by fire. Microcharcoals are found throughout the pollen diagram but showing an interesting different amount over time. Local fire practices were exercised on open vegetable covers in phase B (as indicated by herbaceous pollen concentration), thereby preventing a high stratification of microcharcoal residues (the herbs turned to ash instead of charcoal). The shrub and tree components were probably subjected to a continuous biomass extraction and rejuvenated by temporary agricultural practices. One of these was the so-called *ronco* (dial.): a multiple land use system that involved the burning of dried grass clods and pruning of bushes (releasing in the soil more traces of ash than charcoals) and the subsequent pastoral and cultivation activity<sup>39</sup>. At Punta Mescio, this practice is also testified by the presence in pollen record (albeit discontinuously and with minimal attendance) of peculiar *taxa* mostly indicators of cultivation, open environments and rich soils. Among these *taxa* it is worth noting the presence during the phase B of rye pollen (*Secale*) and grass species considered markers of crop as *Rumex* or Fabaceae. A species of the last family *Lathyrus* (*Leme* dial.) was largely cultivated as mixed crop in the *ronco* multiple land use systems as highlighted in other Ligurian common lands such as the adjacent reliefs of the High Vara Valley.

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<sup>39</sup> For in-depth discussion about the *ronco* practice in Ligurian Apennines see D. Moreno, *Dal Documento al terreno*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1990 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2019). See also V. Pescini, *Which origin for charcoal in soil?* in «Frontiers in Environmental Science», 2019 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2019.00077> for insights on fire practices in archaeological and documentary sources.

The progressive increase in the concentration of microcharcoals along the profile fits with the switch between phase B and A: it has been related to the change in the management of the local vegetation resource and in the local plant (woody) species presence. The abandonment of pastoral practices (including the *ronchi* system) and the transition to an agro-forestry management system had the progressive reduction of herbaceous species and the increase of tree ones as an environmental effect. An increase in biomass (no longer managed by pastoral practices) therefore took place over time. The recent peak in microcharcoal deposition is interpreted as a direct consequence of wildfires in this environment now very rich in biomass: since the end of '60s these wildfires have become a cyclical event in the Mediterranean scrubland of Punta Mesco causing extensive damage.

### **3.3 Transhumance in the multiple management system of the Punta Mesco cape**

Similar multi-proxy research made in a neighbouring area of Cinque Terre National Park demonstrated how the persistence of grazed open spaces (fallow land)<sup>40</sup> and grassland distributed along the coast were connected to the local bovine, ovine, swine and goat livestock. Such economy was surely based on the access right on the common land that pertain all around the year to the dwellers of neighbouring parishes

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<sup>40</sup> It is known (Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno* cit.) that such common fallow land management appears to early 19<sup>th</sup> c. Mapmakers (as well as to contemporary agronomical and statistical text/inquiries/questionnaire) introduced the land use class «*gerbido*» (lat. *Acerbus*, dial. *Zerbu*, *zerbiu*, namely growing, unripe herbaceous/grassy spaces) meaning approximately a rough pasture (possibly with sparse trees). This is an ambiguous character that unfit with the geometrical binary categories employed in charting military topographical maps that sharply separate domestic/cultivated from wild/woodland spaces. In 1816-25 the military topographical survey carried out on a large part of the Mesco promontory – not clearly covered by terraced cultivation of wine and olive groves – is classified with this land use.

and townships in the coast but – in a more complex way – also by the seasonal presence of transhumant flocks of grazing sheep and goats<sup>41</sup>.

The ovi-caprine pastures were widespread both on the coastline and in the hinterland, linked by a transhumance network that moved livestock from inner Apennine grassland in the summer to the coast during winter. As result is a peculiar landscape feature that was clearly visible in historical topographical maps (1816-25) along the ridge descending into the coastline suggests the existence of «grassland corridors»<sup>42</sup>. Historical ecology observation made during the 5T.ERA project on present herbaceous layer revealed the presence of heterotopic herbaceous species (*i.e.* living to an anomalous altitude level or habitat) and other indicator species considered now transhumance legacy *e.g.* as *Scabiosa columbaria* L.: definitively is a peculiar land cover to be ranked among «ancient grassland» ecology herbaceous communities.

Punta Mesco appears to fit into this management pattern of environmental resources for transhumance purposes: the open spaces identified both by pollen analysis could be related to the presence of similar transhumance practices. The neighbouring township of Levanto and Monterosso share the access right of their own livestock with the transhumant shepherd community or better to say the main landlord families shared, albeit in a perpetually conflicting way, their rights to access the pastoral resources of

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<sup>41</sup> N. Gabellieri, V. Pescini, D. Tinterri, *Sulle tracce dei pastori. Eredità storiche e ambientali della transumanza in Liguria*, SAGER, Genova 2020; LASA, 2003 cit.; Stagno, Molinari, *Insedimenti e risorse dell'allevamento nell'Appennino Ligure (XVII-XX secolo)* cit.; D. Moreno, O. Raggio, *The making and fall of an intensive pastoralland-use-system. Eastern Liguria, 16th-19th centuries*, in «Rivista di Studi Liguri», 56 (1990), pp. 193-217.

<sup>42</sup> Spaces and areas of connection between summer and winter pastures, characterized by herbaceous species with different ecological needs (coexistence of species characteristic of mountain and coastal habitats) due to the passage of transhumant livestock. See LASA, 2003 cit.; Stagno, Molinari, *Insedimenti e risorse dell'allevamento nell'Appennino Ligure (XVII-XX secolo)* cit.



Mesco with the flocks of transhumant farmers. A much more consistent flow of livestock moving from Apennines quarters – besides the local animals – tested the carrying capacity of Mesco pastureland. Accordingly, *Rio della Gatta* pollen evidence still several decades after the legal disappearance of commonland (*comunaglie*) during the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century (see transition Phase B/A). The hidden logic of the ovine transhumance movements in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century lies – more than in the direct animal production of meat, milk, cheese, wool – in the fertility transfer from the grazed areas (*Alpialpeggi*) (in the mountain summer districts) and from the fallow land (called *Marina* in the winter quarters) giving sustainability to the production of specialized crops of terraced olives and vines.

In fact, still in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, terraced vineyards and olive groves of Cinque Terre township private owners remained open to grazing even for transhumant grazing in the months between October and March. This helped to maintain the fertility of the terraces in conjunction with vegetable fertilizers such as using shrubs and pine needles collected in the wasteland management<sup>43</sup>. In the Mesco promontory the above mentioned herbaceous corridors that descended from the Apennine and reached the cultivated fields to the terraces and down to the sea, still legible in the cartography of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, disappear (together with their use) in the following representations at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> According to local oral sources (interview with the last tenants of Case Lovara farm) pine needles were collected (cut green from trees practicing branches shredding), dried on the ground and employed as complementary vegetal manure for improvement of soil nutrients, particularly, in order to modify the soil structure in terraced vineyards. Concerning such pine management practices – totally abandoned during the 1970s – it is important to note that the vernacular name ‘*gatta*’ is referring to the pine needles collected by hand to be employed as litter and manure which was adopted – as shown by mid-18<sup>th</sup> century maps – as the place name of the small stream in the Mesco slope: *Rio della Gatta*.

<sup>44</sup> N. Gabellieri, V. Ruzzin, *Fonti testuali, cartografiche e iconografiche*, in Gabellieri, Pescini, *Biografia di un paesaggio rurale* cit., pp. 49-95.

### 3.4 Herb disappearance: the abandonment of the multiple land use system at Punta Mesco

During the 5T.ERA Project, the distribution of current herbaceous species (and when possible, their abundance) were compared with results of the floristic exploration of the Mesco promontory conducted by field botanists during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>45</sup>. The historical resurveys – although lacking spatial precision – match up to the results of the pollen and maps sources discussed above. In varying lengths of time scales the peculiar dynamics and distribution of the population of herbaceous species appear as a function of the changes that occurred in the agro-pastoral land uses system. Nowadays Mediterranean shrub vegetation – a high maquis dominated by *Erica arborea* L. with sparse pine (*Pinus pinaster* Aiton.) trees<sup>46</sup> – almost totally covers the southeast slope of Mount Vè and take over the entire *impluvium* of *Rio della Gatta* which is missing any herbaceous species.

On the contrary the early 20<sup>th</sup> century floristic surveys still indicated the presence of several herbaceous and shrub species (*Festuca ovinas* L., *Briza maxima* L., *Dianthus carthusianorum* L. and *D. caryophyllus* L., *Trifolium glomeratum* L., *Hyoseris radiata* L., *Hypochaeris aetnensis* Benth & Hook, *Muscari comosum* (L.) Mill., *Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hull, *Fumana ericoides* (Cav.) G., *Satureya montana* L., and several species of *Trifolium* and *Vicia*) that are indicators of the previous interspersed open habitats in the fallow land/*gerbidi*. In the Punta Mesco promontory they appear widespread in 1906 especially in the olive groves (between the Castle of Levanto and Punta Mesco), some also in the terraced fields<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Since 1906, several field botanists (e.g. Mattiolo, Gola, Fontana, Ferrari, Mussa etc.) observed, registered and collected the herbs species present in several sectors of the Punta Mesco cape.

<sup>46</sup> Guido *et al.* cit.

<sup>47</sup> See R. Cevasco, C. Montanari, D. Moreno, *Ecologia storica*, in Gabellieri, Pescini, *Biografia di un paesaggio rurale* cit.

These species are today totally lost in the *Rio della Gatta* catchment area, but some isolated plants are still found during the field survey of the 5T.ERA project with some frequency in shelter stations (pockets of earth on rocky outcrops) along the edges of the reopened paths and mule tracks<sup>48</sup>. This observation confirms that here the soil seed bank still preserves some species that populated the slope during the pastoral management phase.

It is interesting to point out that they correspond, in particular, to the species of the sub-family of the Cichorioideae which were collected by the last inhabitants of the promontory until the 1980s to prepare the *Gatafin*: as *Hyoseris radiata*, *Reichardia picroides* (*scréppue* dial.), *Leontodon hispidus* (*tagiainétti* dial.). Their distribution towards favourable micro habitats generally has been activated by the persistence of grazing livestock and harvesting practices (including mowing, collection of vegetable manure, edible mushroom in the neighborhood) of the Case Lovara farm's last inhabitants.

In Table 2 a synthesis of the herbaceous species used in cooking is proposed, including those used in the preparation of *Gatafin*.

The progressive disappearance of these herbs and their habitats has meant that in the current recipe other herbs species has been used (such as the use of chard alone as a substitute for edible herbs), often with no connection to the history of the place (*liens au lieu*).

This also happens in relation to the use of the other main components of the *Gatafin* recipe: fresh sheep cheese. Today the cheese most used in the preparation of *Gatafin* is Parmigiano Reggiano: a recent introduction due to the disappearance of local cheeses, that instead were connected with the transhumant grazing system that has characterized Punta Mesco for centuries. The last inhabitants of Case Lovara refer to the use of this fresh cheese in the years 1940-50: hereafter sheep and goat breeding

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<sup>48</sup> Actually part of the ancient pedestrian routes reopened by the Cinque Terre National Park administration and the Fondo Ambientale Italiano during the restoration project of the individual landscape of Case Lovara farm.

ceased completely as did the domestic production of unseasoned small cheese (*furmagette*) only in the 1980s. Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Levanto area every small property raised some head of cattle and sheep and non-commercial production of milk and dairy products persisted including the making of *furmagette*. An interesting

Plant family	Plant specie	Vernacular name	Micro- habitat	Meal
Compositae	<i>Lactuca perennis</i>	Latussue	Arid areas, terraced field, dry stone walls	Gatafin
	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Latussue	Id.	Id.
	<i>Mycelis muralis</i>	Latussue	Id.	Id.
	<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Latussue	Id.	Id.
	<i>Picris hieracioides</i>	Erbe gianche	Olive orchard, moist terraced vineyards	General
	<i>Picris altissima</i>	Erbe gianche	Id.	General
	<i>Picris echioides</i>	Erbe gianche	Id.	Id.
	<i>Reichardia picroides</i>	Scrèppue	dry stone walls	Gatafin
	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	Tàgiainetti	Id.	Id.
	<i>Hyoseris radiata</i>	Tàgiainetti	Id.	Id.
	<i>Taraxacum officinalis</i>	Piscianlettù	Paths and roads edges	Id.
	<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	Cicoria	Paths and roads edges, meadows	Id.
	<i>Andryala integrifolia</i>	?	Arid areas abandoned	General
Cruciferae	<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	?	?	?
Umbrelliferae	<i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i>	Pimpinella	Olive orchard, terraced fields	General
	<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>	Basiggia	Cliff on the sea	Gatafin
	?	Ravéstene	Olive orchard, moist terraced vineyards	General

Tab. 2 List of herbaceous species collected for the preparation of *Gatafin* and/or for general culinary meal related to some taxa traced in the pollen diagrams. This synthesis was also built on the basis of the archaeological-environmental evidence relating to the herbaceous species historically present on the promontory of Punta Mesco and those reported by local informants.

documentation of this production based on the forage resources of the area is kept in the local museum of Levanto. The collection of the *Mostra Permanente della Cultura Materiale* (Permanent Exhibition of Material Culture) includes wooden and metal containers used in the production of cheese that have the same shape and material as those used in the corresponding summer pastures of the Apennines<sup>49</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusion

By using the methodological approaches of Environmental Archaeology and Historical Ecology embedded in a multidisciplinary research framework, it was possible to observe the historical dynamics of the herbaceous populations used in the past for the preparation of a peculiar dish, the *Gatafin*.

The cross-checking of oral sources with the palynological, archaeological and documentary ones allowed us to highlight patterns of continuity and discontinuity in the use of the main ingredients of the *Gatafin*: the wild herbs and the cheese. Nowadays, *Gatafin* is often prepared using chard and Parmesan cheese, two very different ingredients from those used in the past. The reason of such a change is to be found in the progressive disappearance (which started between 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century) of the environmental management practices characterising the slopes of the Mesco promontory for centuries (at least since the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD).

Among the environmental effects of these multiple agro-sylvo-pastoral practices (grounded on transhumance activity between mountain and coastal areas) there was the activation of the herb population ecology, especially thanks to the maintenance of open spaces and meadows.

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<sup>49</sup> Some photos and description of these tools used for the domestic production of cheese in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century can be found in Gabellieri, Pescini, Tinterri, *Sulle tracce dei pastori* cit.

These herbs have gradually disappeared because of a gradual disappearance of transhumant farming, of open space and of the progressive colonization of tree plant species. Such floristic and gastronomic heritage today almost completely lost at Punta Mesco.

When it comes to characterise a local production, it is not enough to insert it in the current spatial/environmental and social context, but it is necessary to re-locate it within the historical and environmental processes shaping that area of production over time. As in the example of the *Gatafin* edible herbs this concerns both the ecology of the collection sites and the history of production (grazing, temporary agriculture, transhumance) and activation practices (herbs layer species composition, etc.). Avoiding conventional disciplinary generalizations, the historical and archaeological approach has provided fruitful tools and approaches for the study of the local gastronomic productions. It allows us to bring to light the historical relationships (*liens au lieu*) between the tangible availability of the environmental resources (*e.g.* variation in foraging sites ecology, habitats, historical land use, legal access to resources, etc.) and the merging, rise and fall of embedded food practices.

# Wine and the vine in ancient Italy: an archaeological approach

*Emlyn Dodd\**

## 1. Introduction

Wine was both a daily drink and reserved for special occasions in antiquity, played a key role in trade and the economy, and was found in medicinal, religious, domestic, and commercial contexts. Roman winemaking and viticulture were traditionally interpreted through (often-scattered, incomplete and biased) historical sources and, to an extent, comparative ethnography<sup>1</sup>. Increasing attention on Roman agriculture over recent decades, buoyed by improvements in technology and a growing methodological skillset, has, however, created an archaeological dataset that now plays a crucial role in confirming, tweaking or refuting historic interpretation<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> J.P. Brun, *From oil to wine? A balanced view on the production of the most representative agricultural products of antiquity*, in J.P. Brun, N. Garnier, G. Olcese (eds.), *Making wine in western-Mediterranean. Production and the trade of amphorae: Some new data from Italy. Panel 3.5*, Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World 9, Propylaeum, Heidelberg 2020, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> In particular, «a revolution in scientific techniques over the past forty years has made it possible to re-examine and, in many cases, re-write the history of

This chapter focusses on the archaeological evidence available and how it illuminates production of the dominant beverage in Italian antiquity-wine. Archaeometric techniques, including geophysical and chemical analyses, are included alongside traditional methods of survey and excavation. Discussion is mostly restricted to the Italian peninsula within the bounds of the Early Roman period to Late Antiquity (c. 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE to 600 CE). Such temporal and geographical confines allow discussion of winemaking and use for both domestic and export markets, through periods of prosperity and decline<sup>3</sup>, on various scales and for a

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wine»: P. McGovern, *From east to west: The ancient Near Eastern "wine culture" travels land and sea*, in S. Perez, J. Perez (eds.), *Patrimonio cultural de la vid y el vino: Vine and wine cultural heritage*, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid 2013, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> Roman winemaking in Italy went through peaks and troughs, dependent on a range of exogenous and endogenous factors of which space does not permit discussion here. Examples include the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE, which reportedly destroyed a great number of Campanian vineyards and caused the so-called 'wine famine' in Rome, and, in the following centuries, the proliferation of viticulture in Hispania and Gaul that eventually out-competed local Italian viticulture. The latter is particularly visible through archaeological evidence, namely amphorae; though recent work suggests Italian viticulture continued to a greater extent than previously thought, albeit on a smaller scale and with different purpose: P. Arthur, D. Williams, *Campanian wine, Roman Britain and the third century A.D.*, in «Journal of Roman Archaeology», 5 (1992), pp. 250-60; E. De Sena, *An assessment of wine and oil production in Rome's hinterland: Ceramic, literary, art historical and modern evidence*, in B. Frizell, A. Klynne (eds), *Roman villas around the Urbs: Interaction with landscape and environment*. Proceedings of a conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, (September 17-18, 2004), Roma 2005, p. 136; A. Marzano, *Agricultural production in the hinterland of Rome: Wine and olive oil*, in A. Bowman, A. Wilson (eds.), *The Roman agricultural economy: Organisation, investment, and production*, Oxford 2013, pp. 85-106; J. Rossiter, *Wine-making after Pliny: Viticulture and farming technology in Late Antique Italy*, in L. Lavan, E. Zanini, A. Sarantis (eds.), *Technology in transition: A.D. 300-650*, 2008, pp. 93-118; R. Volpe, *Vino, vigneti ed anfore in Roma Repubblicana*, in *Suburbium II. Il*



range of sociocultural groups, strata and purposes. This is supplemented by contemporary ancient texts, including some, most importantly Cato the Elder, Pliny the Elder and Varro, from the Italian peninsular itself<sup>4</sup>.

Archaeological evidence for ancient viticulture and winemaking generally falls into five broad categories: remains of grapes, vines or vineyard arrangements, including irrigation and hydrological systems; tools (*e.g.* billhooks) used in agricultural processes; components of wine presses; architectural structures (*e.g.* vats or treading floors); and metal, ceramic and more rarely organic evidence for the storage, transport and serving of wine. These categories largely align with the sequence of the following pages, observing evidence from cultivation and the harvest, through processing and production, to fermentation, storage and transport.

## 2. Pre-Roman influences in Italy

Spurred by recent developments in archaeometric, paleoenvironmental, geochemical and DNA analyses, theories regarding the origins of

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*Suburbio di Roma dalla fine dell'età monarchica alla nascita del sistema delle ville*, (Atti del Convegno 16 settembre, 3 dicembre 2004 e 16-17 febbraio 2005), 2009, p. 381.

<sup>4</sup> Major ancient agricultural treatises include Cato's pioneering *De Agri Cultura* (2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE), Varro's *Res Rusticae* (37 BCE), Columella's *De Re Rustica* (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE) and Palladius' *Opus Agriculturae* (late 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> c. CE). Pliny the Elder (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE) provides one of the most comprehensive accounts of ancient viticulture and winemaking, devoting Book 14 in his *Naturalis Historia* to the subject. For Late Antiquity in Italy, Zeno of Verona in the mid-4<sup>th</sup> c. (*Tractatus* 2.27.2), Symmachus in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> c. CE (*Ep.* 3.23.1), Cassiodorus in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> c. (*Exp. in Psalm. VIII*), and Pope Gregory in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. (*Dial.* 9) provide a glimpse into the contemporary winemaking process, which appears largely reflective of earlier sources. Although later, and outside the chronology of this chapter, the Byzantine Greek farming manual, *Geoponika* (10<sup>th</sup> c. CE), provides an equally useful and thorough discussion of viticulture, directly citing and drawing much of its material from earlier Greek and Roman sources.

wine and the vine have been developed. Despite its omnipresence, wine did not originate in Italy nor Roman culture, but more likely in the mountainous regions of Lebanon/anti-Lebanon, the Taurus, Caucasus, and Zagros<sup>5</sup>. Wild grapevines were present in Italy and exploited in various forms since the Mesolithic, with new evidence indicating, albeit circumstantially, possible beginnings of cultivation in the Bronze Age<sup>6</sup>; though uses of the grape (and vine) are many and it is difficult

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<sup>5</sup> On the origins of winemaking in Neolithic villages like Hajji Firuz Tepe as early as 7000 BCE, and the possibility of vine domestication stemming from the Near East, see J.P. Brun, *Archéologie du vin et de l'huile de la préhistoire à l'époque hellénistique*, 2004, pp. 37-39; P. McGovern, *Two luxury items of the Canaanites and Phoenicians' Royal purple and wine*, in *Forum II: Ligue des cités Cananéennes, Phéniciennes et Puniques*, 30 October 2009, 2009, pp. 185-86; P. McGovern, B. Luley, N. Rovira *et al.*, *Beginning of viticulture in France*. «PNAS», 110(25) (2013), pp. 10147-52; A.M. Mercuri, P. Torri, A. Florenzano *et al.*, *Sharing the agrarian knowledge with archaeology: First evidence of the dimorphism of vitis pollen from the Middle Bronze Age of N Italy (Terramara Santa Rosa di Poviglio)*. «Sustainability», 13 (2021), p. 13. Early evidence, ca. 7000 BCE, for a mixed wine drink has also been found in China: P. McGovern, J. Zhang, J. Tang *et al.*, *Fermented beverages of pre- and proto-historic China*, «PNAS», 101 (2004), pp. 17593-98.

<sup>6</sup> G. Di Pasquale, E. Russo Ermolli, *Etruria – Le tracce più antiche della vite nel paesaggio: le grandi foreste planiziali*, in G. Di Pasquale (ed.), *Vinum Nostrum: Art, science and myth of wine in ancient Mediterranean cultures*, 2010, pp. 58-61; E. Dodd, *The archaeology of wine production in Roman and pre-Roman Italy*. «American Journal of Archaeology», 126 (3) (2022), p. 443-80, <https://doi.org/10.1086/719697>; A.M. Mercuri *et al.*, 2021 cit. n. 5, pp. 13-16; L. Motta, K. Beydler, *Agriculture in Iron Age and Archaic Italy*, in D. Hollander, T. Howe (eds.), *A companion to ancient agriculture*, 2020, p. 403; A. Trentacoste, L. Lodwick, *Towards an agroecology of the Roman Expansion*, in S. Bernard, L.M. Mignone, D. Padilla Peralta (eds.), *Making the Middle Republic: New Approaches to Rome and Italy, c. 400-200, BCE*, 2023, pp. 164-90. Early evidence for wild grapevines and grape consumption was found at the Epigravettian and Mesolithic sites of Grotta del Romito (Calabria), Grotta dell'Uzzo (Sicily), and Torre Canne (Apulia), and fossilised traces of

grapevine ancestors from c. 50 million years ago located near Verona and Vicenza in Northern Italy: J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 81; G. De Lorenzis, F. Mercati, C. Bergamini *et al.*, *Genomic tools to reconstruct the grapevine domestication and evolution in the western Mediterranean basin*, in J.P. Brun, N. Garnier, G. Olcese (eds.), *Making wine in western-Mediterranean. Production and the trade of amphorae: Some new data from Italy. Panel 3.5. Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World 9*, 2020, p. 23; F. Grassi, M. Labra, S. Imazio *et al.*, *Phylogeographical structure and conservation genetics of wild grapevine*, «Conservation Genetics», 7 (2006), p. 837; S. Marvelli, S. De Siena, E. Rizzoli *et al.*, *The origin of grapevine cultivation in Italy: The archaeobotanical evidence*, «Ann. Bot.», 3 (2013), pp. 155–59. Grapevines may have been exploited in Neolithic Italy – grape seeds occur in several Early Neolithic sites of N Italy, from Friuli to Liguria, with some evidence of vine management – and cultivation is increasingly likely from the Final Bronze Age (c. 1200-1000 BCE), visible through the remains of pruned vines in a rubbish pit at Santa Maria Capua Vetere in Campania: D. Arobba, R. Caramiello, M. Firpo *et al.*, *New evidence on the earliest human presence in the urban area of Genoa (Liguria, Italy): a multi-proxy study of a mid-Holocene deposit at the mouth of the Bisagno river*, «Holocene», 28 (12) (2018), pp. 1918-35; A. Gismondi, G. Di Marco, F. Martini *et al.*, *Grapevine carpological remains revealed the existence of a Neolithic domesticated Vitis vinifera L. specimen containing ancient DNA partially preserved in modern ecotypes*, «JAS», 69 (2016), pp. 75-84; D. Lentjes, G.S. Semerari, *Big debates over small fruits: Wine and oil production in protohistoric southern Italy (ca 1350 – 750 BC)*, «Babesch», 91 (2016), p. 6; M. Rottoli, E. Castiglioni, *Prehistory of plant growing and collecting in northern Italy, based on seed remains from the early Neolithic to the Chalcolithic (c. 5600–2100 cal B.C.)*, «Vegetation History and Archaeobotany», 18 (2009), pp. 9-103. Pollen analysis revealed potential evidence for early grapevine cultivation c. 2000 BCE in the Massaciuccoli Basin, Tuscany, along with pips from Bronze Age contexts near Modena, and observation of domesticated traits via morphometric and molecular analyses in N Tuscany: B. Aranguren, P. Perazzi, *La struttura interrata della media età del bronzo di San Lorenzo a Grece a Firenze e l'inizio della coltivazione della vite in Toscana*, «Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche», 57 (2007), pp. 243-62; A. Cardarelli, G. Bosi, R. Rinaldi *et al.*, *Vino o non vino? Nuovi dati sui vinaccioli della Terramara di Montale (Modena) tra la fine della media età del Bronzo e il Bronzo recente*, in *Preistoria del cibo: 50<sup>ma</sup> Riunione Scientifica dell'Istituto*

to determine a clear relationship between early cultivation and wine-making. Recent evidence does, however, make a strong case for Bronze Age, and perhaps even Neolithic, Italian cultures experimenting with grapes (whether wild, cultivated or domesticated) and fermentation at some point<sup>7</sup>. After all, Italy and the Aegean were part of an interconnected socio-economic network and it is unsurprising that further knowledge of vine cultivation and winemaking might be transferred<sup>8</sup>.

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*Italiano di preistoria e Protostoria*, 2015; B.I. Menozzi, A. Fichera, M.A. Guido *et al.*, *Lineamenti paleoambientali del bacino del Lago di Massaciuccoli (Toscana nord-occidentale)*, «Atti Soc. Toscana Sci. Nat. Ser.», B 109 (2002), pp. 177-87. Perhaps also seen in increasing preference for, and exploitation of, grapevine over cornelian cherry in the Terramare culture around Ferrara from the Middle to Late Bronze Age, c. 1400-1170 BCE: A.M. Mercuri, C.A. Accorsi, M. Bandini Mazzanti *et al.*, *Economy and environment of Bronze Age settlements – Terramaras – in the Po Plain (Northern Italy): First results of the archaeobotanical research at the Terramara di Montale*, «Vegetation History and Archaeobotany», 16 (2006), pp. 43-60.

<sup>7</sup>Quantities were almost certainly limited. See J.P. Brun, 2020 cit. n. 1, p. 7; A. Pecci, E. Borgna, S. Mileto *et al.*, *Wine consumption in Bronze Age Italy: Combining organic residue analysis*, «JAS», 123 (2020), pp. 1-12. Supported in the Middle and Late Bronze Age with exponentially increasing use of cups, strainers, bowls, craters and other vessels (in Mycenaean and local form) relevant to wine production and consumption: Cardarelli *et al.*, 2015 cit. n. 6; D. Lentjes, G.S. Semerari, 2016 cit. n. 6, p. 3. On Sardinia, it is now clear that vines were cultivated since the Early Bronze Age and wine consumed before the arrival of Phoenicians: A. Depalmas, C. Loi, N. Garnier, A. Pecci, *Wine in Sardinia: New archaeological data and research methodology*, in J.P. Brun, N. Garnier, G. Olcese, *Making wine in western-Mediterranean. Production and the trade of amphorae: Some new data from Italy. Panel 3.5*. Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World 9, 2020, pp. 61-71. Evidence of cultivated grapevines from the Aeolian island of Salina as well as Vivara, nearby Ischia, illuminate Middle Bronze Age (c. 1500-1400 BCE) expertise in viticulture: J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 81.

<sup>8</sup>J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 80-81 & 159; D. Lentjes, G.S. Semerari, 2016 cit. n. 6, pp. 1-3. See A. Cardarelli *et al.* 2015 cit. n. 6 for increasing

By no means was this a linear trend across Italy; archaeological and botanical evidence suggests highly localised uptake, in flux with regional and interregional socio-political and economic events, and variable diachronically from site-to-site often with centuries between.

The slow movement of wine production both westwards and within Italy is most visible archaeologically as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE via two streams of development: 1) established local viticultural practice in places where the native grapevine thrived (*e.g.* pressed grape residues at 10<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century Longola di Poggiomarino on the river Sarno, Campania, and Villanovan Gran Carro, Lazio [fig. 1])<sup>9</sup>; and 2) an influx of maritime Phoenician contact with native populations<sup>10</sup>.

Phoenician knowledge and influence are clearly observed through similarities in amphora and flask shapes and the transfer of technologies

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traffic, including trade of ceramics and bronze objects, between Italy and the Aegean in the 14<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Archaeobotanical material from Late Bronze Age Calabria (S Italy) suggests a peak in grapevine cultivation, beyond domestic need, and, shortly after, a decline to household levels by the end of the Bronze Age, perhaps linked to the disruption of trade routes with the Mycenaean world: D. Lentjes, *Planting the seeds of change: Landscape and land use in first millennium BC southeast Italy*, 2016. Winemaking, among other fermented grape products, was certainly present by this time on both mainland Greece and Crete, see J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 70-80).

<sup>9</sup> C. Cicirelli, C. Albore Livadie, L. Costantini *et al.*, *La vite a Poggiomarino, Longola: un contest di vinificazione dell'Età del Ferro*, in P. Guzzo, M. Guidobaldi, *Nuove ricerche archeologiche nell'area Vesuviana (scavi 2003-2006): atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 1-3 febbraio 2007*, 2008, pp. 574-75; D. Lentjes, G.S. Semerari, 2016 cit. n. 6, p. 7. Longola, which has been submerged since the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE, revealed numerous grape pips, pruned vines and pressings.

<sup>10</sup> An *askoide* pitcher from Telavè, Sardinia, shows residual traces of wine and has been dated through C<sup>14</sup> to c. 1000 BCE: S. Marvelli *et al.*, 2013 cit. n. 6, p. 160.

like metalworking, glassmaking and ivory carving<sup>11</sup>. Increasingly widespread contemporary evidence for grapevine cultivation across the Italian peninsular supplements this, perhaps linked to the transfer of new technical knowledge and cultivars<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, Phoenician and earlier Canaanite cultures in the Levant long possessed considerable viticultural technical skill – knowledge that was communicated across their maritime trading network, from the Near East to North Africa, coastal Mediterranean Spain, France, Sicily, Sardinia, the Aeolian islands and Etruria<sup>13</sup>. These technical and practical aspects merged with sociocultural ideologies as local Italian (Villanovan and Etruscan) aristocracies soon adopted and adapted Eastern Mediterranean behaviours and established hierarchical drinking customs, equipment, and self-representation<sup>14</sup>.

Slightly later, Greek colonial movements further transmitted and (re)embedded viniculture across southern Italy. Those that settled in this region named it *Oenotria* (Antiochos, *FGrHist* 3.555) due to favourable conditions for grapevines<sup>15</sup>. In elite tombs at Archaic Cumae

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<sup>11</sup> P. McGovern, 2009 cit. n. 5, pp. 187-88; P. McGovern, 2013 cit. n. 2, p. 240; P. McGovern *et al.*, 2013 cit. n. 5, p. 10147.

<sup>12</sup> A. Trentacoste, L. Lodwick cit. n. 6.

<sup>13</sup> S. Marvelli *et al.*, 2013 cit. n. 6, p. 156 with Fig. 1; P. McGovern, 2013 cit. n. 2, p. 239. Similarly, on the early Phoenician transmission of viniculture to France, see P. McGovern *et al.*, 2013 cit. n. 5.

<sup>14</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 172; L. Motta, K. Beydler, 2020 cit. n. 6, p. 410. See D. Lentjes, G.S. Semerari, 2016 cit. n. 6, pp. 1-2 on how wine and the vine aided social organisation and created increasingly sedentary ancient Mediterranean communities.

<sup>15</sup> J.P. Brun, *Le vin et l'huile dans la Méditerranée antique: Viticulture, oleiculture et procédés de transformation*, 2003, p. 87; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 159. Though it is possible that Bronze Age cultures in Greece preferred a mixed beverage, made from Pramnian wine, honey, barley and topped with cheese, akin to the so-called *kykeon* of Homer (*Iliad* XI.638-41; *Odyssey* X.234; *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 210; E. Dodd, 2022 cit. n. 6). This may also have been transmitted to Italy via Greek colonisation – graters perhaps for cheese

there are Corinthian A amphorae with associated metal vessels for wine drinking, as well as rock-cut presses on Ischia perhaps also from the Bronze and Early Iron Age<sup>16</sup>. Recent archaeological and scientific research has opened the possibility of a third route as early as the Late Bronze Age – a northern overland route via the tributaries of the Danube and Po rivers<sup>17</sup>. Archaeobotanical evidence of grapevine cultivation across Italy, likely associated with winemaking, accelerates through the 9<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE of the Iron Age<sup>18</sup>.

By at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, local Italic cultures, notably the Etruscans, mastered viticulture. Tombs in Etruria and Latium (*e.g.* at Vulci and Decima) are filled with amphorae that perhaps contained local wine and vessels in Etruria and the Faliscan region possess religious inscriptions inviting the bearer to drink<sup>19</sup>. The production of Italian wine escalates further during the late 6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE – visible via agricultural installations at an Etruscan farm at Podere Tartuchino,

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were found in elite tombs at Pithekoussai on the island of Ischia, near Naples (P. McGovern, 2009 cit. n. 5, p. 187). Mixed beverages, including Etruscan and Greek grogs, might, at times, have acted as precursors to pure grape wine.

<sup>16</sup> *E.g.* in the tomb of Pontecagnano 926 (7<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and Artiaco 104 (late 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE): J.P. Brun, 2020 cit. n. 1, pp. 8-10). Genomic sequencing of grapevine material also supports links between Greece and, first, southern Italy then, later, central Italy and France, aligned with socioeconomic and historic events regarding Greek colonisation: G. De Lorenzis *et al.*, 2020 cit. n. 6., J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 160-64 and A. Depalmas *et al.*, 2020 cit. n. 7 provide detailed discussion of the evidence from Cumae and Ischia.

<sup>17</sup> A. Pecci *et al.*, 2020 cit. n. 7.

<sup>18</sup> R. Aversano, B. Basile, M. Paolo Buonincontri *et al.*, *Dating the beginning of the Roman viticultural model in the western Mediterranean: The case study of Chianti (central Italy)*, «PloS ONE», 12 (11) (2017), p. 1; S. Marvelli *et al.*, 2013 cit. n. 6, p. 160; L. Motta, K. Beydler, 2020 cit. n. 6, p. 406.

<sup>19</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 172; P. Komar, *Eastern wines on western tables. Consumption, trade and economy in ancient Italy*, 2020, pp. 40-42.

at Fontanile del Sambuca, Poggio Tondo, Pian d'Alma, and perhaps also Oliovitolo near Taranto (Fig. 1)<sup>20</sup>. This evidence coalesces with that of industrial local production for ceramic wine amphorae as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, including exported wine to Sardinia, Iberia, and Gaul in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>21</sup>. Local expertise, combined with continual Phoenician and Greek influence, entrenched winemaking in what would become Roman culture.

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<sup>20</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 172-73; P. Perkins, I. Attolini, *An Etruscan farm at Podere Tartuchino*, «PBSR», 60 (1992), pp. 71-134; A. Trentacoste, L. Lodwick cit. n. 6. Oliovitolo is attributed as an olive oil processing centre, but the published material culture does not satisfactorily remove the possibility of an association with viticulture. Also see G. Cifani, *Osservazioni sui paesaggi agrari, espropri e colonizzazione nella prima età repubblicana*, in A. Bertrand, *Expropriations et confiscations en Italie et dans les provinces: la colonisation sous la République et l'Empire*, MEFRA, 127.2 (2015), pp. 429-37 for 6<sup>th</sup> c. BCE press installations attributed to olive oil, which could equally be multi-purpose for oil and wine throughout the annual agricultural cycle (an argument perhaps strengthened considering the often-biennial nature of olive production). See J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 164-66 for transmission of Greek vine types and strengthening production at colonial sites from the early 5<sup>th</sup> c. BCE. R. Aversano *et al.*, 2017 cit. n. 18 provide morphometric and DNA analyses on grape seeds from Cetamura in Chianti, Etruria, which illustrate changing cultivation and viticultural strategy at the crucial period of Etruscan to Roman cultural dominance (c. 300 BCE-100 CE); namely, changes in vineyard management rather than selection and introduction of new vine varieties. D.L. Thurmond, *From vines to wines in Classical Rome: A handbook of viticulture and oenology in Rome and the Roman West*, 2017, pp. 22-33 summarises that winemaking was systematised and commercialised by interplay between native and immigrant populations, though somewhat downplays local expertise of which we now possess a clearer evidentiary base.

<sup>21</sup> *E.g.* at Sant'Antonio-Marsiliana d'Albegna: J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 172; A. Zifferero, G. Pieragnoli, C. Sanchirico *et al.*, *Un sito artigianale con anfore da trasporto tipo Py 3B a Marsiliana d'Albegna (Manciano, GR)*, «Officina Etruscologia. Semestrale d'archeologia (I mestieri del fuoco)», 1 (2009), pp. 101-26.



### 3. Vine cultivation and the harvest

It is often difficult to see ancient viticulture in the archaeological record. This contrasts with ancient literature, predominantly Roman agricultural treatises, which provide a rich source of information on the entire cultivation lifecycle, including determining areas suitable for vines; preparing fields and soil for vines; propagating, grafting and planting; caring for, pruning and maintaining vineyards; and the harvest, including how many workers, what tools and the exact activities that occur<sup>22</sup>.

Pompeii has revealed many clues of Roman viticultural activity. Over a number of years, Jashemski and her team uncovered areas within the city walls that were planted with vines – perhaps best known is the so-called Foro Boario (insula II.5)<sup>23</sup>. Due to their burial by volcanic material from Vesuvius, vineyard layouts were remarkably well preserved and, in a similar manner to the human bodies of Pompeii, reconstructed using plaster casts<sup>24</sup>. This allowed researchers to compare archaeological material with descriptions by ancient writers. Soil, topography, drainage, spacing between vines, interplanting of fruit trees,

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<sup>22</sup> See E. Dodd, *Roman and Late Antique wine production in the eastern Mediterranean*, 2020, pp. 17-22 for an overview of relevant ancient literature.

<sup>23</sup> P. Boissinot, *Les vignobles des environs de Mégara Hyblaea et les traces de la viticulture italienne Durant l'Antiquité*, «MEFRA», 121 (1) (2009), pp. 111-13; W. Jashemski, *Excavations in the "Foro Boario" at Pompeii: A preliminary report*, «AJA», 72.1 (1968), pp. 69-73; W. Jashemski, *Large vineyard discovered in ancient Pompeii*, «Science», 180 (4088) (1973), pp. 821-30; W. Jashemski, *The discovery of a large vineyard at Pompeii: University of Maryland excavations, 1970*, «AJA», 77 (1) (1973), pp. 27-41; W. Jashemski, *The gardens of Pompeii: An interim report*, «Cronache Pompeiane», 1 (1975), pp. 53-63. Other evidence exists at the *Caupona of Euxinus* (I.6), *House of the Ship Europa* (I.15), *House of the Gladiator* (I.20), *Gardens of the Fugitives* (I.21) and *Hercules* (II.8), and at insulae II.2 and II.7. See E. Dodd, 2022 cit. n. 6, pp. 451-52 for a recent example nearby at Scafati.

<sup>24</sup> W. Jashemski, 1973 cit. n. 23; 1975 cit. n. 23, p. 59.

methods of vine training, and use of stakes, trellises and pathways all agreed to varying extents with descriptions by the Roman agricultural writers<sup>25</sup>. In effect, longstanding hypothetical reconstruction via literature was ground-truthed.

Across the Italian peninsular traces of ancient viticulture and associated hydrological features have also been detected through excavation and survey. Vineyard trenches from the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE were found near Centocelle, with other early examples at Fontanile del Sambuca in Blera (Lazio), Taranto (Apulia), and Aquarossa and San Giovenale in Etruria (Fig. 1)<sup>26</sup>. Later trenches, some from the Imperial era, were located at Masseria Martelli and Troia Nord near Lucera (Apulia); Pannaconi near Vibo Valentia (Calabria); Tor di Mezzavia, Osteria delle Capannacce, Ponte di Nona, Casal Bianco, and Tor Pagnotta just outside Rome, and Musarna (Lazio); and Falciano del Massico (Campania)<sup>27</sup>. Such trenches were historically interpreted as ‘canali’, perhaps

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<sup>25</sup> E.g. the varying Roman methods of vine training illustrated by W. Jashemski, ‘The discovery of a large vineyard’, 1973 cit. n. 23, p. 34 with ill. 3. On trellising here and at the nearby Villa Regina, see J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 177; R. Volpe, *Il suburbia*, In A. Giardina, *Roma antica*, 2000, pp. 183-210; R. Volpe, *Lo sfruttamento agricolo e le costruzioni sul pianoro di Centocelle in età Repubblicana*, in P. Gioia, R. Volpe, *Centocelle I. Roma S.D.O. Le indagini archeologiche*, 2004, pp. 447-61; R. Volpe, 2009 cit. n. 3. There are also many suggestive parallel trenches throughout necropoleis around Paestum in Campania: P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, pp. 109-11. Further afield, a range of vineyard trenches are known at Megara Hyblaea, in Sicily, by farmers with small plots of land and likely post-6<sup>th</sup> c. BCE: P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 165 and 172. An enclosure farm near Luceria (Apulia), perhaps 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE, also appears to have an adjacent vineyard amongst mixed economy: J. Rossiter, *Roman farm buildings in Italy*, BAR Supp. 52, 1978, pp. 5-6.

<sup>27</sup> P. Arthur, *Romans in northern Campania*, Archaeological Monographs of the British School at Rome 1, 1991, pp. 76-77; P. Boissinot, 2009 cit.

for drainage, though recent interpretation suggests use for vines. Their dimensions are highly variable across Italy<sup>28</sup>. The concentration in the *suburbium* of Rome appear as parallel trenches dug into soft tufa below the soil, typically 0.8-0.9 m wide with spaces of 2.5 m between and a relatively square profile<sup>29</sup>. Narrower trenches with a concave profile are instead identified as channels for water, used for both irrigation and drainage, and closely connected to those for vines<sup>30</sup>. All except one are dated to the Republican period<sup>31</sup>. Most of these trenches are found to the east of Rome reflecting the suitability of this region for the vine, as opposed to that on the right bank of the Tiber where almost none are found (though excavation bias must be noted)<sup>32</sup>. It seems that in the Roman Republican period the *suburbium* was characterised by cultivation of the vine, probably for consumption in local towns and the city, interplanted with other fruits, vegetables, wheat and legumes<sup>33</sup>. Nota-

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n. 23, p. 106, 108, 114 and 118; J.P. Brun, *Archéologie du vin et de l'huile dans l'Empire romain*, 2004, pp. 28-33; See R. Volpe, 2009 cit. n. 3, table 1 for a comprehensive listing of vineyard traces in the Roman *suburbium*. P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, p. 84 provides a detailed description of different types of agricultural excavation in antiquity and how this is depicted within the archaeology, as well as an illustrated overview of all available evidence in Italy (p. 100 with fig. 10).

<sup>28</sup> Compare dimensions reported throughout P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, and a number in P. Arthur, 1991 cit. n. 27, pp. 76-77 with n. 133.

<sup>29</sup> Those nearby Megara Hyblaea also have a square profile and are similarly interpreted as vine trenches: P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, pp. 88-91.

<sup>30</sup> R. Volpe, 2009 cit. n. 3, p. 371.

<sup>31</sup> P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, pp. 116-17.

<sup>32</sup> R. Volpe, 2009 cit. n. 3, p. 371.

<sup>33</sup> P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, p. 115; A. Marzano, 2013 cit. n. 3; R. Volpe, 2009 cit. n. 3, pp. 371-77 and 380. Little evidence exists for *amphorae* or ceramic containers produced nearby Rome to store and transport wine from suburbs to the city, which leads archaeologists to conclude that perishable containers, such as animal skins or *cullei*, were used: A. Marzano, 2013

bly, literary sources from the Republic make no mention of viticulture around Rome<sup>34</sup>. Archaeological evidence, therefore, plays a crucial role to fill *lacunae* in our understanding of local productive topography.

Various tools used in cultivation and the harvest, with parallels in Roman literature, have also been unearthed and provide a tangible glimpse into the daily life and practice of a vineyard worker. Most importantly, the handheld *falx vinitoria* was a multipurpose curved blade used specifically for pruning and other viticultural activities (together with the smaller *falcula* for picking grape bunches)<sup>35</sup>. It had a paring edge, pointed projection for gouging and hollowing bark, and a tiny axe blade attached to the back<sup>36</sup>. Along with the usual type, like those found at Grotta di Malconsiglio<sup>37</sup> (near Sybaris, Calabria) and Ben-

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cit. n. 3, p. 88; R. Volpe, 2009 cit. n. 3, pp. 379-81 and 390). Methods of polycultural cultivation, including the *arbustum* technique where vines are interplanted with and encouraged to climb trees, are well represented in ancient Roman texts and archaeology: J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, p. 36; D. Van Limbergen, *Vinum picenum and oliva picena II: Further thoughts on wine and oil presses in central Adriatic Italy*, «Babesch» 94 (2019), p. 117; D. Van Limbergen, P. Monsieur, F. Vermeulen, *The role of overseas export and local consumption demand in the development of viticulture in central Adriatic Italy (200 BC – AD 150). The case of the Ager Potentinus and the wider Potenza valley*, in G. Tol, T. De Haas, *The economic integration of Roman Italy: Rural communities in a globalising world*, 2017, pp. 342-66.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. Varro only mentions the cultivation of fruit, vegetables, poultry and eggs: R. Volpe, 2009 cit. n. 3, p. 384.

<sup>35</sup> R. Billiard, *La vigne dans l'Antiquité*, 1913, pp. 349-52; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 26; K.D. White, *Agricultural implements of the Roman world*, 2010 (reissue from 1967), pp. 93-97.

<sup>36</sup> A.G. Brown, I. Meadows, S.D. Turner *et al.*, *Roman vineyards in Britain: Stratigraphic and palynological data from Wollaston in the Nene Valley, England*, «Antiquity», 75 (2001), p. 753. See the illustrations in R. Billiard, 1913 cit. n. 35, p. 349; J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, p. 32.

evento (Campania), a diverse range of sickle and hook-shaped tools were realistically used across the Roman world for viticultural activities<sup>38</sup>. Such tools were common for agricultural work in Italy until recently, and still are in some areas<sup>39</sup>. Indeed, the introduction of regular pruning and vineyard management represents one of the most important innovations in Roman viticulture, leading to larger berries and better yields<sup>40</sup>.

Representations in mosaic, fresco and relief also provide an important archaeological and artistic source, particularly to observe aspects of cultivation, harvest, and the vintage, reflective of the world in which these people lived. A relief on a curved well coping now at Villa Albani in Rome depicts workers carrying baskets of grapes to a shallow basin where they are trod by men holding each other (so as not to slip), with details of a mechanical winch press in the background and a juglet and *dolium* for fermentation.<sup>41</sup> A similar harvest and treading representation appears on the sarcophagus of Annia Faustina<sup>42</sup>. Originally from

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<sup>38</sup> *E.g.* the range held in the British Museum collection, see A.G. Brown *et al.*, 2001 cit. n. 36, p. 753; W.H. Manning, *Catalogue of the Romano-British iron tools, fittings and weapons in the British Museum*, 1985. Early examples from the Iron Age and Archaic era have also been recovered, including very early 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> c. BCE examples from Punta Charito (Ischia) perhaps belonging to a Greek settler: G. Bartoloni, *Le urne a capanna rinvenute in Italia*, 1987; P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, p. 111.

<sup>39</sup> A *falcula* found in a Sicilian flea market was used in an experimental archaeological study to recreate Roman wine: M. Indelicato, D. Malfiana, G. Cacciaguerra, *The archaeology of wine in Italy: A Sicilian experiment*, in R. Alonso, J. Baena, D. Canales, *Playing with the time. Experimental archaeology and the study of the past*, 2017, p. 323. K.D. White, 2010 cit. n. 35, p. 185 comments that a Roman example from Benevento is identical to that used by contemporary Italian vine-dressers.

<sup>40</sup> R. Aversano *et al.*, 2017 cit. n. 18, p. 11; Pliny, *HN* 14.14.

<sup>41</sup> J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, pp. 211-12.

<sup>42</sup> R. Billiard, 1913 cit. n. 35, p. 164.

Prati in Rome, now in the Centrale Montemartini museum, a late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE sarcophagus illustrates a mythical *vendemmia* festival and shows every aspect of wine production from harvest to treading. Here, cherubs climb ladders to reach grapes from vines trained high into trees – further evidence of the *arbustum* technique. At Minturnae (Lazio), a mosaic in the imperial baths portrays winged cherubs picking grapes from vines, pouring them from baskets into a brick basin and must flowing into *dolia*. Representations like these work in tandem with survey, excavation, scientific, and historical data to provide a well-rounded comprehension of Roman viti- and viniculture.

## 4. Winemaking

Winemaking was a well-developed technical process with several production techniques in use by the time it was transferred to Italy and, later, Rome. From at least the Early Republican era, these were developed further, creating increasingly diverse quantities, qualities, and types of wine<sup>43</sup>. Indeed, the varying complexity of viticultural production processes, in time, knowledge and resources required, naturally lent towards the creation of socially stratified products and qualitative differences<sup>44</sup>.

### 4.1 Treading

Treading floors (*calçatoria*) or vats are perhaps the quintessential piece of archaeological evidence signifying Roman wine production.

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<sup>43</sup> Seen already by the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE through Cato (*Agr.* 24, 104-25), who includes recipes for making various types of wine, as well as Pliny (throughout Book 14) and Columella's (*Rust.* 12.27, 12.37-12.42) extensive discussion of various wine types in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE.

<sup>44</sup> See A. Van Oyen, *The moral architecture of villa storage in Italy in the 1st c. B.C.*, «JRA», 28 (2015), p. 117.

Fundamentally unnecessary in the production of olive oil, the presence of a treading floor or basin distinguishes between two processes often difficult to tell apart. Up to 80% of the juice can be extracted by treading, which created the second highest quality wine<sup>45</sup>. Examples of such floors abound across Italy, from Imperial contexts like Villa Magna near Anagni, elite *villae rusticae* around Boscoreale in Campania, to those producing on a smaller scale for local demand, like the small insula I.20 treading floor within the walls of Pompeii that flows into a single *dolium*<sup>46</sup>. Others of varying size have been located on the Adriatic coastline at Tortoreto Muracche, Colombara di Acqualagna, and perhaps Fontanelle di Monsampolo del Tronto; San Giustino at Colle Plinio (Umbria); Settefinestre (Tuscany); just outside Rome at Guidonia, Via Nomentana (near S. Alessandro), Via Tiberina and Via Gabinia, and at Villa Magna, Fosso di Montegiardino, and nearby Nemi (Lazio); Villa Columbrella near Mondragone, Villa Carmiano/Gragnano at Stabiae and Somma Vesuviana (Campania); Grotta del Malconsiglio and perhaps the tanks and pavements at Pannaconi (Calabria), and possibly also at Villa Russi and Bologna (Emilia-Romagna) (see Fig. 2)<sup>47</sup>. It is possible to infer that small-

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<sup>45</sup> E. Dodd, 2020 cit. n. 22, p. 55; E. Dodd, 2022 cit. n. 6; D.L. Thurmond, 2017 cit. n. 20, p. 25; D. Van Limbergen, *Wine, Greek and Roman*, in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2020, accessed online 5/5/21. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.6888>.

<sup>46</sup> E. Dodd, *Pressing issues: A new discovery in the vineyard of region I.20, Pompeii*, «*Archaeologia Classica*», 68 (2017), pp. 577-88. Other small treading floors exist within the urban fabric of Pompeii, at II.9.6 (House of the Summer Triclinium), II.1.8-9 (House of Felix & Sabinus), and V.4.6-8 probably producing for local demand and to be sold at taverns.

<sup>47</sup> M.E. Blake, *The pavements of the Roman buildings of the Republic and early Empire*, «*MAAR*», 8 (1930), pp. 149-50; L. Ruggini, *Economia e società nell'Italia Annonaria*, 1961, pp. 530-33; E. Ciafardini, *Un complesso produttivo nell'ager Falernus: Contestualizzazione e nuovi dati archeologici*, «*OTIVM*:

er operations used portable basins made from organic materials of which nothing remains in the archaeological record.<sup>48</sup> The quantity of treading facilities visible today, therefore, provides a skewed representation (both socioeconomically and quantitatively) and is likely considerably fewer than the reality.

Treading floors could be used alone, as at Pompeii, with a mechanical press in the same physical space, like the now-reconstructed Villa dei Misteri (Fig. 3a), or with the two processes entirely separate (see the Late Republican villa at Tortoreto Muracche). At Villa Magna, the sole use of a large treading area within an Imperial estate may signify

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Archeologia e cultura del mondo antico» 4 (2018), p. 1–27; P. Ducati, *Storia di Bologna* 1, 1974, p. 422–23; G. Susini (ed.), *Russi: La villa Romana, la città*, 1975; J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, pp. 29–33 and 52; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, p. 11, 32–33, 38–42, 48–49; A. Marzano, *Roman villas in central Italy: A social and economic history*, 2007, p. 106, 110–12, 737; E. Fentress, M. Maiuro, *Villa Magna near Anagni: The emperor, his winery and the wine of Signia*, «JRA», 24 (2011), pp. 351–52; D. Van Limbergen, *Vinum Picenum and Oliva Picena. Wine and oil presses in central Adriatic Italy between the Late Republic and the Early Empire: Evidence and problems*, «Babesch», 86 (2011), p. 78; D. Van Limbergen, 2019 cit. n. 33, p. 113; M. Aoyagi, A. De Simone, G.F. De Simone, *The “Villa of Augustus” at Somma Vesuviana*, in A. Marzano, G. Métraux, *The Roman Villa in the Mediterranean Basin: Late Republic to Late Antiquity*, 2018, pp. 147–48. Also see the catalogues of E. De Sena, 2005 cit. n. 3, pp. 144–47; J. Rossiter, *Wine and oil processing at Roman farms in Italy*, «Phoenix», 35 (4) (1981), pp. 360–61. In central Adriatic Italy, perhaps also at Fermignano San Giacomo Sant’Ippolito di Fano: D. Van Limbergen, 2019 cit. n. 33, p. 113. Within ancient Latium, examples of Imperial-era processing facilities for wine, likely with treading floors, exist at the villas of Castel Giubileo, Monte Canino, Tor Bella Monaca, L. Coelius Nicephorus on the Via Aurelia and Via Prenestina at Casal Bertone near Rome, *Volusii* at Lucus Feroniae, Via Flaminia, and Grotte di Cervara: J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, pp. 10–11 with references; E. De Sena, 2005 cit. n. 3, pp. 145–46.

<sup>48</sup> J.P. Brun, 2020 cit. n. 1; A. Marzano, 2013 cit. n. 3, p. 101; J. Rossiter, 1981 cit. n. 47, p. 348; D. Van Limbergen, 2011 cit. n. 47, p. 81.



high quality production and, when combined with literary evidence, possibly also ritual, theatrical or performative elements<sup>49</sup>.

Mention must also be given to rock-cut treading areas, or *palmenti*, with adjoining vats, either singular or multiple, for collection, decantation and fermentation of wine. While these are common on Sicily and Ischia, new research is recognising and analysing examples across peninsular Italy at sites like San Biagio a Castel del Piano, San Sepolcro, Monte Amiata, Seggiano and Vitozza (Tuscany); San Leo (Marche); Allumiere, Tolfa, Manziana and Norchia (Lazio); Serramezzana and Novi Velia (Campania); and Ferruzzano and Bruzzano (Calabria) (Fig. 2)<sup>50</sup>. They can be quadrangular or (more rarely) circular in shape, of various sizes and arrangements, and are typically located nearby water sources, on elevated ground, and with vineyards surrounding<sup>51</sup>. Such features regularly lack clear dating material and have variously been attributed to the Archaic, Roman, Late Antique, Medieval and pre-industrial eras; however, reinvigorated study using scientific methodologies is proving ef-

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<sup>49</sup> E. Fentress, M. Maiuro, 2011 cit. n. 47. See N. Purcell, *The Roman villa and the landscape of production*, in T. Cornell, K. Lomas, *Urban society in Roman Italy*, 1995, p. 170 for examples of production as spectacle, and more recently with new evidence from the Villa of the Quintilii just outside Rome in E. Dodd, G. Galli, R. Frontoni, *The spectacle of production: a Roman imperial winery at the Villa of the Quintilii, Rome*, «Antiquity», (97) (392) (2023): pp. 436-453. <https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2023.18>

<sup>50</sup> A. Ciacci, P. Rendini, A. Zifferero, *Archeologia della vite e del vino in Toscana e nel Lazio: Dalle tecniche dell'indagine archeologica alle prospettive della biologia molecolare*, 2012, pp. 531-79. See map in G. Olcese, A. Razza, M. Michele Surace, *Ricerche multidisciplinari sui palmenti rupestri nell'Italia meridionale tirrenica*, in J.P. Brun, N. Garnier, G. Olcese, *Making wine in western-Mediterranean. Production and the trade of amphorae: Some new data from Italy. Panel 3.5. Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World 9*, 2020, pp. 31-41.

<sup>51</sup> G. Olcese *et al.*, 2020 cit. n. 50, pp. 34-35.

fective at providing more detailed answers regarding topography, structure, chronology and use<sup>52</sup>.

## 4.2 Pressing

Harvested grapes were trod twice through before the remaining pomace/marc was placed in baskets made of loosely woven rushes, wound rope, cloth, or in a wooden box for mechanical pressing<sup>53</sup>. This mechanical process produced progressively lower qualities of wine – from the first (deemed similar to trod must), through the second (so-called *mustum tortivum* or *circumsicium*, often used in medicine), to the third and fourth (Latin: *lora*; Greek: *deuterius*; Hebrew: *tmd*)<sup>54</sup>. Even lower qualities involved soaking remaining pulp in water and pressing the re-hydrated substance to produce a cheap ‘after-wine’ for workmen and lower classes<sup>55</sup>.

The presence of a mechanical press indicates winemaking for a distinct scale or purpose and is traditionally thought to evidence surplus production and/or a degree of investment<sup>56</sup>. Wine can, after all, be made

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<sup>52</sup> Some on Sicily appear to be pre-Imperial in date (perhaps Punic-Hellenistic), abandoned during the Imperial era, but reused again from the Byzantine period: G. Olcese *et al.*, 2020 cit. n. 50, pp. 37-39.

<sup>53</sup> E. Dodd, 2020 cit. n. 22, p. 55; Columella *Rust.* 12.39.3-4.

<sup>54</sup> E. Dodd, 2020 cit. n. 22, p. 56; R. Frankel, *Wine and oil production in antiquity in Israel and other Mediterranean countries*, 1999, p. 42.

<sup>55</sup> E. Dodd, 2020 cit. n. 22, p. 56; R.J. Forbes, *Food and drink*, in C. Singer, E.J. Holmyard, A.R. Hall *et al.*, *A history of technology*, vol. II: *The Mediterranean Civilizations and the Middle Ages c. 700 B.C. to c. A.D. 1500*, 1956, p. 132; R. Frankel, 1999 cit. n. 54, pp. 42-43; Cato *Agr.* 25.1; Varro *Rust.* 1.54.3; *Geoponika* 6.13.

<sup>56</sup> T. Lewit, *Oil and wine press technology in its economic context: Screw presses, the rural economy and trade in Late Antiquity*, «Antiquité Tardive», 20 (2012), p. 132; T. Lewit, “*Terris, vineis, olivetis...*”: *Wine and oil production after the villas*’, «European Journal of Postclassical Archaeologies», 10 (2020), pp. 195-

simply by treading grapes with little technological involvement. Yet across the Mediterranean, presses vary greatly in size, complexity, and technology – all of which influence the required expertise, investment, labour and, subsequently, impact the production purpose or scale.

Italy possessed a rather distinct mechanical press tradition throughout antiquity, one that finds echoes in France, Spain and Istria/Dalmatia but little elsewhere in the Mediterranean<sup>57</sup>. The architecture and flooring of press rooms in Italy typically uses either *cocciopesto* (waterproof plaster) or *opus spicatum* (herringbone brickwork) – or both – with the latter more common among installations in central and northern Italy (though this is by no means a rule). During the Mid-Republican era somewhat of a ‘press revolution’ took place – the result of centuries of viticultural evolution and maturation within Italy. This was spurred by favourable socioeconomic conditions, agricultural expansion and is reflected in Cato’s text. It is here for the first time that we find colossal lever presses installed in villas, with powerful winches

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96 and 213; A. Marzano, 2013 cit. n. 3, pp. 92-93; J. Rossiter, 1981 cit. n. 47, p. 348; D. Van Limbergen, 2011 cit. n. 47, p. 81.

<sup>57</sup> Press technologies were highly (micro)regionalised throughout the ancient Mediterranean – broad-stroke technological development and uptake rarely occurred. Instead, centuries old presses were used alongside new technologies and choice depended upon a range of individualised criteria unique to each producer’s situation: T. Lewit, P. Burton, *Wine and oil presses in the Roman to Late Antique Near East and Mediterranean: Balancing textual and archaeological evidence*, in A. Squitieri, D. Eitam, *Stone tools in the ancient Near East and Egypt. Ground stone tools, rock-cut installations and stone vessels from Prehistory to Late Antiquity*, 2019, p. 106; T. Lewit, *Invention, tinkering, or transfer? Innovation in oil and wine presses in the Roman Empire*, in P. Erdkamp, K. Verboven, A. Zuiderhoek, *Capital, investment, and innovation in the Roman world*, 2020, pp. 314-15 and 322; E. Dodd, 2020 cit. n. 22, p. 108 with n. 804; E. Dodd, *Wine and olive oil across the ancient Cyclades: A preliminary report and new thoughts on the development of Greek and Roman press technology*, «Meditarch», 32/33 (2020), pp. 132-33.

and heavy masonry, of a size not yet seen even in the well-established winemaking cultures further east<sup>58</sup>.

In Italy, these presses form two broadly defined types – though there is great variation within these broader groups, further complicated by an apparent lack of microregional trends. Detailed chronologies also present difficulties when associated with type and are in need of more detailed study, which will form a crucial future research direction. Both can be used for other commodities (*e.g.* pressing olives to produce oil), so, unless ambiguity is specified, only those with adequately certain vinicultural attribution are listed below.

The first type is best illustrated by the elite agricultural villas of Campania, previously termed the ‘platform press’, though one which now finds similarities in other Italian regions<sup>59</sup>. It characteristically has a lever-and-drum mechanism directly anchored into the ground, lowered by a winch and handspikes (*sucula*) and pressing over a platform that is often also used for treading (see Fig. 3a). Archaeologically visible are usually two square holes to hold the vertical wooden beams (*stipites*) supporting the winch mechanism, and one hole at the rear of the press for an upright at the fulcrum end (*arbore*)<sup>60</sup>. Typical examples in Campania are those at villas della Pisanella, Regina, dei Misteri (Fig. 3a), at the so-called Stazione and Giuliana farmhouses in Boscoreale, and Villa C. Olius Ampliatus near Naples and Prato at Sperlonga (Lazio)<sup>61</sup>. A rapidly deteriorating wall painting from

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<sup>58</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, p. 182.

<sup>59</sup> J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, pp. 49-55; 1981; R. Frankel, 1999 cit. n. 54, pp. 91-93.

<sup>60</sup> J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, p. 49.

<sup>61</sup> H. Broise, X. Lafon, *La villa Prato de Sperlonga*, 2001; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 181-83; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, pp. 14-20; J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, pp. 18-21. For the Stazione winery at Boscoreale, see R. Frankel, 1999 cit. n. 54, ‘List B’, T980; J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, pp. 12-14.

the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1, Pompeii) depicts this mechanism<sup>62</sup>. Elsewhere in Italy, similar lever-and-drum presses might have existed at Ca' Balduini di sopra, Piano della Monaca, and Tortoreto Case Ozzi in the central Adriatic region of Picenum (from 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE onwards)<sup>63</sup>; Monte Canino, Capena in Lazio<sup>64</sup>; San Giuliano and Villa di Leonessa in Apulia<sup>65</sup>; Ciminata, near Rossano, and Pannaconi, near Vibo Valentia, in Calabria<sup>66</sup>. Other presses of an unidentifiable type exist at the Villa d'Alba Docilia, Albisola (Liguria), and Villas Fiumana (Emilia-Romagna) and Joannis (Friuli) (Fig. 7)<sup>67</sup>. It was previously thought that this type did not survive past the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, yet archaeology now shows they undeniably persisted into Late Antiquity<sup>68</sup>. A 4<sup>th</sup> century CE mosaic at the Roman villa of Piazza Armerina (Sicily) also depicts a lever-and-drum press reinforcing the notion that new screw technologies did not completely take over<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup>J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, p. 212.

<sup>63</sup>D. Van Limbergen, 2019 cit. n. 33, p. 111.

<sup>64</sup>M. Pallottino, *Capena – resti di costruzioni romane e medioevali in loc. Montecanino*, «Notizie degli Scavi di antichità», 1321 (1937); R. Frankel, 1999 cit. n. 54, 'List A', site 27-0-1241-00-001.

<sup>65</sup>Both with *cocciopesto* flooring like installations in N Italy and at Francolise in Campania. In Apulia, wine production also likely existed at Villa d'Agnuli: J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 184-85; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup>P. Boissinot, 2009 cit. n. 23, p. 108; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, p. 32. Ciminata has two presses and *opus spicatum* flooring.

<sup>67</sup>J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, pp. 44 and 47.

<sup>68</sup>P. Burton, T. Lewit, *Pliny's presses: The true story of the first century wine press*, «Klio», 101 (2) (2019), p. 551; T. Lewit, 2012 cit. n. 57, p. 127; T. Lewit, P. Burton, 2019 cit. n. 57, p. 101.

<sup>69</sup>In contrast to the eastern Mediterranean, where the newer (though not necessarily more efficient) direct-pressure screw presses dominate Late Antique contexts. A 2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE bas-relief from Villa Rondanini, Rome, depicts a counterweight with exterior dovetail mortises – frequently used in lever-and-drum presses.

A variation on this first type, also found within Campania, uses a lever-and-hanging screw weight, or screw directly attached to the ground, instead of a drum and winch system. This can be seen at the now-reconstructed *Insula II.5* press, Pompeii (though this is debated), a villa near Sessa Aurunca (suggested to belong to Trajan's daughter, Matidia), and possibly the Villa of Publius Fannius Sinistor in Boscoreale<sup>70</sup>.

The second press type typically features a large pressing area of either *coccipesto* or, more commonly, *opus spicatum*, delimited by a circular collection channel and often built into a floor structure of the same material<sup>71</sup>. Press apparatuses within this type often utilise a stone pier base with one or two interior mortises, the latter previously called the "Tivoli pier base", to hold the wooden uprights at the fulcrum (*arbores*)<sup>72</sup>. They have been interpreted as lever-and-screw presses, of which two variations exist, reinforced by *in situ* counterweight finds<sup>73</sup>. Archaeological data, and close comparison to an im-

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<sup>70</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, pp. 13-14, 22-23, 27; W. Jashemski, 1968 cit. n. 23; W. Jashemski, 1973 cit. n. 23; J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, p. 33; J. Rossiter, E. Haldenby, *A wine-making plant in Pompeii insula II.5*, «Echos du Monde Classique», 33 (8) (1989), pp. 229-39. The *Insula II.5* press at Pompeii has now been reconstructed with a lever-and-drum mechanism (see E. Dodd, 2022 cit. n. 6, Fig. 10).

<sup>71</sup> Previously termed 'circular bed' presses: J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, pp. 49-55; J. Rossiter, 1981 cit. n. 47; R. Frankel, 1999 cit. n. 54, pp. 92-93. A few examples also include flooring of tufa paving or monochrome mosaic, while others have a circular stone press bed or square bed with circular drainage groove (J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26, pp. 50-52).

<sup>72</sup> See databases in D. Van Limbergen, 2011 cit. n. 47; 2019 cit. n. 33.

<sup>73</sup> D. Van Limbergen, 2019 cit. n. 33, p. 112. Though some may have utilised winch mechanisms, as described above (*e.g.* at Varignano: J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, p. 43). Screw counterweights appear in a variety of round, cylindrical and square forms in Italy, using a combination of exterior and interior mortises and sockets. The distribution and chronology of this weight type, called '*Samarina*' by Frankel (1999 cit. n. 54, p. 120), suggests that it

portant passage by Pliny, indicates that one variation lifted a mobile stone counterweight (or -weights), and the other had a screw attached directly to the ground<sup>74</sup>.

This style is found across Italy, though there is a notable concentration in central-northern regions (Fig. 4). Archetypal vinicultural examples have been found at Varignano (Liguria); a number around Verona (Veneto) and Trento (Trentino); Settefinestre and Via della Fattoria near Cosa (Tuscany); Chiarino di Recanati, Colombara di Acqualagna, Monte Torto di Osimo, Cupra Marittima San Basso, and Offida San Giovanni in the central Adriatic region (Marche); Via Nomentana and the Villa dei Gordiani (Lazio); and Scalea (Calabria) (Fig. 7)<sup>75</sup>. There are also suggestive remains elsewhere on the peninsular<sup>76</sup>. A screw-operated press of similar type likely operated at a 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE winery on the Via Gabinia just outside of Rome<sup>77</sup>, and archaeobotanical evidence of grape seeds and indications of a press at Via Cavalotti, Seni-

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developed in Italy with a range of proto- and sub-types.

<sup>74</sup> J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, pp. 215-16; P. Burton, T. Lewit, 2019 cit. n. 68. It is also possible that the former lifted a box of stones or stones within a wooden frame, acting as a counterweight, which left little trace in the archaeological record.

<sup>75</sup> G. Pesce, *Scalea: Trovamenti vari*, «Notizie degli Scavi di antichità», 12 (1936), pp. 67-74; J. Rossiter, 1978 cit. n. 26; P. Liverani, *Termini muti di centuriazione o contrapesi di torchi?*, «MEFRA», 99 (1) (1987), pp. 111-27; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, pp. 38-43; E. De Sena, 2005 cit. n. 3, p. 144; A. Marzano, 2007 cit. n. 47, p. 106; D. Van Limbergen, 2019 cit. n. 33, p. 112; A. Van Oyen, 2015 cit. n. 44, pp. 118-19. It remains uncertain whether those at Settefinestre operated by screw or winch. For databases, including less certain vinicultural examples, see J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, pp. 34-37; D. Van Limbergen, 2011 cit. n. 47; D. Van Limbergen, 2019 cit. n. 33, p. 106 and 112.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. Valle Pilella (or Pitella) and others in the *Ager Tiburtinus*, stretching northeast of Rome between the Tiber and Aniene rivers (E. De Sena, 2005 cit. n. 3, pp. 145-46), as well as those at the Villa of the Quintilii (E. Dodd, G. Galli, R. Frontoni, 2023 cit. n. 49).

<sup>77</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, p. 11.

gallia, suggest possible wine production from mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE<sup>78</sup>.

These presses appear from at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> and certainly 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE through to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE; though some undoubtedly continue sporadically through the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>79</sup>. Importantly, and in relation to the first style above, it is not necessarily a later type, as proposed previously, and clearly possessed a lengthy use-life – though scaling down in size and function probably occurred through Late Antiquity.

Finally, direct-screw presses were also used in Roman Italy; though these, too, suffer from low survival rates due to use of wooden components and difficulty in identification. It is likely that such mechanisms were preferred in urban environments, where valuable space was limited and could not be given to large lever presses, and within oileries, fulleries and perfumeries. It is, however, almost certain that they were also used for wine production in Italy – after all, they are included within Pliny's description of wine presses<sup>80</sup>.

### 4.3 Fermentation

Once grapes were trod or pressed, must flowed through channels or pipes with varying degrees of complexity, dependent on the scale of the installation, into one or more collection structures (typically a vat lined with *cocciopesto*, or similar waterproof treatment, or a *dolium*). In more complex installations, intermediate vats collected must, allowed sediment to settle and primary fermentation to begin, before being ladled, decanted or channelled into a *cella vinaria* with multiple *dolia (defossa)* for clarification, (often) modification, and fermentation proper (see Figs. 3b)<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> D. Van Limbergen 2019 cit. n. 33, pp. 106-8.

<sup>79</sup> In line with amphora evidence: D. Van Limbergen 2019 cit. n. 33, p. 111 and 116.

<sup>80</sup> P. Burton, T. Lewit, 2019 cit. n. 68; Pliny, *NH* 18.74.317.

<sup>81</sup> Well known examples need not be repeated and are listed in the catalogues and texts of G. Baratta, *Römische kelteranlagen auf der Italienischen halbinsel*,



Channelling could occur horizontally, with pipes running between multiple rooms in a villa (e.g. Villa dei Misteri at Pompeii), or vertically, with must flowing through a hole in the floor into collection structures below (e.g. Settefinestre). At simple, small-scale installations, like Pompeii I.20, must flowed directly from the treading floor into a single *dolium*<sup>82</sup>. Manual decanting using ceramic or metal jugs also occurred. Some collection vats in central Adriatic Italy include access stairs for cleaning and decantation – an architectural feature mirrored within wineries elsewhere in the Mediterranean (e.g. Delos)<sup>83</sup>.

The location, design, and scale of *cellae vinariae* and fermentation facilities varied across Roman Italy and was largely dependent on climate, socio-economic status, and purpose. Rows of sunken fermentation *dolia* were housed in the (semi-)open air across Campania and Apulia (Fig. 3b), with its favourable climate, but further north, in Etru-

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2005; J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15; 2004 cit. n. 5; 2004 cit. n. 27; M. Feige, *Landwirtschaftliche produktionsanlagen römischer villen im republikanischen und kaiserzeitlichen Italien*, 2022; J. Rossiter 1978 cit. n. 26; 1981 cit. n. 47; A. Van Oyen, *The socio-economics of Roman storage: Agriculture, trade, and family*, 2020. Less known are a villa store-room with at least 8 sunken *dolia* at Casalotti (Via Boccea), and a pair of *dolia defossa* with channels leading to two large cisterns (c. 102,000 L) at Casilina on the Via Tuscolana, which probably indicate storage for wine (E. De Sena, 2005 cit. n. 3, pp. 144-47; M. Feige, 2022, *ibid.*, Fig. 2; J. Rossiter 1978 cit. n. 26, p. 59). On the various stages and requirements of fermentation, including primary, secondary/ malolactic and respective durations in antiquity, as well as clarification, modification and additives, see E. Dodd, 2020 cit. n. 22, pp. 56-59 and 115-16; D. Van Limbergen, 2020 cit. n. 45. C. Cheung, 'Managing food storage in the Roman Empire', «Quaternary International», 597 (2021), pp. 63-75 provides detail on why *dolia* were such suitable vessels and how they aid the fermentation process.

<sup>82</sup> E. Dodd, 2017 cit. n. 46.

<sup>83</sup> E. Dodd, 2020 cit. n. 22, pp. 75-103; D. Van Limbergen 2019 cit. n. 33, pp. 109-10.

ria, were located inside large storage structures<sup>84</sup>. In the former, double-layer locking lids were used as protection against the elements and to ensure a stable fermentation environment<sup>85</sup>. At small installations, where there is no sign of *dolia defossa*, fermentation likely occurred within the collection *dolium*/vat or the must decanted relatively quickly into portable *amphorae* and fermented therein – a system used commonly in the eastern Mediterranean.

Features like *dolia* and *cocciopesto*-lined (or even brick, mosaic, lead, or tile) vats, along with counterweights and material culture that indicates pressing, therefore, are key archaeological indicators of vinicultural activity. As with other archaeological evidence, great interpretational care must be taken; such features were also used within oileries, fulleries, aquaculture and other agricultural endeavours. Similarly, organic structures that leave little archaeological trace, like wooden tubs, were almost certainly used in collection and fermentation across antiquity.

## 5. Storage and transport

The archetypal Roman wine storage and transport containers, *amphorae*, are long studied and form an invaluable component in our multi-disciplinary repertoire to understand Roman wine production<sup>86</sup>. One need only glance at the extensive work of scholars like Tchernia,

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<sup>84</sup>J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, p. 79; G. Montana, L. Randazzo, D. Barca, M. Carroll, *Archaeometric Analysis of Building Ceramics and “Dolia Defossa” from the Roman Imperial Estate of Vagnari (Gravina in Puglia, Italy)*, «JAS: Reports», 38 (2020), pp. 1-14. Various called ‘sheds’ or ‘hangars’. For discussions of winery storage facilities in Italy, see E. Dodd, 2022 cit. n. 6; A. Van Oyen, 2015 cit. n. 44.

<sup>85</sup>For an excellent description of this system, see C. Cheung, 2021 cit. n. 81, p. 9.

<sup>86</sup>See the excellent introduction and history of amphora studies by the University of Southampton, *Roman amphorae: a digital resource*, 2014 at: [https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/amphora\\_ahrb\\_2005/index.cfm](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/amphora_ahrb_2005/index.cfm).

Carandini, Will, Zevi, Panella, Key and Olcese, among many others, to realise the rich history of *amphora* studies<sup>87</sup>. Wine could be preserved in these ceramic containers for long periods of time, even decades, provided they were hermetically sealed (with resin, pitch, oil, cork, plaster and ceramic)<sup>88</sup>. Yet this, too, is complicated by the multi-purpose use and reuse of these containers. Transport methods using organic containers were also historically underappreciated in scholarship; however, most wine was produced and consumed locally and could be transported and stored for short periods of time in animal hides and small ceramic vessels<sup>89</sup>. Barrels and skins (*cullei*) were crucial in the storage and transport of wine, particularly for certain geographies, purposes, and markets – the former used increasingly in the central and western Mediterranean from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE<sup>90</sup>.

While few examples of these are known archaeologically, Roman art provides glimpses into their appearance and use. A wall painting (now

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<sup>87</sup> Pertinent examples include P. Arthur, *Roman amphorae and the Ager Falernus under the Empire*, «PBSA», 50 (1983), pp. 22-33; A. Carandini, C. Panella, *Ostia III: Le terme del Nuotatore. Scavo dell'ambiente V et di un saggio nell'area*, 1973; J. Lund, *Transport amphorae as evidence of exportation of Italian wine and oil to the eastern Mediterranean in the Hellenistic period*, in J. Lund, *Between Orient and Occident: Studies in honour of P.J. Riis*, 2000, pp. 77-99; C. Panella, A. Tchernia, *Produits agricoles transportés en amphores, in L'Italie d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, 1994, pp. 145-65; D. Peacock, D. Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman economy*, 1986; J.T. Peña, *Roman pottery in the archaeological record*, 2007; A. Tchernia, *Le vin de l'Italie Romaine*, 1986; F. Zevi, *Appunti sulle anfore romane: La tavola tipologica del Dressel*, «Archaeologia Classica», 18 (1966), pp. 208-47. See the thorough bibliography presented by the University of Southampton, 2014 cit. n. 86, under 'References'.

<sup>88</sup> On sealants, see C. Cheung, 2021 cit. n. 81, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> C. Cheung, 2021 cit. n. 81, p. 9.

<sup>90</sup> J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, pp. 100-5; J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 5, pp. 24-25. See Pliny's (*NH* 14.132) commentary on various methods of keeping wine in different climates.

lost) from region VI.10.1 in Pompeii depicts men decanting wine from a *culleus* on a horse-drawn cart into *amphorae*, and a sculpture from the Nymphaeum of Claudius at Baiae shows wine within a smaller animal skin<sup>91</sup>. Similar examples survive in bas-relief from Nona on the Via Praenestina, at Minturnae, and one now in the British Museum of an ox-drawn cart and *culleus*. The increasing dominance of the barrel in northern Italian regions distorts our understanding of Imperial Rome's wine trade. The disappearance of certain *amphora* types (as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, but certainly by the 2<sup>nd</sup>) may not illustrate a crisis in viticulture, but rather triumph of the barrel<sup>92</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion

Much can be added to this chapter, particularly in relation to *amphorae* and ceramic material along with more recent scientific analyses, including geochemical, geophysical, geological and paleoenvironmental studies. Nor has this touched upon types of the grapevine, wine or the innumerable facets of use and purpose (social, economic, cultural, religious, medicinal, etc.). It does, however, make clear that vinicultural archaeology is a field experiencing exponential growth and intensified study, which is simultaneously expanding and fine-tuning comprehension. Wine production in Italy continued to flourish through the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, with older press technologies used alongside traditional modes of land exploitation through villas and intensive production<sup>93</sup>. This does not necessarily appear to be a spatially restricted phenomenon – it occurred from east to west, and north to south. It was not until the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE that wine production diminished, continuing only on a smaller scale for local and domestic use. The *longue*

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<sup>91</sup> J.P. Brun, 2003 cit. n. 15, pp. 101-4.

<sup>92</sup> J.P. Brun, 2004 cit. n. 27, p. 48.

<sup>93</sup> J. Rossiter, 2008 cit. n. 3, pp. 115-16.

durée history of wine production in ancient Italy is thus a diverse story, specific to local geographic, climatic, socio-economic and political environments. In time, our understanding of these invisible periods may be enlightened through new methods and higher resolution archaeology – it is inevitable that our understanding of Roman wine production in Italy will continue to evolve.



Fig. 1 Map of sites mentioned in the text with evidence of pre-Roman or Roman grapevine exploitation or cultivation (map by E. Dodd with base GIS and hillshade data from the EEA and Esri)



Fig. 2 Map of sites mentioned in the text with evidence of treading floor structures or *palmenti* (map by E. Dodd with base GIS and hillshade data from the EEA and Esri)





Fig. 3 (a) reconstructed type 1 Roman wine press with structural elements indicated at the Villa dei Misteri, Pompeii, 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE (photo by E. Dodd); (b) the semi-open air *cella vinaria* at Villa Regina, Boscoreale. The double-layer locking *dolia* lids are preserved on each *dolium* (photo by E. Dodd)





Fig. 4 Map of sites mentioned in the text with evidence of presses or *cellae vinariae*. Square = press type 1; black circle = press type 2; star = uncertain type; white circle = *cella* (map by E. Dodd with base GIS and hillshade data from the EEA and Esri)



**Localizzare il cibo tra produzione e consumo:  
breve itinerario nelle fonti italiane  
tra basso Medioevo e prima Età moderna**

*Antonella Campanini\**

Il cibo è un prodotto culturale. Si è giunti a tale affermazione partendo dalla constatazione che quanto mangiamo – o, nel caso della ricerca storica, quanto i nostri antenati hanno mangiato – non è semplicemente frutto di una terra più o meno avara ma reca con sé, come valore aggiunto fondamentale, l'intervento dell'uomo: innanzitutto dell'agricoltore o dell'allevatore, poi di colui che lo trasforma (e realizza, per esempio, il pane dal grano o il formaggio dal latte) o che lo modifica in cucina, per mezzo della cottura o tramite accostamenti e condimenti. L'intervento umano e non solo il prodotto stesso, a sua volta, si trova a fare i conti con il luogo. Non tutti i prodotti possono attecchire o vivere ovunque e, in ogni caso, il luogo ne determina alcune caratteristiche peculiari delle quali l'intervento umano non può non tenere conto. A queste vanno a sommarsi le tradizioni di quel luogo specifico e di quella specifica comunità, che determinano quelle particolari modalità di trasformare quel prodotto. Tutto questo, a partire da tempi recenti, è considerato parte del 'patrimonio culturale immateriale'<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Per lo sviluppo storico del concetto di patrimonio, declinato in senso alimentare, si rimanda a L. Bienassis, *Les chemins du patrimoine: de Notre-Dame au camembert*, in A. Campanini, P. Scholliers, J-P. Williot, P.I.E. Peter

Molto meno recente, tuttavia, è l'idea di legare un prodotto o una preparazione alimentare a un luogo specifico, in altre parole di definire prodotti e preparazioni affiancando al loro nome generico un 'gastrotoponimo'<sup>2</sup>. Simili attestazioni si trovano in fonti dei generi più svariati, già a partire dall'Età antica. Gli scrittori latini menzionavano, per limitarci all'ambito italiano e ad alcuni tra i mille esempi possibili,

salsicce lucane, prosciutto della Marsica, cinghiali toscani e umbri. Anguille del Garda e dello stretto di Messina, spigola del Tevere, orate del lago Lucrino, murena dello Stretto, rombo di Ravenna, sarago di Brindisi, ricci e frutti di mare di Miseno, di Altino e di Taranto

e così via<sup>3</sup>. La fama di alcuni di questi prodotti resiste inalterata nei secoli successivi, ma altri si affiancano e acquistano la loro rinomanza nel corso del Medioevo. Il gastrotoponimo conferisce loro una sorta di garanzia di qualità, che li distingue rispetto al nome generico del prodotto e ne rappresenta il valore aggiunto.

Non è mia intenzione realizzare un inventario di gastrotoponimi né una lista, seppure necessariamente non esaustiva, degli autori o delle fonti che li hanno utilizzati. M'interessa invece mostrare, tramite singoli casi,

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Lang (dir.) *Manger en Europe. Patrimoines, échanges, identités*, Bruxelles-Bern-Berlin-Frankfurt am Main-New York-Oxford-Wien 2011, pp. 45-91; per una sintesi più recente si veda A. Campanini, *Il cibo. Nascita e storia di un patrimonio culturale*, Carocci, Roma 2019, pp. 20-30.

<sup>2</sup> L'espressione è di Alberto Capatti ed è utilizzata per la prima volta in A. Capatti, *Il Buon Paese*, in *Introduzione alla Guida Gastronomica d'Italia 1931. Copia anastatica*, Touring Club Italiano, Milano 2003, pp. 6-31, in particolare p. 15. Per gastrotoponimo s'intende il nome di luogo che accompagna un prodotto alimentare, naturale o trasformato, o una ricetta culinaria. Può rimandare a una città o a uno spazio geografico più ampio.

<sup>3</sup> A. Capatti, M. Montanari, *La cucina italiana. Storia di una cultura*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1999, p. 3.

alcune tra le possibili ragioni che hanno indotto nel corso del tempo a fornire la localizzazione di prodotti e ricette. Quasi tutte presuppongono che sia avvenuto uno scambio e che il prodotto e la ricetta abbiano circolato: in caso contrario, come fanno notare Alberto Capatti e Massimo Montanari, la necessità di conferire a un prodotto o a una ricetta un'identità precisa, per giunta legata a un preciso luogo, verrebbe a cadere.

L'autoconsumo, in un'economia anche solo parzialmente autarchica, se da un lato corrisponde a una valorizzazione intima e rituale degli oggetti commestibili, li sottrae dall'altro al mercato e al giudizio. Il prodotto esclusivamente 'locale' è privo di una identità geografica in quanto essa nasce dalla sua 'delocalizzazione'<sup>4</sup>.

Un'eccezione alla regola è rappresentata da quei prodotti che si spostano soltanto 'virtualmente': autori ne hanno parlato non tanto per esportarli dal luogo di produzione, quanto per valorizzare quest'ultimo e magari indurre il lettore a visitarlo proprio perché quel prodotto si trova lì. Un simile discorso, per il periodo preso in considerazione in questa sede, non riguarda se non marginalmente le preparazioni alimentari. In epoca contemporanea, al contrario, farebbe probabilmente la parte del leone. Quale guida turistica non spende almeno qualche parola, ma più spesso alcune pagine, per illustrare la gastronomia di un territorio, fornire consigli utili per cogliervi al meglio quanto vi si trova e dimostrare che quanto si trova lì non sarebbe riproducibile altrove, senza rinunciare ad almeno una parte della sua qualità? Le contraddizioni sono peraltro in agguato: se una pizza napoletana a Napoli può avere un gusto particolare, il turista statunitense preparatosi diligentemente al viaggio mediante una guida edita Oltreoceano non troverà a Bologna gli 'spaghetti alla bolognese' se non in qualche bar o trattoria 'da turisti', che serve le specialità che i turisti si attendono di trovare. Il

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<sup>4</sup> Ivi, p. IX.

fatto che queste non facciano parte di alcuna tradizione non è di particolare rilievo. Peraltro, se a un dato momento si notasse che una creazione per turisti presenta un interesse gastronomico che ne giustifica l'esistenza, la sua tradizione potrebbe cominciare proprio allora. Ma ci stiamo spingendo in altra direzione rispetto ai propositi fissati. Torniamo dunque alla domanda iniziale: localizzare perché? Alcune risposte possono essere individuate nei testi di alcuni autori.

## 1. Localizzare per individuare l'eccellenza

«Il primo fondamento, sul quale [il mastro cuoco] ha da fidarsi principalmente, ha da esser la cognitione, et pratica di diversi modi di cose», scrive Bartolomeo Scappi nel primo capitolo della sua *Opera*<sup>5</sup>. La *cognitione*, dunque la conoscenza, si riferisce in particolar modo ai prodotti da utilizzare e include la loro localizzazione. Più la conoscenza sarà approfondita, migliore sarà il prodotto scelto; va da sé che il risultato della preparazione culinaria non potrà che trarne giovamento. La cernita potrà tra l'altro essere effettuata mediante comparazione tra prodotti simili ma reperiti in luoghi diversi. Per scegliere il più evidente degli esempi possibili ci si può orientare alla parte del ricettario dedicata ai pesci. È proprio lì infatti che la concorrenza tra mari e fiumi, tra laghi e stagni, ma soprattutto tra il versante tirrenico e quello adriatico, si rivela più spietata. La localizzazione del prodotto risulta in quel caso fondamentale per assegnare la palma della vittoria.

Vediamo qualche esempio, tratto dalla fauna ittica. Se per lo storione ci si limita all'individuazione del luogo in cui pescarlo – «se ne pigliano molti

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<sup>5</sup> B. Scappi, *Opera*, Tramezzino, Venezia 1570 (rist. anast.: *Opera [dell'arte del cucinare]*, presentazione di G. Roversi, Arnaldo Forni, Bologna 1981), c. 1v. Cuoco segreto di papa Pio V, lombardo di origine ma vissuto perlopiù nella Roma cinquecentesca, Bartolomeo Scappi è probabilmente lo scrittore italiano di ricette più conosciuto prima di Pellegrino Artusi.

nella Stellata presso Ferrara, nel qual loco il Pò fa due rami, un de quali va a Francolino, et l'altro attorno le mura di Ferrara»<sup>6</sup> –, in altri casi la comparazione è d'obbligo. Riguardo al pesce porcelletta Scappi osserva:

Quelli che si pigliano nel Pò, nel Tevere, et negli altri fiumi grossi sono assai migliori di quelli che si pigliano nel mare, o nelli stagni, perciòché quelli dei fiumi son più purgati, et più candidi. Quelli del mare, et delli stagni tirano al verde scuro<sup>7</sup>.

Ancora più semplice è distinguere la provenienza nel caso in cui il prodotto cambi nome: nella ricetta «Della statura e stagione dello spigolo» Scappi illustra che

Il pesce spigolo è anchor esso marittimo, et in diversi lochi è chiamato con diversi nomi, chiamandosi in Venetia varoli, et in Genova lupi, in Roma spigoli, in Pisa, et in Fiorenza ragni, ma in Venetia son più grandi di quelli di Roma<sup>8</sup>.

Bartolomeo Scappi non è tuttavia il primo a essersi occupato della localizzazione del prodotto di qualità. Se arretriamo di un secolo, troviamo Platina<sup>9</sup> che, ricercando le eccellenze non solo in base alla

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<sup>6</sup> Ivi, c. 103r.

<sup>7</sup> Ivi, c. 109v.

<sup>8</sup> Ivi, c. 112r. Per l'utilizzo dei gastrotoponimi nell'*Opera* di Bartolomeo Scappi si rimanda a Campanini, *Il cibo* cit., pp. 63-69.

<sup>9</sup> Colto umanista, nato a Piadena nel Cremonese (da cui deriva il suo pseudonimo) nel 1421, Bartolomeo Sacchi (è questo il suo nome) vive a lungo tra Firenze e soprattutto Roma, dove riveste incarichi presso la Curia pontificia alternando periodi di fortuna a cadute in disgrazia. È affiliato di tutto rispetto dell'Accademia romana, sodalizio composto da filosofi, filologi, letterati, storici: intellettuali accomunati dallo studio del passato in generale e dall'ammirazione per il mondo classico in particolare. A

propria esperienza ma soprattutto rifacendosi alle testimonianze di autori classici del passato, fornisce informazioni di grande interesse. Nel suo *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* (che è stato tradotto come *Il piacere onesto e la buona salute*), Platina unisce alle ricette – tratte dal *De arte coquinaria* di Maestro Martino, sul quale torneremo – uno studio storico-dietetico sui singoli prodotti, ciascuno dei quali viene trattato in un capitolo a sé stante, e aggiunge consigli di dietetica, d’igiene alimentare, in generale di stile di vita, finalizzati all’ottenimento di quel piacere onesto (*honesta voluptas*) e di quella buona salute (*valetudo*) che, lungi da una prospettiva meramente edonistica, troneggiano tra gli ideali epicurei di cui un certo umanesimo si fece portatore<sup>10</sup>.

Da Platina recuperiamo, per esempio, l’interesse degli autori del passato per i prodotti del lago Lucrino, in Campania. «Non omnis laudes pretiumque aurata meretur / Sed cui solus erit concha lustrina cibus» è il distico di Marziale che Platina riporta per mostrare che le orate che si nutrono delle ostriche del lago Lucrino sono le migliori<sup>11</sup>. E non c’è da meravigliarsi, dato che le ostriche stesse, nel medesimo luogo, sono riconosciute come un prodotto d’eccellenza:

quello stesso Orata, che primo possedette vasche pensili, fu anche il primo a sistemare vivai di ostriche in quel di Baia [...]. Ancora:

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somiglianza della maggior parte di quegli accademici, Platina è autore di numerosi trattati, tutti in latino.

<sup>10</sup> Si rimanda in particolare a B. Laurieux, *Gastronomie, humanisme et société à Rome au milieu du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Autour du De honesta voluptate de Platina*, Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2006.

<sup>11</sup> B. Platina, “*De honesta voluptate et valetudine*”. *Un trattato sui piaceri della tavola e la buona salute. Nuova edizione commentata con testo latino a fronte*, E. Carnevale Schianca (a cura di), Olschki, Firenze 2015, p. 400. «Non tutte le orate meritano elogi ed apprezzamento, / ma soltanto quella che si è pasciuta delle conchiglie del Lucrino»: *ivi*, p. 401.



Orata fu il primo ad attribuire la palma della bontà alle ostriche del lago Lucrino<sup>12</sup>.

La fama di orate e ostriche del Lucrino avrebbe avuto grande fortuna: la ritroviamo per esempio all'opera nel *Catalogo degli inventori delle cose che si mangiano et bevono* di Ortensio Lando (su questo autore torneremo), composto un'ottantina d'anni più tardi rispetto al trattato di Platina. In quella sede, Lando 'gioca' ad attribuire a ogni uso culinario il proprio inventore, ricavandone il nome da personaggi del passato o anche, semplicemente, inventandolo<sup>13</sup>. «Perillo fu il primo che mangiasse l'orata», attesta l'autore del *Catalogo* «e Sergio fu il primo che n'abbì istituito i vivai, donde anche ne prese il nome e chiamossi Sergio Orata [...]. Le migliori che si mangino, al mio giudizio, sono quelle del lago Lucrino»<sup>14</sup>. Quanto alle ostriche, «Ruffo Castricio fu il primo che n'insegnasse a mangiar le conchilie, delle quali molto n'abbonda Lucrino, il mar Rosso e Bibaga isola dell'India amenissima»<sup>15</sup>, dove il lago Lucrino risulta essere il luogo di produzione maggiormente raggiungibile.

Il lago Lucrino ci porterebbe lontano. Torniamo a Platina che, in un passo relativo al pesce lupo, rivela espressamente il debito contrat-

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<sup>12</sup> Ivi, pp. 399-401.

<sup>13</sup> A. Campanini, *Connaître l'origine : les produits, les recettes et leurs inventeurs. Trois exemples italiens (XV<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, in *Manger en Europe* cit., pp. 25-44, in particolare pp. 32-39.

<sup>14</sup> O. Lando, *Commentario delle più notabili et mostruose cose d'Italia et altri luoghi di lingua aramea in italiana tradotto. Con un breve Catalogo de gli inventori delle cose che si mangiano et bevono, novamente ritrovato, Ripresa dell'edizione veneziana del 1553*, G. Salvatori, P. Salvatori (a cura di), Pendragon, Bologna 1994, p. 108. Perillo non è un nome d'invenzione, ma storicamente non ha mai avuto a che fare, che si sappia, con le orate. Si tratta infatti dell'inventore del toro di Falaride, spaventoso strumento di tortura utilizzato dal tiranno di Agrigento che portava quel nome. A. Campanini, *Connaître l'origine* cit., p. 37, n. 49.

<sup>15</sup> Lando, *Commentario* cit., p. 104.

to nei confronti degli autori del passato riguardo alla localizzazione dei prodotti:

Quali prodotti alimentari siano migliori in determinati luoghi, lo apprendiamo da quanto hanno detto Varrone e Plinio, che con le seguenti parole attribuiscono al pesce lupo il primato fra i pesci: «Tra quanto c'è di ottimo per i consumi alimentari, abbiamo il frumento della Campania, il vino dell'agro Falerno, l'olio di Cassino, i fichi di Tuscolo, il miele di Taranto, il pesce Lupo del Tevere, specialmente quello preso fra i due ponti, e così i rombi di Ravenna e le murene del litorale siculo»<sup>16</sup>.

Come se non bastasse, per il pesce lupo del Tevere garantisce, in virtù dell'esperienza diretta, Platina stesso: «Pomponio, che abita in riva al Tevere, mi invitava spesso a mangiarne, nei mesi di marzo, aprile e maggio; oltretutto è un cibo che fa bene, essendo non poco nutriente»<sup>17</sup>. Per altri pesci ci sono tuttavia pareri discordi:

Filippo Romano, esimio medico dei nostri tempi e scrupolosissimo indagatore del sapere antico, sostiene che, a giudicare dalla prelibatezza attribuitagli, fosse lo storione quel pesce catturato fra i due ponti, che i nostri antenati stimavano tanto, e non ritiene che la laccia sia meritevole di tali elogi<sup>18</sup>.

Ad altri l'ardua sentenza: «Chi di noi due abbia ragione, lasciamolo giudicare ai ghiottoni»<sup>19</sup>. Unanimità, invece, sul rombo ravennate, al quale è dedicato un capitolo specifico: «Direi che il rombo pescato

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<sup>16</sup> Platina, *“De honesta voluptate et valitudine”* cit., p. 403.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

nell'Adriatico, ma soprattutto nell'insenatura di Ravenna, è delizioso a mangiarsi»<sup>20</sup> è il suo *incipit*.

E così via. Le localizzazioni dei prodotti finalizzate a individuare quelli migliori, che pur non escludono altre logiche di caratterizzazione legate alla qualità dei luoghi o località, sono in Platina molto frequenti<sup>21</sup>. Tra l'altro, occorre sottolineare che tali localizzazioni sono uno dei tratti originali che differenziano il trattato di Platina dal *De arte coquinaria* di Maestro Martino dal quale, come si diceva, Platina stesso trae tutte le ricette. Questo a riconferma del fatto che le fonti di Platina, in questo caso, sono autori antichi e non il suo cuoco di riferimento. In quest'ultimo i gastrotoponimi saranno chiamati in causa soprattutto riguardo alle ricette, come si vedrà più avanti.

## 2. Una mappa per i valorosi destrieri

È data alle stampe per la prima volta a Mantova nel 1662 *L'arte di ben cucinare* di Bartolomeo Stefani, cuoco bolognese al servizio della famiglia Gonzaga. Si tratta di un libro di ricette per molti versi innovativo, e comunque un vero caposaldo della produzione italiana di scrittura culinaria. Come conclusione, al termine delle numerose ricette, l'autore colloca gli *Avvertimenti alli Signori Lettori circa alcune cose appartenenti alli banchetti descritti*: si tratta di una proposta finalizzata a superare i problemi legati alla stagionalità di prodotti scarsamente conservabili, quali frutti e verdure. Siccome si tratta di ingredienti spesso fondamentali e Stefani non vuole assoggettare la scelta delle ricette alla tirannia del tempo e delle stagioni, la soluzione al problema consiste nell'andare a cercare quei prodotti in zone nelle quali, grazie al clima favorevole, è possibile trovarli in qualsiasi momento dell'anno. «[...] chi ha valorosi destrieri e buona borsa in ogni stagione troverà tutte quelle cose che io loro propongo e ne'

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Campanini, *Il cibo* cit., pp. 48-53.

medesimi tempi che ne parlo»<sup>22</sup>. Se la disponibilità economica, la buona borsa, è la condizione *sine qua non*, occorre anche sapere dove dirigere i valorosi destrieri. Diventa a quel punto fondamentale, per il lettore di Stefani, avere conoscenza non tanto dei luoghi di produzione, quanto di quelli di commercializzazione. I suoi *Avvertimenti* rappresentano proprio per questo un inventario abbastanza particolare.

E per maggior notizia s'avverta che Napoli e la Sicilia nelle loro riviere alla fredda stagione producono cedri, limoni, aranci, carchioffi, sparagi, cavoli fiori, fave fresche, lattuche ordinarie e vaghi fiori, delle quali cose a tutto il regno ne fa parte. E la riviera di Gaeta negli stessi tempi serve de medesimi frutti Roma. Genova con tutta la sua riviera abbonda delle medesime cose e, benché produca i cavoli fiori più piccioli di quelli che si praticano a Roma et a Fiorenza, supera però Napoli, Sicilia et altri luoghi, e di tutte queste cose provvede Milano, Fiorenza, Bologna, Turino, Piacenza e le città a quelle vicine, con buona parte della Lombardia<sup>23</sup>.

Quanto è prodotto a Gaeta può essere reperito anche a Roma, Genova rifornisce diverse città del Centro-Nord, e così via. La 'tipicità' di un prodotto, il suo legame al luogo di produzione, ha la sua importanza, ma la possibilità di reperirlo è, in questo contesto, ancora più importante<sup>24</sup>.

### 3. Localizzare per catalogare

Nel 1477 il medico Pantaleone da Confienza pubblica a Torino un *Trattato sui latticini* destinato a divenire un punto di riferimento europeo per lo stu-

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<sup>22</sup> B. Stefani, *L'arte di ben cucinare et instruire i men periti in questa lodevole professione*, Osanna, Mantova 1662 (rist. anast. Arnaldo Forni, Bologna 1983), p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> Ivi, pp. 142-143.

<sup>24</sup> Campanini, *Il cibo* cit., pp. 73-74.

dio e la conoscenza della materia casearia. In tre differenti sezioni ripercorre la formazione del latte e la sua coagulazione, passando in rassegna i diversi sistemi di produrre formaggio, le sue differenti tipologie e infine il loro corretto utilizzo alimentare, tenendo conto delle loro qualità e delle diverse caratteristiche fisiche degli individui che desiderano cibarsene. L'idea di catalogare e creare una sorta di atlante dei formaggi conosciuti è assolutamente originale: l'autore scende parecchio nel dettaglio e presenta formaggi italiani, savoirdi, francesi, inglesi, fiamminghi, tedeschi e svizzeri, di cui ha potuto vedere personalmente la produzione e le cui caratteristiche gli sono note per averli assaggiati. Non vi è alcuna pretesa di esaustività, dato che Pantaleone rifiuta di segnalare produzioni conosciute per semplice sentito dire e dunque esclude quanto esula dalla sua esperienza sensoriale. Dichiarandolo, però, fornisce implicitamente il criterio di selezione adottato per il suo catalogo, criterio non sempre presente neppure negli inventari a noi contemporanei. Onore al merito, dunque.

Tra i migliori, Pantaleone cita e descrive in particolare i marzolini di Firenze – formaggi caprini prodotti in marzo – che si fanno in Toscana e in Romagna, i piacentini di vacca (che «da alcuni sono chiamati parmigiani perché anche a Parma se ne producono di simili, non molto diversi per qualità»<sup>25</sup>), presenti anche nelle zone di Milano, Pavia, Novara, Vercelli, le piccole robirole del Monferrato, e inoltre formaggi di diverse valli piemontesi, formaggi della Savoia e alcuni formaggi francesi, il craponne e il brie. Un piccolo assaggio può essere costituito dai formaggi della Morra, che

si chiamano robirole e sono piccoli di una libbra press'a poco, rotondi e abbastanza massicci rispetto al loro peso, puliti in superficie e lucidi o trasparenti soprattutto se sono di buona qualità: così succede anche per i formaggi inglesi, come si dirà a suo tempo<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Pantaleone Da Confienza, *Trattato dei latticini*, a cura di E. Faccioli, Slow Food Editore, Bra (CN) 2001, p. 78.

<sup>26</sup> Ivi, p. 80.

Alle caratteristiche fisiche del prodotto Pantaleone fa seguire immediatamente la zona di produzione: «Si producono nella terra dei marchesi del Monferrato e del Carretto e Ceva; però una gran quantità è prodotta in parecchie zone del Marchesato del Monferrato. Sono infatti formaggi abbastanza pregiati»<sup>27</sup>. Quale sarà il tempo di stagionatura ottimale, e quale la durata della loro conservazione? Pantaleone ha pronta la risposta:

Si conservano per due anni senza che perdano in bontà; dopo un anno tuttavia sono migliori, e presso molti si mangiano più volentieri dopo sei oppure otto mesi di stagionatura. In effetti dopo questo tempo sono più ricchi di qualità nutritive e si digeriscono più facilmente, come si dirà più avanti<sup>28</sup>.

Se qualche informazione ancora mancava, ecco Pantaleone colmare la lacuna:

Si fanno per lo più col latte di pecora, anzi si chiamano propriamente robiole quelli che si ricavano dal latte di pecora. Alcuni tuttavia lo tagliano aggiungendo latte di mucca, anzi anche latte di capra, che è peggiore. Se ne produce una buona quantità anche in Lomellina, e sono gustosi soprattutto quelli di Palestro e di Confienza: ed è naturale, perché lì sono buoni anche tutti gli altri prodotti della terra<sup>29</sup>.

Pantaleone è nato a Confienza non per nulla, e non perde l'occasione per manifestare l'amore per la sua zona. Per concludere, una battuta di spirito: «Siccome questi formaggi sono piccoli, anche se buoni, sarà sufficiente questo breve capitolo»<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Pantaleone non è prodigo d'informazioni, come forse ci si potrebbe attendere, riguardo all'influenza specifica dell'ambiente di produzione sulla qualità del formaggio prodotto<sup>31</sup>; tuttavia è possibile individuare qualche traccia. Per esempio, ritiene che la buona durata di conservazione del marzolino sia dovuta tra l'altro all'«alimentazione secca degli animali da cui si munge il latte»<sup>32</sup>, oppure, per giustificare la bontà dei formaggi valdostani, asserisce che «il clima è abbastanza temperato, i monti sono fertili e i prodotti della terra impareggiabili»<sup>33</sup>. Anche il *savoir-faire* (o il suo contrario) può avere la sua importanza. In uno dei pochi casi di descrizione di formaggi di cattiva qualità Pantaleone dichiara:

Non ricordo di aver mai mangiato un buon formaggio in tutta la Fian-dra né nel Brabante, né nell'Hainaut né nell'Artois. Non so se la colpa sia dell'incapacità dei formaggiai, dell'aria, o del fatto che apprezzano tanto il latte quanto il burro<sup>34</sup>.

Tre fattori, dunque: quello umano di esperienza, quello climatico e un altro umano, ma stavolta legato a un gusto sviluppato nel corso del tempo, che in questo caso va a detrimento della produzione casearia. L'idea di localizzare per Pantaleone, insomma, non comprende soltanto i luoghi fisici ma anche i frutti del *savoir-faire* sviluppatosi in quei luoghi stessi<sup>35</sup>. In questo appare straordinariamente moderno.

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<sup>31</sup> Con ogni probabilità, Pantaleone considera tale nozione implicita, avendola già sviluppata trattando del latte, in particolare nel capitolo della prima parte dedicato alla *Diversità del latte rispetto al clima, ai luoghi e al nutrimento* (ivi, pp. 50-52).

<sup>32</sup> Ivi, p. 77.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, p. 81.

<sup>34</sup> Ivi, p. 96.

<sup>35</sup> Per approfondimenti si rimanda a Campanini, *Il cibo* cit., pp. 53-57.

#### 4. Localizzazione e valorizzazione del territorio (ironia inclusa, però)

Nella prima metà del XVI secolo vedono la luce e conoscono grande fortuna in Italia le numerose opere dell'umanista milanese Ortensio Lando. Tra queste figura il *Commentario delle più notabili et mostruose cose d'Italia, et altri luoghi, di lingua aramea in italiana tradotto. Con un breve Catalogo de gli inventori delle cose che si mangiano et bevono, novamente ritrovato*, dato alle stampe per la prima volta a Venezia nel 1548<sup>36</sup>. Al *Catalogo* abbiamo già fatto cenno; qui prendiamo in considerazione il *Commentario* che contiene, tra molto altro, quella che può essere considerata la prima guida gastronomica italiana. L'importante, tuttavia, è non prenderla troppo sul serio.

Ortensio Lando utilizza a man bassa il cibo all'interno di questa sua opera. Non per questo è possibile considerarlo uno studioso della materia e, probabilmente, neppure un appassionato dell'argomento, anche se lo tratta talmente nei dettagli e con una tale competenza da far pensare che sia quantomeno un buon intenditore. L'uso che ne fa è strumentale all'ironia che pervade il suo scritto: essendo il cibo un argomento 'basso', legato alla corporeità e lontano dalle questioni spirituali, gli serve per abbassare il livello delle sue opere apparentemente serie e capovolgerle in direzione ironica. Questo accade in maniera palese nel *Catalogo de gli inventori*, ma anche il *Commentario* ne risulta impregnato. È, quest'ultimo, il lungo racconto del viaggio in Italia compiuto da un arameo, cittadino dell'isola degli Sperduti, accompagnato da un fiorentino proveniente dalla terra di Utopia, che gli fa da guida. Insieme visitano numerose città e l'arameo, che parla in prima persona, ne annota le curiosità e le stranezze, e tutto ciò che in qualche modo lo colpisce. Il cibo, nel racconto del viaggio, fa la sua comparsa di tanto in tanto: un passaggio molto dettagliato si trova per esempio all'interno

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<sup>36</sup> Lando, *Commentario* cit.



del racconto del suo soggiorno a Posillipo, di cui descrive nei dettagli le varietà di frutta<sup>37</sup>. «Quivi sono mele cotogne grosse come il capo d'un bue, et più belle di quelle che in Cidonia nascono»<sup>38</sup>, e via dicendo.

La guida gastronomica cui si alludeva si trova però all'inizio del racconto, prima che il viaggio vero e proprio cominci. L'arameo e il fiorentino sono ancora a bordo della nave diretta in Sicilia – prima tappa del viaggio in Italia – ma, assaliti da una tempesta, sono costretti a riparare su un'isoletta quasi disabitata dove fanno alcuni interessanti incontri. L'arameo trascorre qualche ora presso un saggio eremita prodigo di consigli, che conosce e ama l'Italia e gliela descrive in parte<sup>39</sup>. Giusto il suo distacco dalle cose del mondo, il cibo non lo interessa minimamente. Gli fa da contraltare un oste incontrato subito dopo, «un buon brigante, amico anzi schiavo della gola, per un ortolano, per un beccafico, per un fegatello, egli sarebbe ito nel fuoco»<sup>40</sup>. Costui, con un gusto compiaciuto per l'elencazione che caratterizza gran parte della produzione letteraria landiana (e di quella del suo tempo), descrive e commenta le specialità alimentari e gastronomiche italiane più conosciute, in base alle città e secondo l'ordine del viaggio che l'arameo si appresta a compiere (dunque, da sud a nord)<sup>41</sup>. Non si tratta di un catalogo esaustivo e alcune grandi città ne sono escluse (clamorosa la mancanza di Roma), ma questa sorta di divagazione/*divertissement* è la prima lista di ghiottonerie di cui l'Italia disponga. Dalla Sicilia a Genova, comunque, sono tante le località elencate, dove l'uomo con il suo ingegno ha realizzato meraviglie per il palato, nella concezione dell'oste non inferiori per importanza ai monumenti e alle opere d'arte. «Ma quanta invidia ti porto ricordandomi che tu mangerai in Napoli quel pane di puccia bianco nel più eccellente

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<sup>37</sup> Ivi, pp. 25-27.

<sup>38</sup> Ivi, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi, pp. 5-8.

<sup>40</sup> Ivi, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ivi, pp. 8-14.

grado», dice l'oste all'arameo, e aggiunge: «Dirai: “Questo è veramente il pane che gustano gli agnoli in Paradiso”»<sup>42</sup> e, per Bologna, «Non mi voglio scordar d'avvertirti che in Bologna si facciano salsicciotti, i migliori che mai si mangiassero [...]. Benedetto chi ne fu l'inventore! Io baccio e adoro quelle virtuose mani»<sup>43</sup>, solo per fare qualche esempio.

Ortensio Lando, implicitamente ma non troppo, si diverte molto a fronte di queste descrizioni così dettagliate. Il gusto con cui si sofferma su particolari anche minutissimi, gioca con le etimologie e mostra competenze degne di ben altri argomenti non fanno che confermare la ricercata ironia<sup>44</sup>. Occorrerà attendere ancora qualche secolo perché questo genere di competenza sia apprezzato e, soprattutto, preso sul serio.

## 5. Localizzare per differenziare

Nei libri di ricette i gastrotoponimi rivestono molto spesso una funzione fondamentale alla quale probabilmente non si pensa, o almeno non parrebbe la più immediata. Possono servire infatti per distinguere una preparazione da un'altra all'interno di una medesima tipologia: avremo dunque diverse localizzazioni di torte, maccheroni, brodi *etc.* Che poi quelle che presentano il gastrotoponimo nel titolo siano davvero 'tipiche' di un determinato luogo è una questione molto più spinosa e da analizzare caso per caso. Come vedremo nel prossimo paragrafo, infatti, non è detto che tutti i gastrotoponimi indichino la reale provenienza della ricetta e, anzi, errori e fraintendimenti sono costantemente in agguato.

I gastrotoponimi fanno la loro comparsa già nei primi libri di ricette, ancora manoscritti, che in Europa in generale e in Italia in particolare sono attestati a partire, approssimativamente, dalla fine del XIII secolo. Sostanzialmente inutilizzabile a scopi pratici, all'epoca, è il manuale di

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<sup>42</sup> Ivi, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Per approfondimenti si rimanda a Campanini, *Il cibo* cit., pp. 82-86.

cucina di età romana attribuito ad Apicio, redatto intorno al IV secolo e copiato sino all'VIII, poi assunto agli onori della stampa, insieme ad altri classici della letteratura, già alla fine del XV secolo<sup>45</sup>. Nessuno, perlomeno in Europa occidentale, avrebbe più cucinato secondo i suoi suggerimenti. Possiamo dunque asserire che i primi gastrotoponimi medievali in libri di cucina italiani siano attestati nel *Liber de coquina*, il primo dei manoscritti medievali di area italiana. Composto tra gli ultimi anni del XIII e la prima metà del XIV secolo probabilmente nella Napoli angioina, anche se vi è stato chi ne ha retrodatate le origini sino alla Sicilia di Federico II, il *Liber* è un capostipite che vanta numerosa discendenza: da esso derivano, con varianti e adattamenti, innanzitutto la versione toscana intitolata *Libro de la cocina*, compilata verso la fine del XIV secolo, e poi altri manoscritti in latino e in volgare. Pur con le loro significative varianti, tali codici sono considerati parte di un'unica famiglia<sup>46</sup>.

I gastrotoponimi del *Liber* riguardano in parte città e aree italiane, in parte altri Paesi<sup>47</sup>. Man mano che ci si allontana dall'ambito della Penisola, essi abbracciano spazi virtualmente più ampi. Se dunque in Italia troviamo gastrotoponimi regionali o addirittura cittadini, le ricette 'estere' riportano esclusivamente gastrotoponimi nazionali, eccezion fatta per la Provenza, rappresentata autonomamente da un brodo<sup>48</sup>. Dovrebbe essere invece più genericamente francese, o quantomeno da attribuire a popolazioni francofone, il brodo *gallicano*, che compare

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<sup>45</sup> A. Campanini, *Dalla tavola alla cucina. Scrittori e cibo nel Medioevo italiano*, Carocci, Roma 2012, p. 81.

<sup>46</sup> Ivi, p. 84.

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, p. 90.

<sup>48</sup> A. Martellotti, *I ricettari di Federico II. Dal «Meridionale» al «Liber de coquina»*, Olschki, Firenze 2005, p. 218. Il titolo della ricetta presenta le varianti «De brodio provincialico» e «Altramente a la provençale»; il contenuto del brodo è costituito essenzialmente da interiora di capponi, spezie e uova sbattute.

poco oltre e si prepara con carne di gallina, mandorle tritate e fette di pane<sup>49</sup>. Altri brodi dalla ricetta localizzata sono quello *theutonico*, a base di capponi o galline grassi lessati a fiamma intensa, prezzemolo, menta, maggiorana, rosmarino, zafferano<sup>50</sup>, e quello spagnolo, detto anche «brodo verde» a causa del colore che le erbe conferiscono a tale preparazione<sup>51</sup>. È spagnola anche una variante di una sorta di frittata a base di latte di pecora e uova, cotta nel lardo: le conferisce questo carattere ‘nazionale’, nella fattispecie, l’aggiunta di albumi<sup>52</sup>. L’elenco potrebbe continuare.

Per passare invece a ricette di ambito regionale italiano, si possono menzionare i finocchi «come si usa in Campania», che costituiscono l’ingrediente principale di una sorta di minestra destinata alla servitù: si fanno bollire in un pentolino con acqua, aggiungendo una generica pasta e facendo attenzione che il composto non diventi troppo denso. Poi si mette del pepe tritato in scodelle e lo si serve, aggiungendo eventualmente carne<sup>53</sup>. I fagioli presentano invece una ricetta «al modo trivisano», con carne, pepe e zafferano<sup>54</sup>. È *apula*, dunque pugliese, una preparazione detta *simula* o *sumula*, a base di latte, vermicelli, lardo, pepe, zafferano<sup>55</sup>. Sono menzionate anche una composta lombarda, peraltro seguita da una teutonica che reca, al proprio interno, una variante lombarda<sup>56</sup>. Per chiudere con una ricetta ‘cittadina’ si deve far ritorno alle verdure e rivolgersi ai cavoli *ad usum romanorum*, o *secun-*

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<sup>49</sup> Ivi, p. 219.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Ivi, pp. 220-221.

<sup>52</sup> Ivi, pp. 250-251.

<sup>53</sup> Ivi, pp. 207-208.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi, p. 215.

<sup>55</sup> Ivi, p. 251.

<sup>56</sup> Ivi, pp. 276-278.

*dum romanos*, preparati aggiungendo uova sbattute all'acqua di cottura e accompagnati a carne di maiale<sup>57</sup>. Tutte le ricette menzionate sono varianti di altrettante ricette generiche, e da esse distinte proprio grazie alla localizzazione.

Si tratta soltanto di esempi; inoltre il percorso gastrotoponomastico potrebbe proseguire e ampliarsi a dismisura considerando i libri di ricette successivi. In questa sede ci si limiterà a qualche menzione significativa. La prima di esse è tratta da un ricettario immediatamente successivo al *Liber de coquina*, conosciuto comunemente come libro dei 'dodici ghiotti' e redatto in Toscana, probabilmente a Siena, intorno agli anni Trenta del XIV secolo<sup>58</sup>: si tratta della ricetta delle «cervellate bressane». La cervellata, il più delle volte, porta in realtà con sé l'aggettivo 'milanese'; comunque anche in questo caso non si sposta dall'area lombarda, che è tuttora il suo punto di riferimento in Italia<sup>59</sup>. La sua ricetta, nella variante 'bresciana' dei dodici ghiotti, è estremamente indicativa riguardo all'utilizzo dei gastrotoponimi: per produrre cervellata bresciana occorrono formaggio cretese, che Giovanni Reboraci segnala diffuso in tutti i porti del Mediterraneo<sup>60</sup>, e sale di Sardegna o di Chiozza. A circolare, in questo caso, sono al tempo stesso i saperi culinari e i prodotti stessi.

Nei ricettari successivi, dal XV secolo in poi, la tendenza all'utilizzo dei gastrotoponimi raggiunge il suo apice. Maestro Martino, cuoco segreto dei papi Paolo II e Sisto IV, che scrive intorno agli anni Sessanta del XV secolo e abbiamo già avuto occasione di menzionare, dimostra un'ottima conoscen-

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<sup>57</sup> Ivi, p. 203.

<sup>58</sup> Campanini, *Dalla tavola alla cucina* cit., pp. 91-97.

<sup>59</sup> E. Carnevale Schianca, *La cucina medievale. Lessico, storia, preparazioni*, Olschki, Firenze 2011, pp. 153-154.

<sup>60</sup> G. Reboraci, *La cucina medievale italiana tra Oriente e Occidente*, in «Miscellanea storica ligure», 19 (1987), pp. 1431-1579, in particolare p. 1495.

za della Penisola: regioni quali la Sicilia, ma soprattutto città quali Padova, Bologna, Firenze e naturalmente Roma trovano in Martino la consacrazione culinaria. Dalla corte papale, poi, giungono ulteriori sollecitazioni: per esempio, l'esistenza di alcune ricette 'alla catalana' è probabilmente da ascrivere all'elezione del primo papa Borgia, Callisto III, avvenuta soltanto un decennio prima<sup>61</sup>. Una di queste, tra l'altro, rappresenta uno dei rari casi in cui il gastrotoponimo non serve per differenziare, ma per dare maggior forza alla localizzazione. Si tratta del mirause catalano, o alla catalana, il cui nome stesso rappresenterebbe l'italianizzazione' del termine catalano *mig-raust*, mezzo arrostito, e alluderebbe direttamente al contenuto della ricetta: i volatili – che siano pavoni, piccioni o pollastri – devono infatti essere prima parzialmente arrostiti allo spiedo, per poi terminare la cottura in pentola, insieme alla salsa<sup>62</sup>. Un mirause non catalano non potrebbe esistere. Esiste invece la possibilità che il gastrotoponimo serva in qualche modo a giustificare un neologismo che diversamente potrebbe risultare un po' bizzarro. Troviamo poi delle starnie «al modo catelano», le zucche («carabaze alla catelana») e il biancomangiare, nella sua variante catalana<sup>63</sup>.

Un esempio in cui il gastrotoponimo ha la funzione di differenziare due tipi di pasta tra loro molto diversi ma aventi lo stesso nome è costituito dai maccheroni, che in Maestro Martino possono essere «romaneschi» o «ciciliani». Nel primo caso si tratta di una sorta di tagliatelle o fettuccine che, sempre accompagnate dal toponimo che rimanda alla Città eterna, compariranno anche in ricettari successivi, per esempio in quello di Cristoforo Messisbugo e in quello già citato di Bartolomeo Scappi. I maccheroni siciliani, invece, sono analoghi nella forma ai maccheroni attuali<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Campanini, *Dalla tavola alla cucina* cit., p. 106.

<sup>62</sup> Carnevale Schianca, *La cucina medievale* cit., pp. 408-409. La ricetta è edita in C. Benporat, *Cucina italiana del Quattrocento*, Olschki, Firenze 1996, p. 92.

<sup>63</sup> Campanini, *Dalla tavola alla cucina* cit., pp. 107-108.

<sup>64</sup> Ivi, pp. 109-110.

Gli esempi potrebbero continuare, ma non aggiungerebbero altro materiale a quanto visto sinora<sup>65</sup>. Occorre tuttavia soffermarsi ancora un istante sui libri di ricette per portare alla luce alcune possibili insidie strettamente connesse all'uso dei gastrotoponimi.

## 6. Il rischio dei 'falsi amici'

Lo si accennava: nello studio dei gastrotoponimi culinari non si può quasi mai dare per scontato il fatto che rappresentino un'autentica localizzazione e che rimandino dunque senza ombra di dubbio al luogo in cui quella tal ricetta è stata concepita o del quale è considerata 'tipica'. La tradizione è talvolta complessa e può introdurre varianti impreviste. Un esempio che eccede il nostro arco cronologico è talmente interessante da autorizzare la brevissima deviazione. Nel 1766, un anonimo autore dà alle stampe a Torino *Il cuoco piemontese perfezionato a Parigi* traducendo e, se necessario, adattando le ricette che il francese Menon aveva pubblicato vent'anni prima nel suo *La cuisinière bourgeoise*. Quando si trova ad affrontare una ricetta che insegna come preparare la spalla di montone, l'anonimo trova nel testo francese un aggettivo che non comprende. Menon intitola infatti la ricetta in questione «Epaule de mouton à la roussie», dove il termine *roussie* rimanda al verbo *roussir* nel senso di bruciare o fiammeggiare: la spalla di montone è infatti cotta allo spiedo. L'anonimo cuoco piemontese pare invece comprendere *Russie*, Russia, e porta il fraintendimento alle estreme conseguenze, 'battezzando' la sua ricetta «Spalla di montone alla moscovita»<sup>66</sup>. Se si provasse a ricercare nella tradizione gastronomica della capitale russa la spalla di montone del

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<sup>65</sup> Per approfondimenti si rimanda a Campanini, *Il cibo* cit., pp. 66-69.

<sup>66</sup> La ricetta si trova in *Il cuoco piemontese perfezionato a Parigi. Torino 1766*, a cura di S. Serventi (a cura di), Slow Food Editore Bra (CN), 1995, p. 123. È lo stesso Silvano Serventi a rilevare questo fraintendimento: ivi, p. 323, nota 19.

nostro testo, si rimarrebbe senz'altro delusi. L'errore, dunque, è sempre in agguato.

Senza arrivare a questo punto estremo, anche analizzando i primi libri di ricette parecchi dubbi sulla provenienza di preparazioni dal gastroponimo apparentemente evidente e cristallino sono stati insinuati. Prendiamo per esempio la torta parmesana, una delle preparazioni più complesse del *Liber de coquina*. Si tratta di un 'monumento alla torta', composto da vari strati tutti differenti tra loro e separatamente elaborati prima di trovare il loro posto nell'insieme. Ricollegarla alla città di Parma parrebbe un'operazione semplice, ma non tutti sono d'accordo o, almeno, introducono delle ulteriori specifiche. Giovanni Reborà ritiene che Parma sia in effetti la culla di questa torta e ne mette in connessione la creazione con la celebrazione della vittoria dei parmensi sull'esercito di Federico II, avvenuta nel 1248<sup>67</sup>. Anna Martellotti si orienta in una direzione molto differente e collega il piatto a «parma» nel senso di «scudo» per richiamare la forma a contrafforte assunta dalla torta, aggiungendo però che in un secondo tempo la città di Parma l'avrebbe 'adottata' come propria specialità<sup>68</sup>.

Altra torta dal nome riconducibile sì a un luogo, ma non direttamente, sempre secondo Giovanni Reborà dovrebbe essere la torta di pollastri lavagnese, presente in diversi manoscritti<sup>69</sup>, che sarebbe da ricondurre alla città di Lavagna, in Liguria, ma soltanto perché da lì proveniva Sinibaldo Fieschi

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<sup>67</sup> Reborà, *La cucina medievale italiana* cit., p. 1494.

<sup>68</sup> Martellotti, *I ricettari di Federico II* cit., pp. 95-96, che rimanda anche a A. Martellotti, *The Parmesan Pie*, in «Petits Propos Culinaires», 59 (1998), pp. 7-14 e 61(1999), pp. 7-15. Ulteriori elementi sulla torta parmigiana si trovano in Carnevale Schianca, *La cucina medievale* cit., pp. 668-670.

<sup>69</sup> La si trova per esempio nel libro cosiddetto dei 'dodici ghiotti'. L'edizione più recente è costituita da S. Pregnotato, *Il 'più antico' ricettario culinario italiano nel codice Riccardiano 1071. Appunti preliminari, nuova edizione del testo e indice lessicale*, in «StEFI. Studi di erudizione e di filologia italiana», VIII (2019), pp. 219-323, in particolare pp. 265-266.



dei conti di Lavagna, asceso al soglio pontificio con il nome di Innocenzo IV: la torta lavagnese potrebbe essere stata creata proprio in suo onore<sup>70</sup>. La stessa sorte sarebbe stata condivisa dalla torta ungherese<sup>71</sup>, realizzata in questo caso in onore di Carlo Roberto d'Angiò, re d'Ungheria<sup>72</sup>. E via dicendo.

Esistono poi gastrotoponimi ambigui, quale per esempio quello della torta de Romania<sup>73</sup>, dove è difficile capire se ci si rifa all'Impero Bizantino o alla Romagna attuale, che allora si estendeva sull'Adriatico da Porto San Giorgio a Comacchio, comprendendo anche città dell'entroterra quali Bologna e Ferrara<sup>74</sup>. Insomma, anche una denominazione d'origine apparentemente chiara può in realtà nascondere insidie e, come in questo caso, restare fondamentalmente irrisolta<sup>75</sup>.

## 7. Conclusione

Queste annotazioni hanno avuto come scopo quello di mostrare, tramite una rapida panoramica, alcune delle ragioni che hanno spinto in direzione della localizzazione di prodotti e ricette in un'epoca lontana dalla promozione o dal marketing. Ce ne sono senza dubbio altre e soprattutto il filone dell'ironia merita ulteriori approfondimenti. Tuttavia, è lecito sviluppare qualche breve riflessione.

Un argomento apparentemente abbastanza scontato, il legame del prodotto o della ricetta al suo luogo di produzione o d'ideazione, nasce

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<sup>70</sup> Rebora, *La cucina medievale italiana* cit., p. 1494. Ulteriori elementi in Carnevale Schianca, *La cucina medievale* cit., pp. 666-667.

<sup>71</sup> Se ne trova una versione in L. Frati, *Libro di cucina del secolo XIV*, Giusti, Livorno 1899 (rist. anast. Arnaldo Forni, Bologna 1986), pp. 59-60.

<sup>72</sup> Rebora, *La cucina medievale italiana* cit., p. 1495. Ulteriori elementi in Carnevale Schianca, *La cucina medievale* cit., p. 671.

<sup>73</sup> Se ne trova una versione in Frati, *Libro di cucina* cit., pp. 60-61.

<sup>74</sup> Carnevale Schianca, *La cucina medievale* cit., p. 563.

<sup>75</sup> Per approfondimenti si rimanda a Campanini, *Il cibo* cit., pp. 69-73.

in contesti tra loro anche molto diversi e, in fin dei conti, scontato non è. La tentazione di leggerlo applicando i parametri attuali, che appartengono a una società profondamente diversa da quella presa in esame, è forte ma deve essere lasciata da parte.

Il modo di porsi di fronte al cibo dell'uomo del Medioevo o del Rinascimento non è paragonabile a quello attuale, ma qualche punto in comune è possibile individuarlo. Innanzitutto, alla grande mobilità di prodotti e di idee gastronomiche che quotidianamente viviamo non fa da contraltare una spesso presunta immobilità nel passato. I mezzi di comunicazione sono cambiati, e con quelli la velocità di scambio e di propagazione, ma la volontà alla base è fondamentalmente immutata. I valorosi destrieri servivano per raggiungere mercati lontani e un manoscritto creato a Firenze poteva esportare a Venezia conoscenza culinaria, magari adattandola al gastro-sostrato locale. Il Medioevo non è in alcun caso immobile, l'epoca successiva men che meno. E i gastrotoponimi, in qualche misura, acquistano un senso proprio in virtù di quel movimento.

Quale che sia la causa dell'apposizione del gastrotoponimo, la sua conseguenza è comunque quella di procurare una collocazione geografica all'elemento culinario che accompagna. Alle insidie dei 'falsi amici' se ne aggiunge un'altra, frequentissima: credere cioè che quel prodotto, che magari troviamo oggi nel medesimo luogo definito dal gastrotoponimo tardo-medievale, sia esattamente lo stesso prodotto e che dunque, in qualche misura, possiamo gustare adesso 'un po' di Medioevo'. Così non è, naturalmente: cambiamenti tecnici e ambientali, solo per citare i due fattori più evidenti, rendono il nostro prodotto diverso da quello medievale, sebbene magari il nome sia rimasto lo stesso. Quello che però, in qualche caso, resta, è quella sorta di linea di continuità dettata in particolare dall'uomo – per l'ambiente il discorso risulterebbe diverso, e diverse le fonti alle quali rivolgersi – che, *mutatis mutandis*, gli permette di attraversare i secoli relativamente indenne nella sua 'immaterialità'. E, dunque, nei casi più fortunati, di potersi fregiare dell'attributo di patrimonio culturale. Il gastrotoponimo, in questo caso, è di grandissimo aiuto.

# Foodway certosino? Appunti per un caso di studio dalla Riviera ligure di Ponente

Giacomo Nervi\*

## 1. Introduzione

Massimo Quaini, nel 1973, scriveva che

alquanto dettagliata potrebbe essere la ricostruzione delle strutture e dei paesaggi agrari nel distretto di Toirano, a partire dall'inizio del XIII secolo, per la disponibilità di numerosi documenti riguardanti le tenute dei signori locali, del vescovo di Albenga e del monastero di S. Pietro<sup>1</sup>.

L'indicazione di Quaini, che, tra l'altro, aveva assegnato una tesi di laurea inerente al territorio toiranesi<sup>2</sup>, non sembra, per ora, avere riscosso molto successo.

Ne è dimostrazione il fatto che alcuni complessi documentari potenzialmente utili per la storia del territorio sono rimasti, per ora, sostanzialmente

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<sup>1</sup> M. Quaini, *Per la storia del paesaggio agrario in Liguria. Note di geografia storica sulle strutture agrarie della Liguria medievale e moderna*, Camera di Commercio Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura, 1973, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> C. Massa, *Ricerche di geografia storica nel territorio di Toirano*, tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Genova, Facoltà di Magistero, a. a. 1969/70, relatore prof. M. Quaini.

inediti. Parte di questo materiale archivistico venne trasferito, nel 1969, dall'archivio comunale di Toirano all'Archivio di Stato di Savona: al suo interno c'è la parte più cospicua di ciò che rimane dell'archivio della certosa di San Pietro in Varatella. Il fondo<sup>3</sup> è formato da cinque unità: una filza, composta da circa duecento atti notarili, e quattro buste/faldoni, che contengono tredici registri che illustrano soprattutto la gestione contabile e amministrativa del monastero. I registri coprono un arco temporale che va dagli ultimi anni del '500 alla fine del '700; sei sono «libri dei conti» con registrazioni di entrate e/o di uscite: la serie è abbastanza completa per gli anni dal 1598 al 1772, con una lacuna importante tra il 1628 e il 1724. Un ulteriore registro settecentesco – al momento non ne ho ricostruito la storia archivistica – è conservato all'Archivio di Stato di Genova<sup>4</sup>.

La maggioranza degli studiosi ha concentrato le proprie attenzioni sul mito delle origini del monastero, un insediamento altomedievale che si evolve in un'importante abbazia benedettina. La monografia più moderna, quella di Beltrutti<sup>5</sup>, ricalca in molti passaggi uno studio ottocentesco<sup>6</sup>, caratterizzato da una trasparente finalità apologetica. Nel 1966 Antonio Olivieri ha dedicato la sua tesi di laurea alla costruzione di un cartario del monastero<sup>7</sup>; i documenti che fanno parte della compilazione, compresi alcuni presumibilmente apocrifi, vanno letti anche alla luce delle indicazioni di lavori più recenti<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Archivio di Stato di Savona (da ora ASSv), *Fondo Certosa di Toirano* (da ora CdT).

<sup>4</sup> Archivio di Stato di Genova (da ora ASGe), *Ordini religiosi 358, Libro di censi, piggioni, e livelli dal 1767*.

<sup>5</sup> G. Beltrutti, *La certosa di Toirano*, Analecta Cartusiana n. 101, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, Salzburg 1982.

<sup>6</sup> P. Accame, *Storia dell'Abbazia di San Pietro in Varatella*, Tipografia Craviotto, Albenga 1893.

<sup>7</sup> A. Olivieri, *Le carte del monastero di San Pietro in Varatella*, Associazione A cumuna veggia, Toirano-Savona 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Ad esempio: G. Pesce, *Toirano*, Stringa, Genova 1976, pp. 68-72; J. Costa

Il mio studio si pone metodi e obiettivi differenti rispetto a quelli degli autori citati. Per quanto riguarda l'utilizzo degli archivi degli enti ecclesiastici per indagini sulla cultura materiale di età medievale, moderna e contemporanea ho trovato utili modelli di riferimento in alcuni studi effettuati nel Mezzogiorno italiano<sup>9</sup> e in altre opere censite in bibliografia. Buona parte di questo lavoro, comunque, è costruita mediante l'escussione delle fonti testuali, privilegiando scritture contabili e notarili che documentano quelli che Accame, alla fine del secolo scorso, liquidava come «avvenimenti di non grande importanza [...] miserevoli questioni di giurisdizione e supremazia»<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. La certosa di San Pietro in Varatella di Toirano

I visitatori delle grotte di Toirano, nota meta escursionistica in provincia di Savona, non possono non notare, percorrendo la strada che dal paese conduce alle grotte, un campanile un po' malconcio che svetta sopra un piccolo nucleo di costruzioni (Fig. 1).

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Restagno, *Diocesi di Albenga*, in *Liguria Monastica*, Italia benedettina n. 2, Centro storico benedettino italiano, Cesena 1979, pp. 183-196; A. Arecco, *La diocesi di Albenga – Imperia e i suoi vescovi. Storia della chiesa ingauna dalle origini al Quattrocento*, Diocesi di Albenga-Imperia, Albenga 2003, pp. 182-184; P. Embriaco, *Vescovi e signori. La Chiesa albanese dal declino dell'autorità regia all'egemonia genovese (secoli XI – XIII)*, Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, Bordighera 2004.

<sup>9</sup> A. D'Ambrosio, M. Spedicato, *L'alimentazione delle comunità religiose nel Mezzogiorno moderno (secc. XVII – XIX)* in Cavaciocchi S. (a cura di), *Alimentazione e nutrizione secc. XIII – XVIII*, Istituto internazionale di storia economica 'F. Datini', Prato, Serie II – Atti delle 'Settimane di Studi' e altri Convegni, n. 28, Le Monnier, Firenze 1997, e A. D'Ambrosio, M. Spedicato, *Cibo e clausura. Regimi alimentari e patrimoni monastici nel Mezzogiorno moderno (sec. XVII – XIX)*, Cacucci, Bari 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Accame, *Storia dell'Abbazia di San Pietro in Varatella* cit., p. 88.



Fig. 1 Vista della certosa di San Pietro in Varatella (Toirano)

Si tratta del complesso della certosa di San Pietro, un monastero attivo tra la fine del XV secolo e il 1797. Località Certosa, come è denominata nella toponomastica attuale del Comune di Toirano, non è priva di suggestione: le strutture del monastero sono inserite in un contesto rurale a edificazione rada, dove le case costruite in età contemporanea si contano sulle dita di una mano. Numerosi coltivatori, professionisti e non, mantengono in efficienza un sistema agricolo composto da appezzamenti a colture promiscue, orti, vigne, piccoli frutteti. Alcune infrastrutture di interesse architettonico e archeologico sono ancora leggibili, se non attive, come la ‘bealera’, il canale di muratura che conduceva l’acqua agli opifici a energia idrica della certosa<sup>11</sup>. È rimasto intatto anche il muro

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<sup>11</sup> Uno dei frantoi ad acqua, il «*gombo di mezzo*», è rimasto in attività fino agli anni Cinquanta del '900 (testimonianza orale della famiglia Maineri).

che recintava la clausura, a eccezione di un breve tratto, sfondato per creare un accesso dalla strada comunale all'interno del demolito «claustrino». Il suo perimetro, lungo circa 400 metri e di forma grossolanamente trapezoidale, delimita un'area di quasi tre ettari di ampi terrazzamenti, distesi lungo un terrazzo fluviale sulla sponda sinistra del medio corso del torrente Varatella. Oggi gli edifici e i terreni interni e limitrofi alla clausura sono di proprietà privata, ad eccezione dei ruderi della chiesa e del campanile, acquisiti al demanio comunale nel 2014.

Il trasferimento dei monaci in questo luogo era stato formalmente concesso nel 1495<sup>12</sup>: nei documenti il sito viene indicato con toponimi diversi («Canape», «Canave», «Canove», «Canoa») e vi esisteva già una grangia benedettina. I lavori per il nuovo monastero dovevano essere giunti a un buono stato di avanzamento nel 1518<sup>13</sup> ma, secondo Accame, l'epidemia di peste del 1525 costrinse i religiosi a rifugiarsi nell'abbazia abbandonata sulla vetta del monte San Pietro<sup>14</sup>. Nel 1604 il priore Filippo descrive la situazione della certosa con toni catastrofici: vigne e oliveti incolti, muri a secco crollati, la fontana e il nuovo monastero che minacciano già rovina<sup>15</sup>. Durante i primi lustri del Seicento si sono succeduti cantieri importanti<sup>16</sup>. Attorno al 1609 viene costruito un nuovo edificio con cantina, cucina, dispensa, forno e foresteria<sup>17</sup>. La fabbrica delle «stalle nove» si protrae durante il 1610<sup>18</sup>. Nel 1627 viene invertito l'orientamento della chiesa<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Olivieri, *Le carte del monastero di San Pietro in Varatella* cit., p. 188, doc. 129.

<sup>13</sup> Ivi, p. 203, doc. 135.

<sup>14</sup> Accame, *Storia dell'Abbazia di San Pietro in Varatella* cit., p.73.

<sup>15</sup> ASSv, CdT, faldone 37, registro *Libro dei conti 1598 – 1627*, c. 50.

<sup>16</sup> Il 30 agosto 1609 viene registrata una spesa per «*li marmi de la fabrica*»: ivi, c. 87r.

<sup>17</sup> Ivi, c. 85r.

<sup>18</sup> Ivi, c. 89r.

<sup>19</sup> Accame, *Storia dell'Abbazia di San Pietro in Varatella* cit., p. 73.

Dalla seconda metà del XVII secolo in poi l'attività edilizia sembra configurarsi come un *work in progress* di manutenzioni, piuttosto che di interventi radicali.

La casa certosina di Toirano venne pianificata per un gruppo piuttosto ridotto di abitanti; di fatto, venne popolata da un numero variabile da tre a cinque monaci, divenuti sei forse solo per alcuni mesi del 1604<sup>20</sup>. Alternò momenti di stabilità economica a fasi di dissesto finanziario: nel 1597 il neo priore Paolo Fachineti dovette, come suo primo provvedimento, prendere a prestito 100 ducatonì dalla certosa di Casotto, «non avendo trovato ne denari per pagar chi li doveva avere [...] ne il vitto [...] per li Religiosi e servitori». Viene da chiedersi perché l'Ordine mantenesse in vita una sede apparentemente fragile e periferica, ma basta sfogliare i «libri dei conti» per intuire che la certosa rappresentava, assieme alla casa di Savona, uno dei perni della rete di produzione e di distribuzione degli oli di oliva verso tutta la provincia certosina di Lombardia, e ciò giustificava i sacrifici economici dei cenobi maggiori per sostenere Toirano con prestiti, donazioni di beni ed elemosine<sup>21</sup>. La certosa di Toirano, dunque, può essere interpretata come un'azienda agricola che aveva il suo *core business* nel commercio di oli di oliva<sup>22</sup>, attività che fruttava, generalmente, dalla metà a tre quarti dell'«introito» della casa. Le vendite annuali di oli

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<sup>20</sup> ASSv, CdT, faldone 37, registro *Libro dei conti 1598 – 1627*, c. 109r.

<sup>21</sup> Ad esempio l'«elemosina da Pavia per agiustar questa povera casa» di 270 lire nel 1620 (ivi, c. 129v).

<sup>22</sup> Ho approfondito questa interpretazione in modo più analitico in G. Nervi, *La certosa di San Pietro in Varatella: pratiche locali della produzione e della distribuzione dell'olio di oliva tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, in C. Littardi, A. Carassale (a cura di), *Ars olearia – II, Dall'oliveto al mercato in età moderna e contemporanea, Atti del convegno Olivo e olio in Liguria e nella regione mediterranea dal medioevo ai nostri giorni* (Sanremo-Taggia, 25-27 maggio 2017), Comune di Sanremo, Centro Studi per la storia dell'alimentazione e della cultura materiale – CeSA e associazione 'Loro di Taggia', 2019, Guarene 2019.



oscillavano da quantitativi quasi nulli a massimi di oltre cento barili, sotto l'effetto dell'alternarsi delle annate di carica e scarica, del succedersi di fasi climatiche positive o negative, ma anche delle diverse strategie di commercializzazione adottate dai priori del monastero. Per interpretare i dati aggregati delle vendite in modo più realistico è necessario ricordare che la certosa non vendeva solo la produzione propria, ma commercializzava anche oli acquistati sul mercato locale. L'indotto dell'olivicoltura era moltiplicato da un articolato sistema di forniture di beni e servizi, che amplificava la redditività delle annate fortunate e si azzerava in quelle peggiori. La certosa, oltretutto diverse categorie merceologiche di oli, metteva sul mercato le olive fresche, la sansa, la cenere dei camini dei frantoi, l'acqua di vegetazione («ogliaro» od «ogliara») delle olive, le fecce dell'olio e le attrezzature dismesse dei frantoi, come le macine di pietra, gli elementi di legno e i fiscoli usurati. Venivano messi a disposizione degli olivicoltori locali servizi come la molitura delle olive, pagabile anche in natura («in tanto olio»), la fornitura di «canne grosse» per la bacchiatura, la conservazione degli oli in «trogli» di muratura o nelle giare di terracotta, il prestito di otri di pelle, l'erogazione di credito sotto forma di prestiti di oli o di contratti di censo.

Le altre entrate della certosa, a integrazione del ciclo dell'olivicoltura, derivavano dall'allevamento, rilevante fino ai primi decenni del '600, dall'orticoltura, incentivata particolarmente all'inizio del XVII secolo, e dagli investimenti immobiliari e finanziari. Questi ultimi erano indirizzati, fino alla seconda metà del '600, soprattutto all'acquisizione e allo sviluppo di opifici a energia idrica. Nella seconda metà del XVII secolo la certosa arrivò a disporre di due mulini-frantoi, un frantoio, una cartiera e una pista per la produzione di polvere da sparo, attività tutte esternalizzate a gestori privati tramite varie forme contrattuali, ad eccezione del frantoio «soprano», gestito a conduzione diretta. Nel corso del '700 aumentarono i proventi legati alle attività finanziarie e di gestione del patrimonio, come la stipula di contratti di censo, e gli introiti per locazioni di case e terreni. L'ulti-

mo tentativo di riconversione produttiva fu la trasformazione di un mulino da grano in una «pista da tabacco»<sup>23</sup>.

### **3. Produzioni e consumi alla certosa: un approccio per sfere economiche**

Per addentrarsi tra le centinaia di registrazioni dei «libri dei conti» della certosa è opportuno scegliere un approccio coerente, pena lo smarrirsi tra decine di pagine fitte di compravendite. Il primo ostacolo che ho incontrato è la disomogeneità dei criteri contabili e degli stili di tenuta dei registri. Alcuni registri offrono entrate e uscite impaginate in corrispondenza; in altri entrate e uscite sono rappresentate senza essere poste in relazione cronologica. Alcuni registri contengono solo entrate, altri solo uscite. A volte è il priore in carica che gestisce i registri, talvolta è il procuratore oppure l'eventuale rettore provvisorio. Priori, procuratori e rettori compilano la contabilità con stili molto diversi l'uno dall'altro: alcuni registrano entrate e spese quasi quotidianamente, altri aggiornano i conti a cadenza periodica, talvolta senza neppure apporre le date delle transazioni, il che sottintende la tenuta di brogliacci di brutta copia dei quali sono rimaste pochissime tracce. A dispetto del luogo comune della precisione certosina non mancano errori e correzioni: durante il 1616 il rettore Amedeo combina parecchi pasticci e il nuovo priore Arcangelo, nel 1617, si ritrova a dover rimediare a sviste contabili per oltre 333 lire<sup>24</sup>. Accame documenta nel 1581 anche un tentativo di truffa con alterazione della contabilità, con il priore Gregorio Lomellino che, scoperto, tenta

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<sup>23</sup>Nel 1775 era munita di 4 «pile» ed era gestita da Bernardo Mainero, al quale era «appigionata» anche la raccolta della foglia dei gelsi nella clausura (ASGe, Ordini religiosi 358, *Libro di censi, piggioni, e livelli dal 1767*, p. 82).

<sup>24</sup>ASSv, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro dei conti 1598 – 1627*, cc. 109r e 109v.

un'inutile fuga in Francia<sup>25</sup>. A metà del '700 sarà il priore Anselmo a dileguarsi con la cassa<sup>26</sup>.

Credo che ci siano elementi sufficienti per scoraggiare un approccio meramente quantitativo e 'formalistico' ai registri<sup>27</sup>. In fondo, la tenuta di questa documentazione era originata semplicemente dalla necessità di dimostrare ai Padri Visitatori dell'Ordine che esisteva una procedura sistematica di controllo di gestione e che, almeno formalmente, le entrate e le uscite annuali tendevano a equilibrarsi. Tra l'altro, l'impressione è che il controllo periodico dei Visitatori non comportasse sempre una revisione contabile minuziosa. Non va dimenticato, inoltre, che sfuggono totalmente al nostro campo visivo le transazioni effettuate dai monaci con le (cospicue, rispetto alla media degli altri regolari) risorse personali.

Comunque, per provare a descrivere l'intreccio di cicli produttivi che si incrociano alla certosina, propongo di identificare tre sfere economiche di produzioni e consumi. La prima è l'autoconsumo, cioè i beni prodotti in loco per soddisfare le esigenze dei monaci, dei conversi e dei salariati, che esprimono posizioni sociali e regimi alimentari differenziati. La seconda sfera incorpora i cicli delle merci redistribuite all'interno della rete delle certose della provincia di Lombardia. L'ultima sfera include i cicli dei beni in entrata e in uscita dall'azienda, provenienti da (oppure diretti a) mercati locali, regionali e interregionali esterni all'Ordine certosino. L'unica merce il cui ciclo di produzione e distribuzione interseca tutte e tre le sfere è l'olio di oliva. Questa scomposizione può rivelarsi discutibile sotto l'aspetto scientifico, ma, perlomeno, mi consente di impostare una narrazione più ordinata.

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<sup>25</sup> Accame, *Storia dell'Abbazia di San Pietro in Varatella* cit., p. 77-78.

<sup>26</sup> ASGe, *Archivio Segreto, Giunta di Giurisdizione*, 126.

<sup>27</sup> Cfr. anche le cautele espresse da Giana e altri nel contesto di studi simili, ad esempio in L. Giana, *Decifrare la regola. L'inchiesta innocenziana sui conventi piemontesi di antico regime*, Sagep, Genova 2020, p. 71 e *passim*.

#### 4. L'autoconsumo

Le produzioni destinate all'autoconsumo all'interno del cenobio sono quelle che, inevitabilmente, lasciano meno tracce documentarie, non essendo registrate nelle transazioni contabili. Per la seconda metà del XVIII secolo viene in aiuto il priore Giovanni Maria Isnardi, che ha usato alcune pagine di un registro come minuta per prendere appunti sul contenuto della dispensa e della cantina. La fonte principale per scoprire le produzioni della certosa è, comunque, la descrizione delle voci di entrata della cassa: ho ipotizzato che, ragionevolmente, i prodotti dell'agricoltura e dell'allevamento destinati alla vendita possano essere interpretati anche come surplus di produzione residuati dall'autoconsumo. Questa regola va, comunque, applicata con cautela: ad esempio, alla certosa si allevavano bovini, ma, almeno teoricamente, i monaci non potevano consumarne le carni.

Ad esempio, per soddisfare almeno parte del fabbisogno di cereali panificabili, la certosa aveva ereditato dall'abbazia benedettina un modello di organizzazione abbastanza raffinato. La coltivazione dei cereali si svolgeva presso due poli produttivi: i terreni interni alla clausura a Toirano e i possedimenti nel territorio di Bardineto. Bardineto è un villaggio distante 8 km in linea d'aria dalla certosa, inserito in un contesto ambientale molto diverso rispetto a Toirano: situato a oltre settecento metri sul livello del mare, il borgo sorge nella valle del corso superiore del Bormida di Millesimo, con un microclima appenninico dagli inverni più rigidi e dalle precipitazioni più abbondanti rispetto alla fascia costiera. A Bardineto il monastero possedeva un edificio nato come grangia benedettina che, nel 1604, veniva definito «cassina»<sup>28</sup> e risultava affidato alla gestione di massari. Alla «cassina» si coltivavano cereali e fieno nei prati irrigati con l'acqua del «bottasso», l'invaso artificiale che capta la sorgente

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<sup>28</sup> Nel 1767 la «cassina» aveva il tetto coperto di «paglia d'orzo» (ASSv, CdT, reg. *Entrata e spese della V.da Certosa di Toirano 1758 - 1772*, p. 70r).

del Buranco, emissaria di uno dei più importanti sistemi carsici della Liguria. I movimenti dei mulattieri da Bardineto a Toirano per condurre a valle il grano sono documentati nel dettaglio nel corso del '600<sup>29</sup>. Durante l'inverno del 1617 la certosina mette in vendita piccoli quantitativi di barbariato<sup>30</sup> e toSELLA<sup>31</sup>: vengono distinti in «nostrano» (di Toirano) e «di Bardineto»<sup>32</sup>, e ciò rende esplicita la strategia di seminare gli stessi cereali in luoghi diversi, per ridurre i rischi derivanti da eventi climatici locali o altri fattori. L'autoproduzione di cereali non era sempre sufficiente a coprire il fabbisogno interno: nel 1623 il priore Alfonso Mainerio dichiara che nel monastero, a giugno, ci sono «farina per fare una volta del pane per il Convento. Stara 2 et moturali 4 frumento»<sup>33</sup>, una scorta abbastanza ridotta. Un acquisto importante di grano è documentato nel giugno

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<sup>29</sup>ASSV, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro dei conti* cit., c. 7v.

<sup>30</sup> Il barbariato è la mistura, in proporzioni variabili, di grano e segale seminate, coltivate e mietute insieme.

<sup>31</sup> Per Bartolomeo Paschetti la toSELLA è «grano bellissimo, albissimo, nettissimo, e di maggior peso di qual si voglia altro grano» (B. Paschetti, *Del conservare la sanità e del vivere dei Genovesi*, Giuseppe Pavoni, Genova 1602, libro secondo, p. 354). In un dizionario di fine '700 è descritta come «Specie di formento assai comune. Spiga senza barbe, fa un pane bianchissimo» (*Dizionario universale economico rustico*, Stamperia di Michele Puccinelli, Roma 1797, vol. 21, p. 284). Nell'«Enciclopedia del negoziante» del 1842 la toSELLA è definita «Frumento d'inverno, *Triticum hibernum*. Il calice contiene egualmente quattro fiori a loppe disposte in iscaglie e che cadono alla maturità dei grani; sono per ordinario senza barba; in alcuni luoghi indicano questa specie col nome di toso o toSELLA» (*Enciclopedia del negoziante ossia Gran Dizionario del Commercio*, Ed. Giuseppe Antonelli, Venezia 1842, tomo IV, p. 264). Nel 1648, nei magazzini di Genova del 'granatino' Francesco de la Fuye sono stoccati «migliaia di sacchi di sassette e toSELLA» (E. Grendi, *I Balbi*, Einaudi, Torino 1997, p. 92).

<sup>32</sup> ASSV, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro dei conti* cit., c. 112v.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, c. 148.

1604<sup>34</sup>. Le vendite di farine e altri cereali sono altrettanto altalenanti e irregolari: si trovano citate, in quantitativi variabili, segale (1598)<sup>35</sup>, to-sella (1598)<sup>36</sup>, grano (1599<sup>37</sup>, 1600 e 1603<sup>38</sup>), ma anche avena<sup>39</sup> e orzo<sup>40</sup>. Gli appunti del priore Isnardi<sup>41</sup>, relativi alle annate del 1769 e del 1770, svelano come, durante il XVIII secolo, la strategia di approvvigionamento di cereali fosse cambiata. L'acquisto degli ampi appezzamenti della Braiassa e della Braietta, non lontani dalla Certosa, aveva consentito di avvicinarsi maggiormente all'autosufficienza: nei nuovi terreni di Toirano era stata concentrata la semina del grano, il cui raccolto veniva integrato con i conferimenti di alcuni mezzadri. La sola rimozione della «stobbia» dal campo della Braiassa impiegava un uomo per sette giorni<sup>42</sup>. Alla «cassina» di Bardineto si coltivavano grano, barbariato, fieno e legumi. Se il contratto con i mezzadri prevedeva, fino agli anni Sessanta del '700, il progressivo impianto di nuovi castagni<sup>43</sup>, il nuovo patto del 1773 obbligava il mezzadro a seminare grano, compreso il frumento marzengo, segala, piselli, lenticchie, fagioli, ceci e mochi<sup>44</sup>; scompaiono i riferimenti al castagno. I prodotti di Bardineto sembrano diventare colture di assicurazione rispetto ai raccolti di Toirano.

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<sup>34</sup> Ivi, c. 56r.

<sup>35</sup> Ivi, c. 5v.

<sup>36</sup> Ivi, cc. 15v e 58v.

<sup>37</sup> Ivi, c. 24v.

<sup>38</sup> Ivi, c. 26v e 44v.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi, c. 20v.

<sup>40</sup> Ivi, c. 76v.

<sup>41</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 36, reg. *Salariati ed affittamenti delli Edificij della Certosa di Toirano*, pp. 3 e 5.

<sup>42</sup> ASGe, *Ordini religiosi 358, Libro di censi, piggioni, e livelli dal 1767*, p. 42 bis.

<sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 52.

<sup>44</sup> Ivi, pp. 83 – 83 bis. Il moco è una varietà di cicerchia.

L'immissione sul mercato di surplus agricolo venne incentivata all'inizio del XVII secolo. Tra il 1604 e il 1616 l'«uomo forte» del monastero pare essere il procuratore Bernardo Garassino, espressione di una agguerrita «parentela» locale. Per rimediare alla ciclica carenza di denaro liquido, Garassino e il priore Filippo svilupparono la vendita al minuto di prodotti agricoli. Nel registro delle entrate iniziano a comparire transazioni minime, come quella di una «dozena di persichi» (pesche) del 15 luglio del 1612<sup>45</sup>. Queste «microvendite» sono preziose, perché ci consentono di entrare, per così dire, a curiosare negli orti della clausura. Tra i beni ceduti tra il 1604 e il 1622 ecco cento teste d'aglio<sup>46</sup>, noci<sup>47</sup>, cavoli «garbusi» disponibili da maggio ad agosto<sup>48</sup>, cipolle<sup>49</sup>, «arbiege» (piselli)<sup>50</sup>, «cicari» o «ciseri» (ceci)<sup>51</sup>, zucche<sup>52</sup>, fave<sup>53</sup>, «lenticie» (lenticchie)<sup>54</sup>, «capari» (capperi)<sup>55</sup>. L'ortaggio più richiesto erano le «biette» (bietole), molto ricercate da Carnevale a Pasqua<sup>56</sup> come ingrediente delle torte verdi quaresimali; erano coltivate e vendute, comunque, in tutto il periodo tra la primavera e l'autunno<sup>57</sup>. I clienti abituali erano persone in relazione con il monastero, come il «bovaro» dei mo-

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<sup>45</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro dei conti* cit., c. 93v.

<sup>46</sup> Ivi, c. 54v.

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, c. 64v.

<sup>48</sup> Ivi, c. 65v.

<sup>49</sup> Ivi, cc. 66v, 160v.

<sup>50</sup> Ivi, cc. 67v, 80v.

<sup>51</sup> Ivi, c. 68v.

<sup>52</sup> Ivi, c. 80v.

<sup>53</sup> Ivi, c. 101v.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi, c. 105v.

<sup>55</sup> Ivi, c. 137v.

<sup>56</sup> Ivi, cc. 56v, 63v.

<sup>57</sup> Ivi, cc. 117v, 121v.

naci, alcuni artigiani della zona, i «papelari» della cartiera, o il «mastro barbero» dei monaci, proveniente da Balestrino<sup>58</sup>. Nella contabilità del secolo successivo le transazioni si diradano: non saprei dire se la vendita al minuto non sia stata più praticata, o se le operazioni finanziarie di importo ridotto venissero gestite al di fuori della contabilità ufficiale.

## 5. La rete delle certose

Nel 1667 i priori delle certose di Toirano e di Pavia chiedono congiuntamente a sua 'Alt. Reale' (il duca di Savoia), giacché «hora gli resta commodo di tener la strada nuovamente apperta da Alessandria al Finale», l'esonazione dalle gabelle e dai dazi per le merci dei certosini. Si tratta – elencano i padri – di «bauli, sacchi, o' fagoti de religiosi et da Pavia a Torano formaggi e risi per loro uso, com'anco da questa all'altra oglio sappone salumi e frutte di riviera»<sup>59</sup>.

In realtà le esportazioni documentabili verso altre certose riguardano quasi solo oli di oliva. Ho eseguito un sondaggio sul libro dei conti più antico: dal 1597 al 1626 la certosa di Toirano ha venduto 1.152 barili d'olio; di questi, 417 erano diretti a sedi dell'Ordine, quindi circa un terzo delle spedizioni di oli avevano come destinatario cenobi certosini. A beneficiarne era, innanzitutto, la casa madre di Casotto, in Val Corsaglia<sup>60</sup>. Anche l'altra certosa delle Alpi Liguri, quella di Pesio, riceveva almeno un carico annuale<sup>61</sup>. Tra '600 e '700 l'olio di Toirano ha raggiunto, a cadenze più o meno saltuarie, anche le certose di Asti, Milano, Rivarolo (Genova), Savona, Losa (Val di Susa), Collegno (Torino)<sup>62</sup>. Particolar-

<sup>58</sup> Ivi, c. 88v.

<sup>59</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 39, cartella 3, *Privilegi del Convento della Certosa*.

<sup>60</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro dei conti* cit., cc. 26v, 27v, 30v, 28v, 37v, 51v, 55v, 59v, 68v, 82v, 86v, 89v, 91v, 92v, 93v, 97v, 99v, 100v, 118v, 136v, 152v.

<sup>61</sup> Ivi, cc. 55v, 97v, 127v, 132v, 133v, 135v, 152v, 153v.

<sup>62</sup> Ivi, cc. 34v, 36v, 38v, 85v, 89v, 90v, 91v, 93v, 106v, 111v, 114v, 120v e



mente impegnativo si rivelava il rifornimento della certosa di Pavia<sup>63</sup>: nel 1609 i mulattieri liguri hanno compiuto il tragitto da Toirano a Pavia e ritorno almeno nove volte<sup>64</sup>. Sporadiche esportazioni di pesce conservato e di fichi secchi raggiungevano la casa madre di Casotto, che inviava, al ritorno, «frumento, segala, formaggi, broso<sup>65</sup>, butiro e altro»<sup>66</sup>. La rete delle certose, ognuna con le proprie specializzazioni produttive, costituiva un network a livello interregionale, il cui motore erano i consumi delle certose maggiori.

Un'annotazione isolata cita una produzione poco documentata, quella delle olive conservate: il 10 ottobre 1618 vengono inviati alla certosa di Savona «rubbi 2 olive da salare»<sup>67</sup>; purtroppo non viene precisata la varietà delle olive<sup>68</sup>.

## 6. La certosa e il mercato: consumi e vendite

Nel corso del XVII secolo i priori della certosa valutavano in sei o sette barili l'autoconsumo annuale di oli di oliva presso il cenobio. L'ecce-

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ASSV, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro della cassa dell'introito 1676 – 1724*, pp. 125, 249, 259, 265, 283, 297, 303, 361, 371, 442, 452.

<sup>63</sup> ASSV, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro dei conti* cit., cc. 20v, 22v, 33v, 75v, 76v, 136v, 142v.

<sup>64</sup> Ivi, c. 86v.

<sup>65</sup> Il brusso (o bruzzo, brus, brussu) è una pasta casearia dal sapore piccante, a base di ricotta fermentata.

<sup>66</sup> Ivi, cc. 52r e 28r.

<sup>67</sup> Ivi, c. 116v.

<sup>68</sup> Gli uliveti storici del territorio toiranese sono composti in maggioranza da piante di olivo di varietà Colombaia; per una caratterizzazione della varietà vedi R. Barichello *et al.* (a cura di), *Le varietà di olivo liguri*, Regione Liguria – Assessorato all'agricoltura, Genova 2006, p. 185. L'invio a Savona di frutti freschi potrebbe essere giustificato dalla mancanza nel Savonese di varietà di olive da mensa adatte alla conservazione.

denza veniva destinata – come scritto –, in proporzioni variabili, alla rete delle case dell'ordine e ai mercati locali ed esterni. Gli oli della certosa erano contesi da un composito microcosmo di interlocutori commerciali: consumatori locali e «rivendaroli» del territorio, mulattieri della val Bormida e del basso Piemonte, mercati urbani ed enti religiosi<sup>69</sup>.

Un altro bene che eccedeva più o meno ampiamente l'autoconsumo era il vino. Oltreché al (la Regola prescriverebbe moderatissimo...) consumo dei monaci, era destinato ai pasti dei salariati e, se il contratto lo prevedeva, dei giornalieri. Gli inventari di cantina datati 1669, 1770 e 1772 raccontano che la produzione era ammontata, rispettivamente, a 87 e 66 scandagli e 101 barili, cioè circa 7.000, 5.300 e 4.000 litri. Dagli appunti del priore Isnardi si scopre che i monaci conservavano per il loro uso il vino prodotto da «uve scielte» a bacca rossa coltivate nella clausura, un misterioso vino «bino»<sup>70</sup> bianco e il pregiato moscatello<sup>71</sup>, del quale venivano prodotti due o tre scandagli l'anno, da conservare in damigiana. A salariati e giornalieri, e alla vendita, era destinato un vino rosso ricavato dalle uve conferite dai mezzadri e tagliato con il vino del torchio. Il «vino fatto d'uva marcia» veniva trasformato in aceto, usato per marinare il pesce fritto<sup>72</sup>. Nei «libri dei conti» il vino compare (tra le entrate) nel XVIII secolo, e non è pressoché mai citato nel registro più antico, sia in entrata che in uscita: la produzione, probabilmente, era aumentata dopo il 1619, con l'acquisizione della vigna della Braiassa, ma le lacune nella serie dei registri impediscono di documentarlo con precisione. Malgrado

<sup>69</sup> Vedi nota 8 con 22.

<sup>70</sup> Non escluderei che «bino» sia semplicemente un *lapsus calami*, o una mia lettura errata, per «buono».

<sup>71</sup> Cfr. A. Carassale, *L'ambrosia degli dei - Il moscatello di Taggia: alle radici della vitivinicoltura ligure*, Atene edizioni, Arma di Taggia 2002.

<sup>72</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 36, reg. *Salariati ed affittamenti delli Edificij della Certosa di Toirano*, pp. 4 e 6.

l'aumento della superficie vitata, anche durante il '700, nel corso di alcune annate negative, i certosini furono costretti a integrare la propria produzione (nel 1766, ad esempio, con «vino di Linguadoca» per i monaci e con un generico vino locale per la servitù e i giornalieri<sup>73</sup>).

Almeno fino al XVII secolo, una risorsa attivata prevalentemente in funzione della vendita erano i fichi. I fichi essiccati venivano commerciati a volume (l'unità di misura è lo «staro», con i sottomultipli «quarta», cioè un quarto di «staro», e «moturà»), quelli freschi a vista «in pianta», con la raccolta affidata ai compratori<sup>74</sup>. Tra '500 e '600 numerosi alberi di fico crescevano nei terreni chiamati Vignassa<sup>75</sup>, Ferrazzo (dove, durante le annate più abbondanti, venivano venduti «in pianta», come nelle estati del 1607<sup>76</sup>, del 1610<sup>77</sup> e del 1626<sup>78</sup>), Canevé<sup>79</sup>, Braiassa<sup>80</sup>. Dal giugno 1597 al marzo 1598, annota il priore Paolo, gli incassi per cessioni di fichi secchi e freschi ammontarono a 43:13 lire (poco più del 4% dell' «introito» complessivo annuale)<sup>81</sup>. Le vendite dei fichi secchi si concentravano tra dicembre e febbraio<sup>82</sup>; durante l'inverno del 1608 equivalsero, complessivamente, a oltre 40 quarte. Tra gli acquirenti dei fichi secchi c'era anche la certosa di Casotto<sup>83</sup>, ma la quasi totalità dello smercio avveniva su mercati di prossimità. I fichi

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<sup>73</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spesa* cit., cc. 63r e 64r.

<sup>74</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 37, *Libro dei conti* cit., cc. 2v, 89v, 122v.

<sup>75</sup> Ivi, c. 1v.

<sup>76</sup> Ivi, c. 78v.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi, c. 89v.

<sup>78</sup> Ivi, c. 174v.

<sup>79</sup> Ivi, c. 110v.

<sup>80</sup> Ivi, c. 132v.

<sup>81</sup> Ivi, c. 6v.

<sup>82</sup> Ivi, c. 18v.

<sup>83</sup> Ivi, c. 75v.

secchi venivano distinti in grandi e piccoli: se le «fiche grosse» venivano vendute, nel 1605, a 16 soldi il «moturà», le «piccole» valevano solo 9 soldi<sup>84</sup>. Vengono specificate anche determinazioni varietali: i polposi fichi «coaschi» o «quaschi»<sup>85</sup>, ad esempio, sono distinti dai piccoli «rondini»<sup>86</sup>. Durante il XVIII secolo le vendite dei fichi secchi sembrano ridursi: una risorsa sostituita della sempre maggiore redditività delle entrate finanziarie e dall'apprezzamento degli oli di oliva, o il segnale di un minore impegno nella valorizzazione delle produzioni 'minori'?

Spostiamo l'attenzione sui consumi. Sfogliando i registri del XVIII secolo balzano all'occhio le numerosissime transazioni che riguardano l'acquisto di pesce, consumato sia come alimento «di magro» che come sostituto delle carni di quadrupedi. Anche nella prassi odierna, la Regola dell'Ordine certosino consente il consumo di carni e derivati solo nel caso di ricovero in ospedale<sup>87</sup>. La bassa conservabilità del pesce comportava tanti piccoli rifornimenti a cadenza ravvicinata. Nei «libri dei con-

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<sup>84</sup> Ivi, c. 69v.

<sup>85</sup> Ivi, c. 137v. Il fico coasco è citato nella *Pomona Italiana* di Giorgio Gallesio; cfr. C. Littardi, *Contributo alla conoscenza di alcune varietà di fico coltivate nel Ponente ligure*, in A. Carassale, C. Littardi, I. Naso (a cura di), *Fichi - Storia, economia, tradizioni*, Centro Studi per la Storia dell'Alimentazione e della Cultura Materiale 'Anna Maria Nada Patrone'-CeSA e Philobiblon edizioni, Ventimiglia 2016, p. 277.

<sup>86</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 37, reg. *Libro dei conti* cit., c. 81v. I fichi rondini nell'albenganese sono chiamati «rondette» (ne vengono designate una varietà nera e una bianca); la Regione Liguria ne ha finanziato un progetto dimostrativo di lavorazione con metodologie tradizionali (Cooperativa olivicola di Arnasco, *Metodologie tradizionali di lavorazione di fichi, fagioli, castagne, olive e antiche ricette di cucina*, Cooperativa olivicola di Arnasco, Arnasco 2003, pp. 7-9 e 14).

<sup>87</sup> G.M. dom. Lorenzi, *Finalità e vita quotidiana dei Certosini*, in V. De Martini, A. Montefusco (a cura di), *Certose e certosini in Europa*, Atti del convegno alla Certosa di San Lorenzo (Padula, 22-24 settembre 1998), Sergio Civita Editore, Napoli 1990, p. 40.

ti» si trovano acquisti effettuati da pescatori o rivenditori di Loano<sup>88</sup>, Pietra<sup>89</sup>, Laigueglia<sup>90</sup>, Ceriale<sup>91</sup>. Il venditore otteneva i pagamenti da parte del procuratore o del priore/rettore della certosia tramite note di spesa («liste») a cadenza periodica: se ne è conservata una, sciolta all'interno di un registro<sup>92</sup>. Le annotazioni più analitiche riportano tipologia del pescato, il peso, il prezzo alla libbra e il costo complessivo per ogni singolo acquisto. Le specie di pesci (di mare e di acqua dolce), molluschi e crostacei citate nei registri sono, complessivamente, più di cinquanta<sup>93</sup>. Il pesce si differenzia, grosso modo, in due fasce di prezzo: il pesce «buono» viene valutato intorno o oltre i quattro soldi alla libbra, quello più economico, come «sardelle» e acciughe, tra i due e i tre soldi alla libbra. Tra i pesci più costosi troviamo il pesce spada, che supera i

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<sup>88</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Cassa cit.*, cc. 126r, 176r. Nel 1756 il «Sig. Maccagli» fornisce «sepie e gianchetti»: ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrate e spese dal 1752 al 1758*, cc. 92r-93r. Un Ghiglione, pescatore loanese, è citato nel 1755: ivi, c. 74r.

<sup>89</sup> In ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Cassa cit.*, c. 120r figura il «pescatore Geronimo Bruno» e, ivi, a c. 122r, genericamente un «pescatore dalla Pietra».

<sup>90</sup> Un tale soprannominato il «Lengueggino», attivo anche nel commercio dell'olio di oliva, compare nei registri a partire dagli anni Sessanta del '700: ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spese cit.*, c. 83r.

<sup>91</sup> «Masollo Mainero del Ceriale», *ibidem*.

<sup>92</sup> La nota comprende forniture tra ottobre e novembre del 1766, per una spesa complessiva di 24 lire e 4 soldi. Vengono recapitati alla certosia, in date diverse, un grongo di cinque libbre, un «pesce lucerna», cioè una cernia, da sedici libbre, quattro pagari per complessive diciassette libbre, pesce spada per oltre nove libbre, due forniture di pesci misti e, per quattro volte, una o due folaghe.

<sup>93</sup> Ne ho compilato un elenco con proposte di determinazione in G. Nervi, *A tavola con i Certosini: consumi alimentari in un monastero del XVIII secolo*, in *Sacro e Vago Giardinello - Chiesa e territorio: arte, cultura e storia* / «Quaderno annuale del Centro studi di storia della Chiesa nella Diocesi di Albenga - Imperia 'Gio. Ambrogio Paneri'», III, Albenga 2017, pp. 39-40.

cinque soldi alla libbra, o la palamita, che arriva a otto. Per quanto riguarda il pesce conservato, frequente è la citazione della tonnina<sup>94</sup>, cioè il tonno in salamoia; viene distinta in «magra» e «grassa», cioè preparata con la ventresca<sup>95</sup>. Il tonno viene acquistato anche sottolio: la diffusione su larga scala di questo sistema di conservazione sarebbe avvenuta proprio nel corso del '700<sup>96</sup>. Del tonno i monaci si concedono anche il mosciame<sup>97</sup>, la bottarga<sup>98</sup>, la ventresca<sup>99</sup>, le «stringhe» sotto sale<sup>100</sup> e il tarantello<sup>101</sup>; è praticata la salatura di «anchiode» e «sardelle», e si prepa-

<sup>94</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Cassa cit.*, c. 120r.

<sup>95</sup> S. Torre, *Le magie del tonno*, Marsilio, Venezia 1999, pp. 47-49.

<sup>96</sup> Calleri scrive che «dalla fine del Seicento, i genovesi [...] cominciarono a far affluire dalle tonnare dell'Elba un prodotto sott'olio (quasi certamente cotto)». Vedi N. Calleri, *Il senso del tonno per la storia*, in N. Repetto, S. Rossi (a cura di), *Le ragioni del tonno*, Sagep, Genova 2013, pp. 89-90. Vedi anche Torre, *Le magie del tonno cit.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>97</sup> In un'occasione (ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spese cit.*, c. 162r) compare l'espressione «mossame di bariga». «Barriga» in spagnolo e in portoghese significa «pancia, interiora», il che farebbe pensare che si trattasse di mosciame di ventresca. Quindi sembrerebbe che venissero differenziati un «mossame grasso» e un «mossame magro», come per la tonnina e per la ventresca. Il mosciame era ottenuto per essiccazione dei filetti.

<sup>98</sup> Ad esempio, ivi, c. 162r.

<sup>99</sup> Vedi nota 70.

<sup>100</sup> Ad esempio, ivi c. 99r. Per Apro시오, che a sua volta fa riferimento al dizionario del Casaccia, le stringhe sono fatte con «la pelle che si trae dalla mascella superiore del tonno» (S. Apro시오, *Vocabolario ligure storico bibliografico sec. X-XX / Parte seconda-Volgare e dialetto, vol. II*, Società Savonese di Storia Patria, Savona 2002, p. 547).

<sup>101</sup> Il tarantello è un taglio di filetto ricavato sotto il dorso ma sopra i fianchi del tonno. In alcune cucine locali italiane è anche il nome di un insaccato: una sorta di salame di tonno, confezionato con la parte più magra della ventresca tritata e aromatizzata. In questo contesto dovrebbe trattarsi di filetti conservati per salatura e venduti a barilotti: cfr. M.L. De Nicolò, *Dal*

ra e si consuma anche il pesce in «scabecio», fritto e marinato in olio e aceto<sup>102</sup>. Il merluzzo oceanico conservato si caratterizza in primo luogo come un alimento quaresimale<sup>103</sup>, e poi come una 'seconda scelta' nei periodi dell'anno durante i quali la pesca è meno fruttuosa. Il baccalà è citato relativamente poche volte, ma le partite acquistate sono ingenti: nel dicembre del 1755 ne vengono comprati a Loano quattordici rubbi e quattro onces; il 12 dello stesso mese, ad Alassio, ne viene acquistata una scorta di un cantaro e sei rubbi, per il valore di 27 lire, condivisa con il rettore delle scuole e con l'arciprete di Toirano<sup>104</sup>.

I dati sugli acquisti di pesce durante il '700 dimostrano quanto le interpretazioni delle restrizioni alimentari date dai priori fossero oltremodo variabili e soggettive. Il priore Vittorio Borsarello, in carica come rettore dal 1721 e poi come priore fino alla sua morte nel 1733, impone un regime alimentare orientato all'autoconsumo. Nel 1729, ad esempio, gli acquisti di alimenti dall'esterno si limitano alle uova (tre volte al mese), al burro (due volte al mese in primavera e una volta alla settimana in estate), al formaggio piacentino una volta al mese, e a poca frutta. Il pesce arriva a tavola solo la domenica, a rallegrare il pranzo comunitario con acciughe, sardelle, anguille; a febbraio e marzo i bianchetti sono il piatto forte del giorno di festa. Nel 1738, quando al priore Carlo Colla succede il priore Dalmazio, il pesce, invece, viene incluso anche nel menu dei giorni feriali: durante gennaio, luglio e settembre viene acquistato pesce fresco o conservato per nove volte al mese, a giugno addirittura undici volte; da marzo a maggio, una

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*banco di vendita a tutte le mense. Pesci molluschi crostacei dal tardo medioevo alla tradizione*, Museo della Marineria W. Petrignani-Università di Bologna, Pesaro 2020, pp. 131-136.

<sup>102</sup> Ivi, c. 73r.

<sup>103</sup> Acquisti di baccalà specialmente in Quaresima, ad esempio, in ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrate* cit., c. 88r, o ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, *Entrata e spese* cit., c. 93r.

<sup>104</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, *Entrate* cit., c. 83r.

volta al mese, vengono preparati i bianchetti. Il pesce più adoperato è il nasello, ma non mancano l'acciuga, l'ombrina, il pesce spada, e «pagari», «lovazzi», «boghe», «lacerti» e altri. Anche la tonnina viene comprata a scadenza quasi mensile<sup>105</sup>. Con il rettorato di Filippo Maria Bocconi, dal 1759 al 1765, la certosa torna a una certa frugalità. Gli acquisti di alimenti si riducono in modo drastico; l'unica documentazione sull'acquisto di pesce che ci perviene è il pagamento mensile di un non meglio precisato fornitore, quindi il dato utilizzabile è solo il totale annuale della spesa: nel 1761, ad esempio, ammonta a circa 139 lire. Con l'arrivo del rettore e poi priore Giuseppe Maria Isnardi le spese per l'alimentazione si incrementano: per quanto riguarda pesce e derivati, è interessante paragonare il totale della spesa annuale nel 1767 (ben 393 lire) alle citate 139 lire del 1761. Il suo successore dal giugno 1767, il priore Pietro Rusca, sembra manifestare una certa attrazione per la ventresca di tonno<sup>106</sup>.

I priori della certosa interpretano in modo diverso anche l'astinenza dal consumo di carni. Era diffusa la prassi di considerare 'pesce' anche molluschi e crostacei di acqua e di terra, tartarughe, testuggini, rane, uccelli acquatici e persino lontre e castori, benché tali pratiche alimentari non siano mai accettate all'interno della Chiesa in modo unanime<sup>107</sup>. Anche alla certosa di Toirano emergono usi conflittuali: nel corso del '700 si alternano priorati 'rigoristi' e altri che interpretano digiuno e astinenza in modo più permissivo; come dimostrerò, le cause non sembrano (solo) imputabili a orientamenti dottrinali diversi. Ecco,

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<sup>105</sup> Ivi, cc. 88r-93r.

<sup>106</sup> Ivi, cc. 71r-73r.

<sup>107</sup> Cfr. M. Montanari, *Mangiare da cristiani: diete, digiuni, bianchetti. Storia di una cultura*, Mondadori, Milano 2015; C. Furlan, *Venerdì pesce. Digiuno e cristianesimo*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2021.



quindi, comparire nei registri degli acquisti folaghe<sup>108</sup>, lumache<sup>109</sup>, rane<sup>110</sup>, gamberi di fiume<sup>111</sup>, lontre, tartarughe di mare<sup>112</sup> e testuggini<sup>113</sup>. Per quanto riguarda le testuggini, incuriosisce, talvolta, l'alto numero di esemplari acquistati: evidentemente non venivano consumate simultaneamente, ma venivano allevate all'interno della clausura, forse nello spazio chiuso del chiostro centrale; l'allevamento di testuggini a fini alimentari in monasteri e conventi di età moderna è stato documentato anche con metodi archeologici<sup>114</sup>. In alcuni casi sono fornite da procacciatori locali: nel febbraio del 1769 viene registrato l'acquisto di quaranta testuggini per diciassette lire<sup>115</sup> e il venditore è un toiranesse, Bartolomeo Durante detto Marciò. Non mi sembra banale far notare come la domanda della certosa stimolasse la raccolta e la colletta di risorse alimentari 'selvatiche' (ma sull'uso di questo vocabolo si potreb-

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<sup>108</sup> Vedi nota 72.

<sup>109</sup> Ad esempio, ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, *Entrate cit.*, c. 112r.

<sup>110</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spese cit.*, 64v.

<sup>111</sup> Ad esempio, ivi, c. 156v.

<sup>112</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Cassa cit.*, c. 150v.; ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spese cit.*, cc. 13r e 88r.

<sup>113</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38; reg. *Entrate e spese cit.*, cc. 51r, 60r, 67r. Nel giugno del 1754 vengono comprate «100 tartarughe» incluso «Porto di Camallo da Barchetta», cioè trasporto via mare (presumibilmente da Genova); in questo caso è presumibile che si trattasse di *Testudo sp.* di allevamento. Il consumo di questa carne (in zuppa o in brodo) era anche collegato a occasioni rituali: quattro testuggini vengono utilizzate per il pasto del giovedì santo del 1767.

<sup>114</sup> J. De Grossi, C. Minniti, *L'analisi dei resti faunistici. Alcune osservazioni sull'alimentazione dei Minimi di S. Francesco di Paola*, in H. Broise, V. Jolivet (par), *Pincio I. La villa médicis et le convent de la Trinité - des - Montes à Rome. Réinvestir un site antique*, École française de Rome – Soprintendenza speciale per i beni archeologici di Roma, Roma 2009, pp. 277-290.

<sup>115</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spese cit.*, c. 83r.

be discutere...)<sup>116</sup>, come anguille, rane, lumache o gamberi di fiume. I gamberi venivano pescati nei ruscelli di Bardinetto<sup>117</sup>, quando le «alpi» erano frequentate per la fienagione estiva.

I prodotti del territorio arrivavano nel refettorio certosino anche tramite il sistematico uso del pagamento in natura. Livellari e affittuari, spesso, saldavano canoni e rate annuali con prestazioni di lavoro o conferimenti di alimenti. I Bossero, pastori che affittavano due piccoli orti a Boissano, tra il 1772 e il 1776 versano la pigione «in ricotta, e formaggiette»<sup>118</sup>. Giuseppe Rossano ottiene, nel 1770, uno sconto sull'affitto di un «Canevaro posto nella Croxiata» procurando quattro capponi<sup>119</sup>. Ambrogio Durante, livellario del Ferrasso, nel 1768, tampona i suoi debiti col monastero consegnando un raccolto di «amandole»<sup>120</sup>.

Alcuni storici della Chiesa hanno rappresentato i certosini come uno degli ordini che ha conservato maggiormente la sobrietà delle origini e la conformità alla regola. Secondo Aubert, alla fine del '700 i certosini si contraddistinguevano per essere un ordine «particolarmente severo»<sup>121</sup>. Nel caso della certosa di Toirano tali generalizzazioni non sembrano essere sempre valide, almeno per ciò che riguarda i consumi

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<sup>116</sup> L'allusione è alla proposta di Moreno di non interpretare 'domestico' e 'selvatico' in termini di opposizione binaria D. Moreno, *Domestico vs selvatico. Annotazioni su tassonomia e storia locale*, in «Quaderni storici», 91 (n.s., aprile 1996), Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 87-103. La correlazione tra pesca di anguille e rane e lavori di manutenzione e gestione di strutture idrauliche artificiali mi sembra, a suo modo, un esempio suggestivo di attivazione indiretta (?) di risorse.

<sup>117</sup> Ad esempio, ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spese cit.*, cc. 56r e 103r.

<sup>118</sup> ASGe, Ordini religiosi 358, *Libro di censi, piggioni, e livelli dal 1767*, p. 35 bis.

<sup>119</sup> Ivi, p. 56 bis.

<sup>120</sup> Ivi, pp. 44 e 44 bis.

<sup>121</sup> R. Aubert, *Decadenza degli ordini religiosi e del clero diocesano*, in H. Jedin, (diretta da), *Storia della Chiesa, vol. VII - Tra rivoluzione e restaurazione 1775 - 1830*, Jaca Book, Milano 1993, p. 6.

alimentari. Scelgo come esempio l'introduzione delle merci coloniali, in particolare della cioccolata, oggetto di un serrato dibattito sulla compatibilità della sua assunzione con le pratiche penitenziali<sup>122</sup>. Nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo presso la certosa di Toirano la cioccolata passa da un utilizzo esclusivamente 'medicinale' a un uso soprattutto voluttuario, e apre la strada ad altri nuovi prodotti. La prima volta che la cioccolata compare nella contabilità della certosa è durante la (fatale) convalescenza del priore Bruno Olivero nel 1743; evidentemente anche a Toirano era stata introdotta la pratica di impiegare la cioccolata «come sostentamento energetico per i certosini malati, a cui veniva distribuita assieme ai biscotti»<sup>123</sup>. Il punto di svolta, anche in questo caso, sembra essere il priorato di Giuseppe Maria Isnardi, che diffonde alla certosa consumi di impronta urbana e nobiliare. Tra i suoi primi provvedimenti troviamo l'acquisto di una scorta di «sei libbre di cioccolata»<sup>124</sup>. Pochi mesi dopo «zucharo e cioccolato» costano alla certosa quattordici lire e otto soldi: la cioccolata allietta, assieme allo «siroppo», anche gli ospiti per la festa di San Pietro<sup>125</sup>. Cioccolata, rosolio, ventresca e pesce scabecciato sono alcune delle leccornie servite il giorno della

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<sup>122</sup> C. Balzaretto, *La cioccolata cattolica. Storia di una disputa tra teologia e medicina*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna 2014.

<sup>123</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Cassa* cit., c. 150r. Sull'uso della cioccolata come ricostituente presso un'altra certosa, quella di Calci, vedi C. Casini, *Cucina di magro e di festa*, Edizioni ETS, Pisa 2002, p. 22. La cioccolata era stata comprata a Genova; del commercio del cacao a Genova in età moderna si è recentemente interessato, ma in chiave di 'global history', Calcagno (P. Calcagno, *Nizza, Genova e La redistribuzione del cacao sullo scorcio del XVIII secolo: storia di una contesa mercantile*, in «RiME, Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea», n. 8/1, Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Cagliari 2021, pp. 76-104).

<sup>124</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata* cit., c. 59r.

<sup>125</sup> Ivi, c. 70r.

festa di San Brunone<sup>126</sup>: la cioccolata, oltre a mantenere la sua valenza «medica»<sup>127</sup>, diventa uno degli alimenti che celebrano i giorni di festa del cenobio. Insieme alla cioccolata compare il caffè: nel settembre del 1766 il priore dota la certosa di «6 chicchere con tondini e tazzette da caffè», acquistate assieme a «libbre sei di zucchero», «pepe garoffanato» e due libbre di caffè<sup>128</sup>. Nel 1771 c'è anche una citazione per il tè: ne vengono acquistate due oncie<sup>129</sup>. I generi coloniali vengono consumati contemporaneamente e intercambiabilmente, a dispetto di alcune generalizzazioni storiografiche di successo<sup>130</sup>. Durante il priorato di Isnardi il fasto per i festeggiamenti tende sempre ad aumentare. Nella lista della spesa per la festa di San Pietro del 1770 ci sono «cioccolato, zucchero, dolci, caffè»<sup>131</sup>. «Per il giorno di San Brunone» dello stesso anno vengono acquistati «salumi, paste di Sardegna, lumache, anguille, trifoli, vino, riso, prinzola», e «una torta e canestrelletti», accompagnati da sciropo e rosolio. In occasione di un altro giorno di festa, nel 1771, troviamo in cucina «trifoli, lumache, pomi<sup>132</sup>, zibibbo, stringhe, farina di ceci, pignoli, cioccolato»<sup>133</sup>. Il Natale del 1766 viene celebrato con

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<sup>126</sup> Ivi, c. 73r.

<sup>127</sup> Tre acquisti di cioccolata nel giro di pochi giorni durante l'inverno del 1767 mi fanno pensare al decorso di una convalescenza (ivi, cc. 74-75). Nello stesso periodo viene registrata la spesa per l'«acconciatura di due cioccolatiere» (ivi, c. 76r).

<sup>128</sup> Ivi, c. 63r.

<sup>129</sup> Ivi, c. 102r.

<sup>130</sup> Alludo, ad esempio, a W. Schivelbusch, *Storia dei generi voluttuari*, Mondadori, Milano 1999.

<sup>131</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata* cit, c. 93r.

<sup>132</sup> Tra le mele, la varietà più apprezzata erano le «carle», citate da Giorgio Gallesio (che le riteneva originarie del Finale) nella Pomona Italiana. Cfr. ad esempio ivi, c. 75v, dove si legge di «pomi carli» comprati nel settembre 1767.

<sup>133</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata* cit, c. 99r.

torrone e non precisati «dolci»; l'acquisto di pinoli e uvetta lascia intuire la preparazione domestica del pandolce<sup>134</sup>. Il gusto di Isnardi per la pasticceria è espresso anche da acquisti come una spesa per «marzapani, biscotti, confetture, miele di Spagna, zucharo rosato»<sup>135</sup>.

## 7. Conclusioni

Il regime alimentare presso la certosa di Toirano negoziava esigenze, tendenze e posizioni sociali diverse. Il rispetto delle norme fissate nella regola dell'Ordine costringeva, almeno ufficialmente, a ridurre gli ingredienti e le pietanze proibibili ai monaci. In compenso la collocazione della certosa in un territorio che può offrire con una grande varietà di produzioni e una stagionalità ampia, arricchiva le opzioni alimentari, così come la vicinanza di centri di pesca come Loano, Pietra e Laigueglia e la radicata propensione locale alle attività di raccolta e coltura. La redditività del commercio degli oli di oliva, inoltre, consentiva, talvolta, di investire in consumi voluttuari, modellati sul gusto e sulla ritualità dei ceti più elevati (dai quali, peraltro, talvolta i certosini provenivano)<sup>136</sup>.

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<sup>134</sup> Ivi, c. 63v.

<sup>135</sup> Ivi, c. 76v. Secondo Mintz, lo «zucchero rosato» è uno zucchero riaddizionato di melassa, già menzionato «nei resoconti del XIV secolo di Francesco Pegolotti, un mercante veneziano, e nei resoconti degli scambi tra monarchi dal XIV secolo in poi» (S.W. Mintz, *Storia dello zucchero*, Einaudi, Torino 2020, pp. 164-165). Nella tradizione dolciaria ligure, però, lo 'zucchero rosato' è indiscutibilmente la conserva di petali di rosa.

<sup>136</sup> Sulla socialità nobiliare genovese ineludibile il riferimento ai lavori di Grendi e Raggio: E. Grendi, *Ipotesi per lo studio della socialità nobiliare genovese in età moderna*, in «Quaderni storici», 102 (1999), pp. 733-747; O. Raggio, *Storia culturale, socialità aristocratica ed esperienze individuali*, in R. Bizzocchi, A. Pacini (a cura di), *Socialità aristocratica in età moderna: il caso genovese: paradigmi, interpretazioni e confronti*, Quaderni del Dipartimento di

È problematico, quindi, se non fuorviante, ipotizzare l'esistenza di un 'foodway certosino' locale codificato. La tentazione di presupporre, in modo generalizzante, che tutti i certosini rispettassero la «Regola» del loro Ordine con letture letterali e uniformi è ampiamente smentita dall'analisi empirica della documentazione, che, invece, mette in luce la grande varietà di pratiche individuali nel piccolo cenobio toiranesi<sup>137</sup>. Ogni cambio ai vertici del monastero comporta mutamenti delle abitudini alimentari e della quantità e della qualità dei consumi; ogni priore sembrerebbe adeguare, in modo più o meno evidente, alla sua mentalità e al suo gusto la gestione economica e le pratiche sociali del monastero, con variazioni talvolta stridenti. Anche le varianti formali e tecniche nelle modalità di tenuta della documentazione contabile, a ben vedere, sono esse stesse espressione della medesima varietà di situazioni. Durante il '700, in particolare, l'attitudine eremitica dei monaci più intransigenti si alterna a interpretazioni più 'mondane' della regola, che lasciano emergere il gusto personale dei singoli priori, il lassismo nelle pratiche del digiuno e dell'astinenza, il bisogno di costruire momenti di convivialità e condivisioni con la società locale. I legami tra produzione, consumo e territorio gradualmente si allentano e si aggrovigliano: anche nella chiusura di un piccolo monastero della campagna ligure si incrociano filiere alimentari sempre più articolate e globalizzate. A conclusioni simili è arrivato Spedicato nei suoi studi sugli ordini religiosi nel

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storia / Università di Pisa, Edizioni Plus-Pisa University Press, Pisa 2008, in particolare pp. 25-26; ma anche il contributo di Raggio in questo libro.

<sup>137</sup> Pratiche che, a loro volta, sono diverse da quelle delle altre case certosine. Un libro contabile della vicina certosina di Savona documenta consumi piuttosto diversi e 'appenninici' rispetto a Toirano: tra gli acquisti funghi secchi, cipolle, latte, «stocfix», «vino del Monferrato», «formaggio d'Olanda»; festeggiamenti più sobri con «ciambella» comprata e «biscotti dolci» fatti in casa (ASSV, *Carte Comune di Savona, Serie I*, busta 1188, *Monastero della Certosa – Libro di Scritture da Agosto 1796 in gennaio 1797*. cc. 3-11).

Mezzogiorno italiano durante il XVIII secolo: (rispetto alle regole e agli statuti) «prevale nella prassi una diffusa tolleranza che tende a tradursi in una delega ampia ad ogni singolo superiore di gestire il vittuario quotidiano secondo le proprie possibilità»<sup>138</sup>.

L'interpretazione di queste pratiche alimentari così variabili sarebbe rimasta per me nebulosa e generica, se un ritrovamento (assolutamente fortuito) di altra documentazione non mi avesse regalato un'ulteriore (e per me straniante) chiave di decifrazione. Una serie archivistica conservata presso l'Archivio di Stato di Genova rivela la drammatica conflittualità che ha agitato l'Ordine certosino in Liguria durante il XVIII secolo<sup>139</sup>. All'interno delle certose incluse nel territorio della Serenissima Repubblica di Genova (Rivarolo, Savona, Toirano) si fronteggiano aspramente due fazioni: i «nazionali» – cittadini genovesi che hanno come riferimento politico alcuni componenti delle Giunte dei Confini e di Giurisdizione e la famiglia dei Grimaldi – contro i certosini di altre provenienze, che fanno capo al vertice provinciale dell'Ordine, presso la certosa di Pavia. Il principale obiettivo dei «nazionali» è conquistare il controllo delle tre certose, imponendo, in palese contraddizione con la Regola e la prassi dell'Ordine, la cittadinanza genovese come requisito per accedere alle «cariche superiori» dei monasteri (priori, vice priori, procuratore, maestro dei novizi). La vicenda andrebbe ricostruita a un grado di dettaglio che in questa sede non è possibile. In estrema sintesi, parto dall'epilogo: negli anni Cinquanta del '700 l'opera di 'genovesizzazione' delle certose del Dominio è quasi completata. Il 23 agosto del 1753 la Giunta di Giurisdizione segnala ai Serenissimi Collegi che, ormai, tutti i «superiori» dei monasteri, a parte due, sono di cittadinanza

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<sup>138</sup> D'Ambrosio, Spedicato, *Cibo e clausura* cit., p. 126.

<sup>139</sup> Si tratta di almeno un'ottantina di documenti di natura diversa, comprese parecchie 'lettere orbe', datati dal 1738 al 1768 e conservati in una filza non ordinata dell'archivio della Giunta di Giurisdizione (ASGe, *Archivio Segreto, Giunta di Giurisdizione*, 126).

genovese. Svelato questo contesto, le variazioni delle pratiche alimentari alla certosa di Toirano assumono una logica più leggibile. In una prima fase, il rigorismo – come quello del priore Bocconi, albenganese e cittadino «nazionale» –, va letto come una contrapposizione al lassismo e alle accuse di «contribuzioni, aderenze, borsigli, e divertimenti de' Priori» con le quali venivano strumentalmente attaccati i priori forestieri, e, in particolare, gli odiati piemontesi<sup>140</sup>. A 'genovesizzazione' compiuta, il moralismo polemico lascia il posto a una ostentata rilassatezza, con i «nazionali» che fruiscono con un approccio di stampo coloniale delle risorse locali dei quali si sono impossessati.

Nuove notizie illuminano la biografia del rettore e priore Giuseppe Maria Isnardi che, come detto, è l'uomo che meglio incarna la 'genovesizzazione'. Nel 1759 Isnardi è uno dei due candidati «nazionali» all'importante carica di maestro dei novizi della certosa di Rivarolo; la spunta, invece, il suo contendente Levaggi: Isnardi viene penalizzato perché è sì «genovese», ma di Savona. La sua destinazione a priore di Toirano, forse, va letta come un risarcimento per la mancata nomina e un espediente per allontanarlo da Rivarolo. Alla luce della vicenda, la sua attitudine ai consumi è più comprensibile: la certosa è ormai popolata da soli «nazionali» e non c'è più bisogno di infliggere frugalità punitiva ai «forestieri». Inoltre, le direttive della Serenissima Repubblica sono di concentrare gli investimenti immobiliari su Rivarolo<sup>141</sup>: la disponibilità di maggiori somme da spendere in consumi voluttuari deriva, quindi, anche dall'interruzione delle ristrutturazioni. Alla luce

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<sup>140</sup> L'espressione virgolettata è tratta da un 'biglietto di calice'. In un'altra missiva anonima del 1757 recapitata alla Giunta di Giurisdizione vengono contestati al priore di Rivarolo «viaggi, giuochi, regali, cavalli e divertimenti continui» (*ibidem*).

<sup>141</sup> Nel 1759 la Giunta di Giurisdizione stava ancora discutendo, incontrando l'ovvia opposizione dell'Ordine, la proposta di chiudere le certose di Toirano e Savona, o almeno una delle due, per liquidarne i beni a favore di quella di Rivarolo (*ibidem*). Era un dibattito acceso da oltre un decennio.



di questo contesto, molti tasselli trovano la loro collocazione e si spiegano le interpretazioni lassiste della Regola certosina e delle secolari elaborazioni teologiche sul digiuno, l'introduzione massiccia dei generi coloniali, le mutazioni organizzative dell'azienda agricola, a partire dall'abbandono della castanicoltura a Bardineto. Un aspetto appariscente della 'svolta coloniale' è la comparsa nel cenobio di nuove figure professionali. Sfolgiando il «Libro delli salarij» della certosa si nota come il cuoco diventi il dipendente più pagato del monastero<sup>142</sup>. Di alcuni di essi, attivi dal 1734 al 1765, conosciamo nome e provenienza: Antonio Maria Tubino è «di Ponsevera», Sebastiano Delfino viene da Arenzano, Giovanni Mante è di Voltri, Francesco Roncallo, che «serve da ortolano, barbiere, e da cuoco» è «di Rivarolo in Polcevera»<sup>143</sup>. Tutti gli ortolani-cuochi provengono da zone periurbane di Genova, in particolare da quell'area «tra Pegli e Quinto» dove Quaini localizza l'origine, nel XVI secolo, della struttura agraria della 'villa genovese'<sup>144</sup>. È lecito avere curiosità verso le biografie di questi «pratici» itineranti. Sicuramente il loro reclutamento avveniva presso la certosa di Rivarolo. Tali migrazioni hanno comportato il trasferimento, oltreché di pratiche culinarie, di sementi e piantine, e quindi un arricchimento della biodiversità agricola. Da una nota del 1741 si apprende che la certosa aveva tra i suoi fornitori un vivaista dei dintorni di Genova, di nome Giambattista Roncallo, presumibilmente imparentato con il citato Francesco Roncallo di Rivarolo, dal quale vengono acquistati «semi di lombardo, capuccio, radiccia, cavoli bianchi, (?), scorzonera, latuca» e «piante di peri salvatici, fichi, brugne, cerese, nocciuole, et altre»<sup>145</sup>. Un altro or-

<sup>142</sup> Oltre al cuoco, in almeno un'occasione è testimoniata la presenza alla certosa di un «ragazzo di cucina»: nel 1747 il giovane aiuto è soprannominato «Pennacino» (ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Cassa cit.*, c. 211r).

<sup>143</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 36, reg. *Libro delli salarij*, pp. 14, 30-59.

<sup>144</sup> Quaini, *Per la storia del paesaggio agrario in Liguria* cit., pp. 161-162.

<sup>145</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Cassa dal 1724 sino al 1748 inclusiva sino a*

dine al vivaio, nel maggio 1767, elenca piantine di «melloni, patteche (angurie), biete rapa, melinzane»<sup>146</sup>. Quella che ho chiamato ‘svolta coloniale’ impone alla certosa di Toirano il modello dell’«agricoltura di villa», che, fino ad allora, in val Varatella non aveva dato esiti né economici né architettonici. Da un sistema solidale, tendenzialmente «inefficace dal punto di vista dell’attivazione di processi di accumulazione di tipo capitalistico»<sup>147</sup> e adattato «alle forme di gestione del posto»<sup>148</sup> si passa a un approccio orientato alla produzione di surplus per aumentare i livelli di consumo, introducendo tecniche, lavoratori, risorse estranee alla realtà locale. Ne consegue anche il riorientamento verso Genova delle tre sfere con le quali ho cercato di descrivere le relazioni economiche del cenobio, a partire dalle rotte dell’olio; si scioglie, così, qualche nodo dell’ordito della secolare rete di solidarietà e complementarietà che collegava e sosteneva le sedi dell’Ordine certosino nel settentrione italiano.

Questo caso di appropriazione di risorse degli ordini regolari è ben diverso dalla dinamica proposta da un collaudato orientamento storiografico, secondo il quale le istituzioni ‘laiche’ – gli stati nazionali – tendono a intraprendere azioni giurisdizionali conflittuali (soppressioni, confische) per acquisire beni ecclesiastici all’interno del proprio patrimonio<sup>149</sup>. Qui, invece, i vertici statali genovesi organizzano un progetto

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*Febraio*, c. 121r. Il «lombardo» è la verza; interessante l’attestazione dell’uso del perastro come portainnesto.

<sup>146</sup> ASSv, CdT, fald. 38, reg. *Entrata e spese* cit., c. 65v.

<sup>147</sup> F. Landi, *Storia economica del clero in Europa*, Carocci, Roma 2005, p. 40.

<sup>148</sup> Ivi, p. 39.

<sup>149</sup> Landi, ad esempio, sembra teorizzare un modello a scala europea a tappe successive, che si svilupperebbe in modo rettilineo addirittura dalla soppressione dei Templari alle confische attuate dai governi liberali dell’800: cfr. ivi, p. 13 e *passim*, in particolare pp. 34-38. Per una discussione su queste tesi vedi M. Battistoni, *Abbazie e ordini religiosi nel Piemonte di antico regime. Patrimoni e giurisdizioni*, Sagep, Genova 2017, pp. 11-13.

che definirei di ‘parassitismo politico’ a spese dell’Ordine dei certosini, favorendo l’introduzione di uno spezzone dell’*élite* oligarchica nel cuore dell’organizzazione per fruirne delle risorse dall’interno. Non per nulla, già a metà ’600, la Repubblica di Genova si era opposta (con successo, come Venezia) alle soppressioni innocenziane dei cenobi minori<sup>150</sup>. Mi sembra più realistico aderire a quell’indirizzo interpretativo, «improntato al rifiuto metodologico di un’anacronistica separazione tra potere statale e potere ecclesiastico»<sup>151</sup>, che descrive, nella società di antico regime, un «sistema di relazioni che a livello di idee, stili di vita, relazioni politiche e patrimoniali, rimane estraneo a una netta separazione tra il campo dei laici e quello dei chierici»<sup>152</sup>.

Diventano più chiare anche le motivazioni dell’organizzazione alla certosa di sempre più numerosi eventi pubblici condivisi con la comunità locale. I ‘genovesi’ sentivano la necessità di stringere relazioni con quei segmenti della popolazione che erano legati ai monaci per ragioni economiche e religiose. La chiesa della certosa era aperta ai fedeli, e, anzi, per un centinaio di abitanti ‘di là dall’acqua’ del torrente Varatella aveva quasi il ruolo di una parrocchia, senza dimenticare che i certosini officiavano, talvolta, anche la cappella dedicata a sant’Anna nella borgata di Dari<sup>153</sup>. I fedeli e i rappresentanti politici della comunità paiono non approvare le ingerenze genovesi sul monastero. Una provocazione forte era stata messa in scena nel 1747, quando i certosini di Toirano si rifiutarono di festeggiare col suono delle campane la vittoria genovese

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<sup>150</sup> Cfr. Giana, *Decifrare la regola* cit., p. 28.

<sup>151</sup> Battistoni, *Abbazie e ordini religiosi nel Piemonte di antico regime* cit., p. 17.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>153</sup> In realtà, per la certosa le entrate derivanti dall’officiatura e dai servizi religiosi erano pressoché irrilevanti sotto l’aspetto economico; rappresentavano sicuramente, invece, un patrimonio simbolico e relazionale importante. È un dato comune a molte sedi dei regolari: cfr. Battistoni, *Abbazie e ordini religiosi nel Piemonte di antico regime* cit., pp. 160-165.

contro gli austrosardi. L'obiettivo del priore Isnardi è di 'risemantizzare' ritualità e liturgia della certosa in chiave di propaganda nazionalista: potrebbe essere un sintomo di questa fase l'imposizione – recuperando un'usanza precedente – di esporre il gonfalone genovese durante la festa all'abbazia abbandonata sul monte san Pietro. Questa pratica, nota come «i bandieraggi», era affidata a una badia giovanile capitanata da un «alfiere», che otteneva dai certosini anche abbondanti donazioni di vino<sup>154</sup>. Anche i 'trattenimenti' nei giardini della clausura in compagnia del notabilato locale, allietati da dolci e vini pregiati, sembrano esprimere questa valenza propagandistica.

Le pratiche del consumo alimentare e della socialità dei certosini di Toirano durante il XVIII secolo, insomma, si rivelano interne a discorsi politici che diventano espliciti e concreti nel contesto di una lunga fase di conflittualità locale e statale. Dove, forse, ci si poteva aspettare un rarefatto ed edificante dibattito teologico e morale, è emerso, invece, uno spigoloso episodio di lotta giurisdizionalista che resta, comunque, in attesa di ulteriori approfondimenti. Una migliore comprensione di queste dinamiche è stata resa possibile solo dal ritrovamento casuale di un complesso di fonti prodotto e conservato da soggetti esterni all'organizzazione studiata. Ma che trovare quello che si cerca non è mai abbastanza qualcuno l'ha già detto.

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<sup>154</sup> Cfr. B.E. Maineri, *Ingaunia. Note liguri*, Forzani e C., Roma 1884, pp. 423- 427 e O. Boccone, *La processione*, in D. Marino (a cura di), *L'abbazia di San Pietro*, in proprio, Toirano (s.d. ma 2019), pp. 168-169. Un vessillo con lo stemma della Repubblica di Genova è tuttora conservato presso la chiesa parrocchiale di san Martino di Toirano. Secondo Boccone dovrebbe essere stato realizzato nella seconda metà del XIX secolo (Boccone, *La processione* cit. p. 169).

Tabella pesi e misure

Pesi / Misure	Sottomultipli
Cantaro (47,5125 kg)	6 rubbi
Rubbo (7,91875 kg)	25 libbre
Libbra (316,750 g)	12 once
Oncia (26,3958 g)	
<i>Quarta da olive di Albenga (16 litri)</i>	18 moturari
<i>Moturaro (0,888 litri)</i>	
<i>Emina di Albenga per Cereali (128 litri?)</i>	4 stare
<i>Stara (32 litri?)</i>	4 quarte
<i>Quarta (8 litri?)</i>	4 moturari
<i>Moturaro (2 litri?)</i>	
Barile da olio (65,48 litri)	
<i>Barile da vino (40 litri?)</i>	40 amole
<i>Amola (1 litro?)</i>	

I riferimenti in corsivo sono tratti da P. Rocca, *Pesi e misure antiche di Genova e del Genovesato*, Genova 1871.

Sono, pertanto, anacronistici e utili solo come riferimento orientativo.



# Terraced chestnut and hazelnut groves in the Sturla Valley: historical patterns of local management

*Claudia Vaccarezza, Anna Maria Stagno, Caterina Piu\**

## 1. Introduction

This contribution illustrates some case studies related to the analysis of terraced cultural landscapes linked to the practices of chestnut (*Castanea sativa* Mill.) and hazelnut (*Corylus avellana* L.) cultivations present in Sturla Valley and lower Fontanabuona Valley, the hinterland of the Tigullio Gulf (Genoa province, Fig. 1). The methodology used during these researches – developed, over the years, by the Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology and History (LASA - University of Genoa) – comes from the meeting of different disciplinary fields and the consequent combined use of archaeology, geographical-historical sciences and applied natural sciences with a microanalytical approach. The result is a method that integrates and leads to dialogue different

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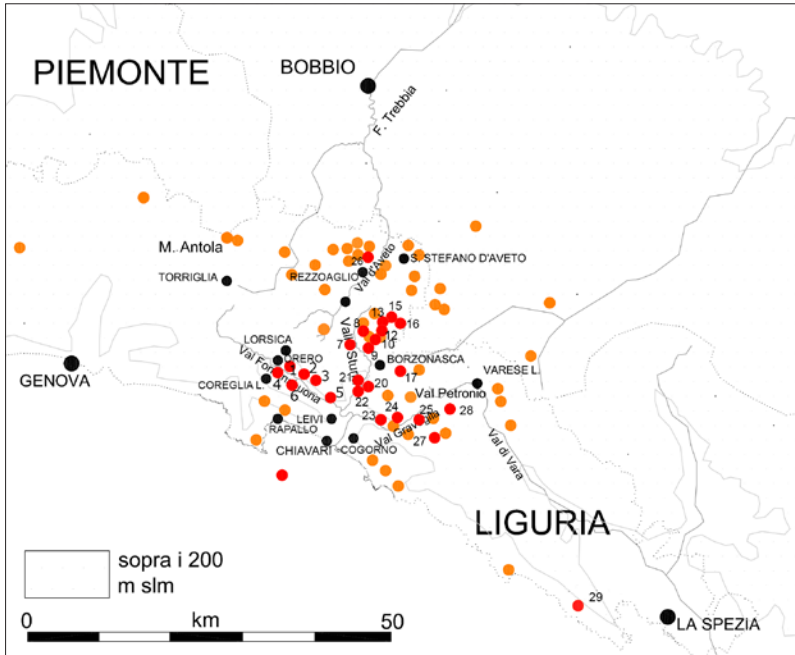


Fig. 1 Location map of the discussed sites and areas. Fontanabuona Valley San Colombano Certenoli Municipality: 1. Certenoli, 2. Aveggio, 3. Castelletti, 4. Calvari, 5. San Colombano, 6. Pian dei Cunei; Sturla Valley Borzonasca Municipality : 7. Belpiano, 8. Gazzolo, 9. Caregli, 10. Caroso, 11. Lago di Giacopiane, 12. Perlezzi, 13. Prato Sopracroce, 14. Castagneto, 15. Zandoni, 16. Vallepiena, 17. Montemoggio, 18. Borzone; Mezzanego Municipality: 19. Prati di Mezzanego, 20. Porcile, 21. Isola di Borgonovo, 22. Vignolo; Graveglia Valley - Ne Municipality 23. Caminata, 24. Zerli, 25. Nascio; Other cited sites: 26. Mogge di Ertola (Aveto Valley, Rezzoaglio, GE), 27. Pian del Lago near Bargone (Casarza L., GE), 28. Lagorara (Maissana, SP); 29. Case Lemmen (Riomaggiore, SP)



disciplines and type of sources: documentary (land registries, notarial deeds, deeds of sale, etc.), cartographic, oral environmental and ground sources (archaeological, sedimentary, geological)<sup>1</sup>. By comparing and cross-referencing data derived from these sources, it is possible to reach a higher definition of the processes that generated the landscapes: in particular «through the historical and archaeological reconstruction of historical actions and practices it's possible to reach the social groups that were actors in this environmental history»<sup>2</sup>. Using the same sources (sometimes the same cadastres or cartography) in different ways, it is possible to describe the two landscapes – although rather common – as two complex system of management of environmental resources and full of social tensions.

The history of the hazelnut groves landscape was reconstructed over a long period of time using chronological criteria. Instead, the study of chestnut groves, was carried out by reconstructing the relationships between forms of production and the construction and qualification of ownership, with constant cross-referencing with data derived from field investigations (for example, the connection between chestnut cultivation and system of irrigation). In all cases, through an analysis of the current organization and the actors involved in maintaining the practices, the aim is to highlight the historical dimension of management practices and the complex relationship that links the products

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<sup>1</sup> R. Cevasco, D. Moreno, *Microanalisi geo-storica o geografia culturale della copertura vegetale? Sull'eredità ambientale dei "paesaggi culturali"*, in «Trame dello spazio. Quaderni di geografia storica e quantitativa», 3 (2007), p. 89. See also R. Cevasco, *Memoria verde. Nuovi spazi per la geografia*, Diabasis, Bologna 2007; D. Moreno, C. Montanari, *Il lato oscuro del paesaggio: per una ecologia storica del paesaggio rurale in Italia*, in C. Teofili, R. Clarino (a cura di) *Riconquistare il paesaggio. La Convenzione Europea del Paesaggio e la Conservazione della Biodiversità in Italia*. WWF, Italia ONG ONLUS, Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Roma 2008, pp. 159-175.

<sup>2</sup> Cevasco, Moreno, *Microanalisi geo-storica* cit.; Cevasco *Memoria verde* cit.

(hazelnuts and chestnuts), to the landscapes and social groups and individuals who cultivate them<sup>3</sup>.

In both cases, the research has allowed to recognize the historicity and the specificity of these landscapes at the national level; they were, therefore, included in the National Catalogue of Historic Rural Landscapes<sup>4</sup>. Regarding the hazel terraced landscape, the procedure for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Rural Landscapes has also been initiated<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>The research presented here builds on two PhD dissertations: C. Vaccarezza, *Paesaggi rurali tra storia delle risorse e morfologia sociale*, University of Genoa, 2011; A.M. Stagno, *Archeologia rurale: spazi e risorse. Approcci teorici e casi di studio*, University of Genoa, 2009, then in A.M. Stagno, *Gli spazi dell'Archeologia rurale. Risorse ambientali e insediamenti nell'Appennino ligure (XV-XXI sec.)*, Firenze, 2018. They have also been deepened through the 'PAHF' Research Project (*Les Paysages d'Arbres Hors Forêt. Multi valorisation dans le cadre d'un développement local durable en Europe du Sud - 2007-2009*), Ministère de l'Écologie, de l'Énergie, du Développement durable et de l'Aménagement du territoire, 2010, the research for the Catalogue of Historic Rural Landscapes (see note below) and for the construction of candidacy for recognition as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO-Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage 2011). The present work has been able to rely on these materials. Also important for Terraced chestnut groves were the projects, *Feasibility study of a project for the knowledge, conservation and management of Ligurian wetlands (2005-2007)*; *Water Perimeters. History and archaeology of a resource (2006-2007)*.

<sup>4</sup>This is a project promoted by MIPAAF under the coordination of Prof. Mauro Agnoletti of the University of Florence that has seen the cataloguing of a number of historic rural landscapes throughout Italy. Ligurian landscapes were studied and proposed by the LASA of the University of Genoa under the coordination of Prof. Diego Moreno and Prof. Roberta Cevasco. The project resulted in the publication of the volume M. Agnoletti (a cura di), *Paesaggi rurali storici. Per un catalogo nazionale*, Laterza, Bari 2010.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/1327>

## 2. Terraced hazelnut groves

Terraced hazelnut groves helped to differentiate and characterize the landscape, especially of the municipalities of San Colombano Certenoli (Fontanabuona Valley), Mezzanego (Sturla Valley) and Ne (Graveglia Valley). Compared to other Italian areas where the hazel is cultivated on flat or hilly areas with gentle slopes, in these valleys the cultivation is, predominantly, located on steep terraced slopes.

Over time, through slow transformations and thanks to the profitability of production, this cultural landscape has been transformed from promiscuous cultivation to specialized cultivation; today, many varieties identified as ‘Misto Chiavari’ are known, including more than twenty-five cultivars, of which the most common are *Tapparona*, *Dal Rosso*, *Dall’orto*, *Longhera*, *Menoia* and *Saigretta*<sup>6</sup>.

Today these territories are facing a phase of abandonment that began in the last decades of the twentieth century and led to the reduction of the cultivated area; however, there still remains – still almost intact – the hazelnut groves landscape, even if in a post-cultural phase, with various consequences on the stability of the steep landslide slopes.

The questions still open about this landscape concern the management of the culture and especially the social and economic organization that has developed over time around this production<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Research on local ‘cultivar’ was carried out by the prof. Virginia Ughini of the University of Piacenza, in the framework of the Demonstration Project ‘Enhancement of the hazelnut production chain: through transformation into pasta, quality certification and organic cultivation’ - EC Regulation 1257/99, PSR Liguria Region-Measure 3.3 (2007): V. Ughini (a cura di), Progetto Dimostrativo ‘Valorizzazione della filiera di produzione della nocciola: attraverso la trasformazione in pasta, la certificazione di qualità e la coltivazione biologica’ - Regolamento CE 1257/99, PSR Regione Liguria - Misura 3.3 (2007).

<sup>7</sup> For more on the historical hazel landscape see C. Vaccarezza, *Terrazze a nocciolo del Tigullio*, in Cevasco R. (a cura di), *La Natura della Montagna. Scritti in ricordo*

## 2.1 From sedimentary sources the first traces of hazelnut trees

According to botanists, hazel tree is present in Ligurian mountains as a spontaneous shrubby species within well-structured broadleaf and needle forest formations located between 0 m and 1700 m a.s.l.<sup>8</sup>.

For the Ligurian populations, the «Institute for Wood Plants and the Environment»<sup>9</sup> defines hazel as a broadly distributed mesophilous species present in the shrub layer of *Physospermum cornubiense* oak forests, broadleaf forests in general, mountain pine forests, and spruce fir forests. It becomes a dominant species in pioneer invasion thickets, locally accompanied by other broadleaf trees, always numerically subordinate, found on high mountain slopes and generally of invasion on abandoned pastures or crops<sup>10</sup>.

The survey conducted by IPLA didn't consider that most of these formations, for the Tigullio area, are in the post-cultural phase, but interpreted these little hazelnut populations as neoformations of pioneer species repopulating abandoned areas. In fact, investigations conducted in the Ligurian area aimed at reconstructing late and postglacial vegetation dynamics have shown that hazel was part of the floristic court more than 10,000 years ago, when fir forests still dominated the Apennines<sup>11</sup>.

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di Giuseppina Poggi, Oltre Edizioni, Sestri Levante 2013, pp. 486-492.

<sup>8</sup>S. Pignatti, *Flora d'Italia* vol. 1, Edagricole, Bologna 1982, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup>The Institute for Wood Plants and the Environment (IPLA) is a joint stock company with total public capital of the Piedmont Region that serves as a technical reference structure for the development of innovative actions and policy support in the fields of forestry, environment and energy resources.

<sup>10</sup> Regione Liguria, Dipartimento Agricoltura e Protezione Civile Servizio Politiche della Montagna e della Fauna Selvatica, *I tipi forestali della Liguria, Robinwood project*, a cura di IPLA S.p.A., 2006, p. 272.

<sup>11</sup> R. Maggi, *I Monti sono vecchi. Archeologia del paesaggio dal Turchino alla Magra*, 'Cataloghi dei Beni Naturali della Regione Liguria'. De Ferrari, Genova 2015, p. 47 and p. 69. In this volume Maggi traces his career as

The opening of spaces in forest formations by Mesolithic peoples favoured the expansion of the hazel tree, whose fruit was probably used as food, thanks to its richness in nutrients and excellent organoleptic qualities. Research carried out by the LASA at Mogge di Ertola, in the municipality of Rezzoaglio, at an elevation of just over 1000 m on the Po Valley side of the Apennines, has revealed how the hazelnut tree has developed becoming a remarkable species. This is documented by the findings of waterlogged branches and numerous hazelnuts dated around 2,500 years BC found in the peat bog<sup>12</sup>. Thus, from a wild species found in the Apennine flora, hazel tree becomes utilized, perhaps even domesticated, species. Pollen diagrams produced in various research conducted in the early 2000s on the Tigullio coast highlighted how for nearby localities with similar climatic characteristics the percentage of hazel differentiates from values around 80 percent in Rapallo compared to other localities where, for the same period (*i.e.*, about 7,000 years BC) the value is around 20 percent<sup>13</sup>. Such a high amount

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an archaeologist, offering a reading of the results of his research and also of the investigations of other scholars from the perspective of environmental archaeology. The pollen diagrams he comments on in his volume have offered considerable insights into the reconstruction of the history of hazel in Tigullio. The references are to the Mogge di Ertola, in the municipality of Rezzoaglio (Ge), and to Pian del Lago near Bargone (Ge). For further information on pollen diagrams see M.A. Guido, B.I. Menozzi, C. Bellini, S. Placereani, C. Montanari, *A palynological contribution to the environmental archaeology of a Mediterranean mountain wetland (North West Apennines, Italy)*, in «The Holocene», 23 (11) (2013), pp. 1517-1527.

<sup>12</sup> See also AAVV. 2006, *Studio di fattibilità di un progetto per la Conoscenza, conservazione e gestione delle Zone Umide Liguri, Relazione sugli studi delle aree campione. Per un Archivio della Documentazione Scientifica, Storica, Etnografica e Turistica*, 3 voll., Università degli Studi di Genova, LASA e Direzione Regionale per i Beni Culturali e Paesaggistici della Liguria, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> C. Bellini, M. Mariotti-Lippi, C. Montanari, *The Holocene landscape history of the NW Italian coasts*, in «The Holocene» 19 (2009), pp. 1161-1172.

of pollen for Rapallo, according to Maggi, suggests that the hazel tree must have been selected from the other species in the floristic court<sup>14</sup>. The presence of hazelnut pollen in diagrams relating to 7,000 BC suggests the appearance of this species in the Ligurian cultural landscape in very ancient times; however, the earliest documentary evidence of its cultivation, consumption and commercial value dates back several millennia later, as documented below.

## **2.2 Written sources: the hazelnut between the Middle Ages and the modern age**

The first written record concerning the hazelnut in Tigullio goes back to late 1391: it is the will of Nicolò Scalia of Chiavari in which «*avelane festecarie*» are mentioned<sup>15</sup>. A survey in the 15<sup>th</sup>-century notarial archives by medieval historian Mario Chiappe showed that, as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the hazelnut had significant value. During that period, in fact, land cultivated with hazelnut trees became the subject of a series of sales and leases from which it is possible to deduce the spread of the crop (particularly in the village of San Colombano in the Lavagna Valley and Vignolo and Prati di Mezzanego in the Sturla Valley from which the spread of this crop in the territory began) and its economic importance, since in almost all the transactions appear, as protagonists, members of the local nobility and middle class. It is very likely that initially the hazel tree was cultivated in promiscuity with other species or was even domesticated from wild specimens as in the case of some parcels of

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<sup>14</sup> Maggi, *I Monti sono vecchi* cit., pp. 72 and 75.

<sup>15</sup> M.C. Poggi, *Terre e colture nel levante ligure*, Master dissertation, University of Genoa, a.a. 1987-88, Tutor Giovanni Rebora. The author has registered the deeds notarized by Rivarola notaries between 1345 and 1497 and transcribed some of them. The deed referred to is part of the Notarial Archive fund of Chiavari currently kept at the State Archives of Genoa (from now on ASGe.), Filza 61.

land – «una pezza di terra arborata di noccioli ed altri alberi selvatici situata in villa Bembelie in località Costamezzana» – given by the nobleman Pasquale della Torre del fu Simonino to the marquis Antonio Malaspina di Mulazzo<sup>16</sup>.

Regarding the following centuries, particularly for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the rich documentation of the Cadastres of the Republic of Genoa allows to make a detailed reconstruction of the geography of hazelnut and its expansion thanks to the preservation of the Caratate of 1613<sup>17</sup> and 1641<sup>18</sup>.

By analysing the data contained within the documentation, it is possible to correlate the evolution of hazelnut cultivation with the transformation of land use. In 1613, the area most affected by cultivation was the lower Lavagna Valley, in particular, the «Ordinarie»<sup>19</sup> of Vignale, Certenoli, Aveggio and Castelletti where hazelnut seems to be present in more than 30 percent of the parcels, mostly associated with

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<sup>16</sup> M. Chiappe, F. Marini, *Relazione storica per il disciplinare di produzione della Indicazione Geografica Protetta “Nocciola Misto Chiavarese”*, Comunità Montana Valli Aveto, Graveglia, Sturla, unpublished report 2007. The medieval historian Chiappe, in this research, records some acts of Chiavari notaries (ASGe-Chiavari Notaries Fund) dealing with the sale or lease of land where hazelnuts were cultivated in Vignolo di Mezzanego and San Colombano.

<sup>17</sup> ASGe, *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 717, *Registrum Caratate Bonorum Immobilium Vallis Lavanie Clavari*.

<sup>18</sup> ASGe, *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 719, *Vicariato di Chiavari, Capella di Val Lavagna*, 1641; *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 718, *Vicariato di Chiavari, Capella di Valle Sturla*, 1640-41; *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 723 *Vicariato di Chiavari, Capella di Carasco*, 1641; *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 720, *Vicariato di Chiavari, Capella di Garibaldi*, 1641; *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 724, *Vicariato di Chiavari, Capella di Leivi*, 1641; *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 722, *Vicariato di Chiavari, Capella di Rupinaro*, 1642.

<sup>19</sup> The *Ordinarie* corresponded to an administrative subdivision of the territory which coincided with the parish boundaries. Therefore, it is to be understood as an administrative unit.

vines, olive trees, chestnut trees, poplars and walnut trees. More rarely it is found in monoculture, probably in small plots with an estimated value of a few Genovese liras<sup>20</sup>.

In the Sturla Valley, hazel is found in 15 to 18 percent of land parcels, mostly associated with olive, vine, chestnut, and oak. It is not clear whether the hazelnut tree occupied marginal areas, whether it was interspersed with other crops, or whether it was on homogeneous areas in monoculture separated from other species; the estimators, as noted in the notarial deeds, recorded the presence of hazel but not the manner of cultivation.

About the value of the lands, it can be seen that, in general, those in which only hazel tree appears turn out to have little value (this may also suggest that they were small plot for monoculture); on the contrary, where it is cultivated in promiscuity with other species, the value is on average much higher than in those where hazel is not present. Thirty years later, the geography of hazelnut cultivation undergoes significant changes: other localities, such as Carasco and San Bartolomeo di Leivi, begin their cultivation<sup>21</sup>, monoculture plots increase, and in the Lavagna Valley those in association with chestnut decrease, in favour of those with olive trees and vineyards.

The reasons behind these changes are difficult to trace: probably, the small landowners, indebted to the rich families of the local potentate, such as Torre and Maschio<sup>22</sup>, Ravaschieri and Rivarola, in order to avoid selling

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<sup>20</sup> As an example, for the Vignale Chapel, the average value for monoculture plots is about 25 liras, with values between 20 and 35, compared to the average 133 liras for association plots.

<sup>21</sup> ASGe, *Magistrato di Comunità* n. 724, *Vicariato di Chiavari, Cappella di Leivi*, 1640-42. These are two lands with vineyards, olive and hazel groves and wooded land.

<sup>22</sup> O. Raggio, *Mutamenti di proprietà e contratti agrari nel Chiavarese – 1544-1714: l'espansione dei domini di due famiglie*, in *Studi di micro-analisi storica (Piemonte-Liguria secoli XVI-XVIII)*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1977, p. 65. One hypothesis that might find some basis is that the modest transformation of crop



their lands, attempted to intensify the cultivation of hazelnuts, due to the speed of production, with the expectation of quick and discreet profits. The strategy, if really implemented, failed because the market was ruled by the same families to whom the smallholders were indebted, and so much land was sold or leased under emphyteusis to them. Hazelnuts became part of the «regalli» basket<sup>23</sup>, as recorded punctually by the Rivarola family in their account books<sup>24</sup>. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Giovanni Maria Piccone points out how hazelnuts are a product destined for trade rather than for self-consumption: about the hazel, he says, «tutto è proficuo: il legno rapidamente formato: le fronde ottimo pascolo ad ogni qualità di armento: il frutto, che negli anni, in cui abbonda, spedito in Ispagna fa introitare allo Stato migliaia, e migliaia di pezzi duri»<sup>25</sup>.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the push of the Società Economica di Chiavari, the hazelnut crops continued its expansion, even reaching

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types was a consequent response to the impoverishment of the peasant class, and this is partly in line with Raggio's assertion that, in the Chiavarese region, «lo schiacciamento della realtà umana non sembra essere stato compensato da un reale progresso dell'agricoltura» – «the crushing of human reality does not seem to have been compensated for by real progress in agriculture».

<sup>23</sup> In addition to the perpetual, peasants were obliged to the practice of *regalli*, that is, to bring as gifts to the master, usually on San Michele [Michaelmas Day], a basket of products, including eggs, poultry, dried chestnuts, hazelnuts, wine, and oil, some of which were then sold, a practice that reminds us of an archaic form of land ownership that was preserved until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>24</sup> Biblioteca della Società Economica di Chiavari (from now on BSEC), Archivio Rivarola, reg. n. 179, Registro conti 1684-1686, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> G. Piccone, *Memoria sul ristabilimento e coltura de' boschi del Genovesato: breve istruzione sulla raccolta ed uso di alcune sostanze resinose della melesa e pino*. Genova 1796, p. 32. Here the translation of the cited text: «everything is profitable: the wood quickly formed: the fronds excellent pasture to every quality of herd: the fruit, which in the years in which it abounds, shipped to Spain makes the State take in thousands, and thousands of hard pieces».

the London market from which it transited to be traded overseas<sup>26</sup>. Only a small part of the production of the hazelnut is destined for the local market, «il cui frutto gradito ad ogni mensa anche la più signorile»<sup>27</sup>, becomes part of the diet of local communities, but mostly it is found used in cultic and ritual contexts, for example for the production of *reste*, a type of necklaces that were given to girls as engagement requests or taken to relatives and friends after weddings, instead of sugared almonds<sup>28</sup>.

### 2.3 Oral sources tell: the hazelnut in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The 20<sup>th</sup> century represents the golden century for the Tigullio hazelnut. Production benefited from both the severe crisis in chestnut production (which occurred due to the exacerbation of plant diseases) and the gradual abandonment of land located far from home. At the same time, it enjoyed the entrepreneurial ability of the Cogozzo families of Mezzanego and Torre (the so-called ‘*Nutuen*’) in Calvari (San Colombano Certenoli) who, for a few decades, allowed small producers to glimpse a possibility of economic emancipation.

Especially after the Second World War many chestnut groves, even olive groves, were converted to hazelnut groves until, in 1968,

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<sup>26</sup> In 1883, fresh hazelnuts were quoted at 3 to 5 denarii per pound. For comparison, coarse choice chestnuts, again on the same square, were quoted from 15 to 25 shillings per 50 kg. See BSEC, Bollettino Comizi Agrari, 1883, serie II, Anno IV, Gennaio No. 1 (vol. 3), p. 12 and BSEC, Massa G., 1879, cited above, p. 28. Massa calculates that annually the export affects 1000 quintals of hazelnuts, practically all the production.

<sup>27</sup> BSEC, Atti Società Economica, Discorso dell’Avvocato Castagnola in occasione dell’annua esposizione del 3 luglio 1836, pp. 8-9; «whose fruit pleasing to every table even the most genteel».

<sup>28</sup> Those who get married and know the dialect still say they go to bring ‘*e nisoe*’ to relatives and friends.

they exceeded 600 ha in specialized cultivation<sup>29</sup>. The yield was calculated, on average, at 15 q/ha for a value of about 30,000 liras of product per quintal. In the 1960s, a few hectares of hazelnut groves, which were easy to care for, yielded a few million liras a year<sup>30</sup> - a fortune - so much that throughout this period the specialized press at national level discussed extensively the possibility and usefulness of planting new hazelnut groves in Tigullio, in addition to those already present that covered large areas in Leivi, Coreglia Ligure, Orero, Borzonasca and even areas designated for irrigated gardens such as Pian dei Cunei.

The hazelnut's fortunes, however, did not last long. Turkey overpoweringly appeared on the market and, perhaps also because of trade agreements with this country, confectionery industries such as Ferrero, which historically bought in the Tigullio, now preferred the cheaper Turkish hazelnuts, although less valuable organoleptically.

The local trade network was too weak to absorb the thousands of quintals of hazelnuts produced annually, hazelnuts that were difficult to process given the different sizes due to the large number of varieties and small size, and cultivation headed for decline.

## **2.4 The recent past and the present of hazelnut cultivation**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> c., thanks to the intuition of Maria Grazia Sbarboro, the officer of the Aveto, Graveglia and Sturla Valleys

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<sup>29</sup> C. Scocco, *Indagine per il riconoscimento del marchio I.G.P. per la nocciola "Misto Chiavari"*, Comunità Montana Valli Aveto, Graveglia, Sturla, Unpublished report, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Archivio dell'Ispektorato compartimentale agrario di Genova (from now on AICA), busta 24, fascicolo 6 (5 bis), Relazione su 'Coltivazioni di nocciolo nel chiavarese' prodotta dal reggente dell'Ufficio Staccato di Chiavari dell'Ispektorato Provinciale dell'Agricoltura di Genova, Beneducci, e inviata al dott. Augusto Modena il 22 novembre 1956, p. 4.

Mountain Community<sup>31</sup>, with the collaboration of other local entities, the procedures for the recognition of the IGP trademark Tigullio hazelnut has been started. The promoting body carried out a census of the hazelnut lands, identifying the owners and the people who still exploited this production for commercial purposes, selling the hazelnuts to the Franco Romaggi Company and the Cogozzo family who continued to buy this product at market price for resell through their business.

At the same time the entities involved in this project tried to track down companies interested in using the «*Misto Chiavari*» type of hazelnut – for example, in confectionery production – so as to build a new commercial network in order to implement the market that survived the collapse of the 1970s.

The suppression of the Mountain Communities, following the provisions of a 2010 regional law, didn't interrupt the virtuous circuit that had been hardly set in motion thanks to the intervention of the Regional Aveto Park and of, above all, the Nabot social cooperative president, Claudio Solari, that, looking for uncultivated land to cultivate on loan, saw in the hazelnuts untapped potential.

Maria Rita Savardi, at that time the contact person for agriculture in the Nabot cooperative, had the opportunity to start a small production in some hazelnut groves of 20<sup>th</sup>-century planting in Pian dei Cunei and in Aveggio, in the municipality of San Colombano Certenoli (Fig. 2). The support and active collaboration of Renato Lagomarsino, a well-known scholar of local history, made it possible to gather information and data about cultivation techniques, through listening to elderly growers.

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<sup>31</sup> Mountain communities, until the 2010 – when they were suppressed – were administrative body aimed to help the mountain development. In the case study area they were an administrative reference for local farmers and local producers, above all, to address issue and problems related to the request of fundings.



Fig. 2 The hazelnut crop in Pian dei Cunei (San Colombano Certenoli)

Savardi looked for new outlets that were not necessarily tied to tradition, with the goal of creating a supply chain profitable for the different players, thus enhancing the product and the territory. She initially identified a possibility in the collaboration with the Parodi Nutra company in Campomorone (GE) for the production of hazelnut oil obtained by cold pressing, packaged in pretty bottles. At the same time, the company had analyses done aimed at defining the organoleptic qualities of the «*Misto Chiavari*» hazelnut. The analyses revealed important properties in the cosmetic field as well, but the product with which the company conquered the market was the hazelnut cream.

On the wave of success, in the Sturla Valley the Cooperativa Agricola Rurale Isola di Borgonovo di Mezzanego and some pastry chefs from Chiavari began to produce a similar product, always of excellent quality.

This 'grassroots' restart of the hazelnut production gave new impetus to several Local Authorities urged by the Aveto Park to join the

Association of the «*Città della Nocciola*»<sup>32</sup> with the participation in the «Nocciola Day» and to undertake promotional initiatives as themed evenings proposed by local restaurateurs in collaboration with the Pro Loco of San Colombano Certenoli, the recognition of the *Misto Chiavari* brand at the Chamber of Commerce of Genoa and the birth of the community of ‘Hazelnut Producers of the Tigullio Valleys’.

In the meantime, the Aveto Park started a program to relaunch the hazelnut and succeeded to obtain the inclusion of «Misto Chiavari» hazelnuts in Slow Food’s «*Arca del Gusto*».

New paths were taken: the realization of these events made it possible to establish a synergistic relationship between local authorities, producers, confectioners, restaurant owners and traders that today, despite the difficulties caused by the problematic start of the last program of the Regional Rural Development Plan, seems to offer a new horizon to the Tigullio hazelnut and its historical landscape.

### 3. Chestnut grove cultivation

Given the loss of economic interest of chestnut populations in Liguria – dramatically since the 1950s – both as horticultural and forestry resource, a new interest has recently raised on their environmental and cultural services. In order to identify this new value, a number of research have been undertaken on chestnut historical ecology<sup>33</sup>. The study of different

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<sup>32</sup> It is an association planned by the hazelnut producers of Giffoni (Salerno) which collect the main hazelnut centres of Italy, promoting their initiatives.

<sup>33</sup> R. Cevasco, B.I. Menozzi, C. Molinari, D. Moreno, C. Vaccarezza, M.A. Guido and C. Montanari, *The historical ecology of Ligurian chestnut groves: archival documentation and field evidence*, in G. Bounous, G.L. Beccaro (eds.), *Proceedings of the First European Congress on chestnuts. ‘Castanea 2009’*, (Cuneo, 13-16 October, 2009), «Acta Horticulturae» n. 866 (2010), pp. 43-50.

bearing sites<sup>34</sup> chestnut trees documented that historical ecology could act as a «new tool to extend research beyond conventional studies of rural landscape history», by exploring the historical connection that can be detected between places (sites), local land/plant management practices and local knowledge, in order to identify the correlated historical systems of production<sup>35</sup>. The research carried out in western Ligurian Apennines show that the historical ecology of present chestnut populations (forming in Liguria several different post-cultural landscapes) largely depends on their connection with pre-18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> c. mono- and multi-production systems. As in the case of wooded pastures, it is clear that chestnut cultivation in post-medieval times is strictly related to a number of local animal productions in multiple (agro-sylvo-pastoral) production systems. A peculiar example of historical mixed groves is the alder/chestnut co-plantation and the planted pastures with a «savannah type» ecology<sup>36</sup>. In this case, given the low density of the tree cover in this local landscape, the microanalytical approach would contribute to a better definition of the challenging topic of the trees out of forest ecology<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Cevasco *et al.*, *The historical ecology* cit.; A. M. Stagno, C. Molinari, *Terraced and irrigated chestnut groves and vegetable gardens in Alta Valle Sturla*, in M. Agnoletti (ed.), *Paesaggi rurali storici*, Laterza, Bari 2009, pp. 189-191, for *Perlezzi* sites; B.I. Menozzi, M. Zotti, C. Montanari, *A non-pollen palynomorphs contribution to the local environmental history in the Ligurian Apennines: a preliminary study*, «Vegetation History and Archaeobotany», 19, 2010, pp. 503-512; C. Molinari, *Ricerche palinologiche per l'identificazione di sistemi agro-silvo-pastorali storici*, PhD dissertation; Università di Genova, a.a. 2009-2010, pp. 117-196.; Molinari 2010, pp. 133-200; Stagno, *Archeologia Rurale* cit.; Stagno, *Gli spazi dell'archeologia rurale* cit., pp. 269-346; Cevasco, *Memoria verde* cit.

<sup>35</sup> D. Moreno, *Escaping from "landscape"*, in R. Balzaretto, C. Watkins, M. Pearce (eds.), *Ligurian Landscapes: Studies in Archaeology, Geography and History*, Accordia Research Institute, University of London 2004, pp. 129-140.

<sup>36</sup> A.T. Grove, O. Rackham, *The Nature of Mediterranean Europe. An Ecological History*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Cevasco *et al.*, *The historical ecology of Ligurian chestnut groves* cit.

Palynological analysis<sup>38</sup> has shown present features and extension strictly connected to previous managements: largest extension: *e.g.*, largest extension during the post-Medieval period; system of temporary cultivation based on cereal sowing after the extirpation of herbs and shrubs; the cycle provided wood, charcoal, fruit, hay, grass; the fertilisation of the parcel was assured by the grazing; decline of chestnut cultivation since the beginning of 1900. In all the studied sites, the soil was used as mowing meadow and the leaves of chestnut trees were used as fodder. Lagorara, *Casa Lemmen* and *Perlezzi* chestnut groves were also grazed. It is important to underline that until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these sites were located in areas covered by the flow of transhumance between the ridges of Eastern Ligurian Apennines and the coast described above.

The study of archival and field evidences documents a particular practice of co-plantation of sweet chestnut grove with black alder, spread in the Entella River basin, since late 18<sup>th</sup> until the half of 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>39</sup>. Today chestnut appears associated to black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* (L.) Gaertner) in several chestnut groves sites pertaining to hamlets situated in parishes nearby the town of Chiavari (Leivi, Cogorno). In particular, the study of a statistical questionnaire promoted by Repubblica Ligure (1798)<sup>40</sup> allowed to individuate the diffusion of this particular practice. In the Entella Valley, co-plantation was used to enrich chestnut groves soil, to produce hay for cattle and to collect alder fodder to be buried in vineyards<sup>41</sup> and in cereal fields<sup>42</sup>. The timber was used too, as sup-

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<sup>38</sup> C. Molinari, *Ricerche palinologiche* cit.

<sup>39</sup> Vaccarezza, *Castagni e ontani nel Tigullio* cit.

<sup>40</sup> For further information about the Questionnaire of Repubblica Democratica Ligure C. Costantini, *Comunità e territorio in Liguria: l'inchiesta dell'Istituto Nazionale*, in «Miscellanea Storica Ligure», n.s., V (2) (1975), pp. 291-363.

<sup>41</sup> Oral testimony of R.V. (1928-2018).

<sup>42</sup> This practice is well documented in the «*Diario di Andrea Gagliardo* (Diary of Andrea Gagliardo)», a farmer who lived in Camposasco (a hamlet in the



port in horticulture and in vineyards or as a weir in irrigation systems. Alder management was different from that in alder woods, where it was coppiced, or in chestnut groves, where it was pollarded. Other municipalities or parishes answered to the questionnaire of Repubblica Ligure, such as Caminata (Graveglia Valley), Porcile (Mezzanego) affirming a coexistence of chestnut with alder in woods, mainly in the so called «wasteland» (*inculti*), normally common land (*comunaglie*). Lagorara (Maissana, SP) site is a terraced sweet chestnut grove planted in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. on a previous wooded meadow pasture<sup>43</sup>. Similarly, in Lemmen (Riomaggiore, SP) site, located in the Cinque Terre National Park, the employment of different sources allowed to reconstruct the regressive history, until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., of a rural landscape characterized by grazing areas with a chestnut wooded meadow system developed into a cultural landscape of coast winter pastures of a transhumance system; a system more complex than the present one characterized by olive and vine terraces. The processes underlying the current remains of the Cinque Terre cultural landscape are a very different background from the generic ‘historical or traditional’ identity often claimed to a landscape of vine-wine production that has lost its commercial outlets for over three generations and is presently involved in an incessant abandonment<sup>44</sup>.

In addition, through the case study of Perlezzi and upper Sturla Valley we had the opportunity to deepen the social dimension of the practices related to chestnut cultivation, starting from the observation

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Municipality of San Colombano Certenoli) in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Diary was transcribed and commented in C. Vaccarezza (a cura di), *Il Diario di Andrea Gagliardo tra la Merica e la Fontanabuona (1888-1899)*, Oltre Edizioni, Sestri Levante 2020, pp. 54-64.

<sup>43</sup> Molinari, *Ricerche palinologiche* cit., pp. 174-183.

<sup>44</sup> Cevasco *et al.*, *Historical ecology of chestnut-grove* cit.; Molinari, *Ricerche palinologiche* cit., pp. 184-195.

of present practices and present organisation and going back in time through archival and field sources. In this paper we will focus on this case study because it is still preserved the irrigated sweet chestnut cultivation, which still today could be considered a mixed practice, which not only links chestnut to the cultivation of orchards, but also allows to explore the relational dimension behind the one of the most historically used fruits in Ligurian kitchen, ‘chestnut’: locally, in fact, the sweet fruit of chestnut tree is called ‘*erburu*’, the tree par excellence.

### **3.1 Irrigated sweet chestnut wood cultivation and vegetable gardens in Sturla Valley**

Irrigated cultivation until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century was spread over a wide area of irrigated terraced mountain that went from Aveto and Trebbia Valley to Petronio Valley. This is a set of historical practices of cultivated terraces (chestnut and horticulture), associated with the use of irrigation water spread in Ligurian and Piedmont Apennines until the 1950s. The cultivation of chestnuts and vegetables, typical of many Apennine areas, is here associated with the reshaping of the slopes and the adoption of a complex irrigation system. At higher altitudes, instead, the area is characterized by ample pastures.

The chestnut cultivation is attested in Sturla Valley during medieval age, but irrigation practices are documented in the area only since the 17<sup>th</sup> c. The area of practices and landscapes of irrigated sweet chestnut wood cultivation and vegetable gardens through the use of historical aqueducts (*‘bei’*) is maximally preserved in the upper Sturla Valley (and on the sub-basin of the torrent Penna) in the municipality of Borzonasca, in the province of Genoa. Particularly, it is preserved in the hamlets of Perlezzi, Zanoni, Vallepiana, Caroso, Prato Sopracroce, Castagneto and Caregli. In the past, irrigation of chestnut trees was practiced also in Graveglia Valley (Zerli and Nascio villages in particular), but today only irrigated horticulture still survives, as well as in Petronio Valley, where the historical aqueducts are still used for irrigation.

Due to the presence of irrigated sweet chestnut cultivation, upper Sturla Valley was included in the 'Historical Rural Landscape National Register'<sup>45</sup>. The area, of about 2400 ha, extends from the southern slopes of Mount Aiona to the torrents Penna and Sturla to the south, at altitudes varying between 200 and 1200 m a.s.l. The area falls into the territory of the Aveto Natural Regional Park and it is part of the network Natura 2000, with three sites of community interest<sup>46</sup>. The irrigation network is still functioning in the vegetable gardens and chestnut groves on various terraces, often contiguous, near the settlements of Perlezzi, Caregli, Caroso, Valle Piana and Prato Sopralacroce.

### **3.2 The social dimension of practices of the irrigated sweet chestnut cultivation and their material evidence**

The historical irrigation system is in excellent condition in Perlezzi, Caroso and Caregli, where a series of stone conducts branch off from the main canal in an increasingly dense network, taking the water to each terrace and then to individual chestnut trees, through conducts dug in the ground. In the hamlets of Perlezzi, Sopralacroce, Zanoni and Valle Piana, pastures are still managed collectively and aqueducts are used to irrigate vegetable gardens and chestnut groves. The terraces around Perlezzi, used for vegetable gardens, are delimited by rows of vines, of the variety «*dolcetto nero*», one of the few surviving examples of this type of arrangement in the area. Until the '60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those terraces were used for grazing and for crops typical of the Ligurian Apennines such as corn and potatoes.

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<sup>45</sup> Agnoletti, *Paesaggi rurali storici* cit.

<sup>46</sup> The geological substratum consists mainly of sandstone of the Formation «*dello Zatta*», a formation of light-gray micaceous sandstone with strata of siltstone, marls, argillite of the Late Paleocene-Cretaceous; the rest of the substratum consists of marly limestone alternated with argillaceous and sandy marls.



Fig. 3 Irrigated sweet chestnut groves at La Costa (Perlezzi, Borzonasca)

The materiality of the practice of irrigated sweet chestnut cultivation is represented by the terraces and the channel system (Fig. 3). Sweet chestnut groves are cultivated in terraces, defined by dry walls of height and variable amplitude, along which the derivation channels of the aqueducts made of shale slabs functional to the irrigation of crops are branched. In many cases, the shale slabs that were placed at the entrance of each derivation channel are still visible (and in some cases in use in order to close it, when necessary, for example to regulate the shifts established about the use of water<sup>47</sup>). In some cases, the channels were only partially defined

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<sup>47</sup> In Graveglia Valley, according to what was written by H. Plomteux (1981, 2000), during Seventies to bring the water to the small canal of the field to be irrigated, the clips (*'quighe'*) or small closed (*Seráge*) were inserted inside

by the stones. They were mostly obtained directly by digging a furrow in the earth at the base of the terrace. This type of channel requires frequent maintenance, according to what is documented, once every year.

As emerges by this short description, the irrigated sweet chestnut cultivation is not a single practice, but consists of a set of agricultural practices closely interrelated, which are a feature in irrigation systems and link chestnut and vegetable gardens cultivation. The practices related not only to chestnut cultivation (care of the chestnut trees; harvesting chestnuts, transformation processes (drying and grinding chestnuts for the production of flour)), but also mowing grass on the terraces (later used as hay for cattle), cultivation and above all the care of the irrigation system. The cultivation has been practiced on terraced where sweet chestnut trees are alternate to vegetable gardens and in some cases to hazelnuts.

Grass trimmer is used now for mowing, but the wooden rake is still using to collect the cut grass. The drying of the chestnuts until 1970s was realized in specific structures «*seccherecci*» (locally ‘*auberghi*’), today almost completely abandoned (or reused as sheds), still visible along terraces and inside the hamlets. Along the terraces, the main open channel of the aqueduct (locally called ‘*beo*’ or ‘*beodo*’) is branched in littler channels, that through a series of increasingly smaller pipes (dug into the ground), lead the water to the vegetable gardens and to each chestnut too. Just a few specifics tools related to this cultivation are still in use, for example, the hoes used to dig the channels, the blades and the sickles used to cut the grass on the terraces and the wooden rakes by which the terraces were cleaned, and the grass collected.

The most important element of these irrigated cultivations is the care of the irrigation system. The practice requires some operations locally defined ‘*sciaccà u beo*’: maintenance of the main channel of the aqueduct and its setting, cleaning of irrigation canals and annual resto-

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the main canals; in some cases, however, with the help of a hoe, the water was launched directly on the field.

ration of sales channels dug in the ground: these operations are carried out with the use of the hoe. The practice is described by the term '*spacciamiento*' (split) even in the archival documents relating to numerous conflicts happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> c., connected to water resources which involved Perlezzi, Caroso, Caregli, Sopralacroce and Gazzolo hamlets.

All the practices above described are part of a common knowledge among the producers and inhabitants, orally transmitted between generation and learned through the experience, both for the care of terraces, as well as to chestnuts, and above all for the maintenance of the irrigation system. In several cases, the technical knowledge is mostly given by people aged between 60- and 80-year-old, and it is progressively disappearing, with the process of depopulation. There were no bearers or professional practitioners with special characteristics or knowledge, or who dedicate their time exclusively to this work. However, a figure with special responsibility is certainly the President of each Rural Consortium of land improvement that, in each hamlet, manages the water system. The President legally represents the Consortium, even before third parties. As shown by the Statutes of Rural Consortia, the President is responsible for organizing the work of ordinary and extraordinary administration of properties managed by the Consortium, and therefore also the maintenance works of irrigation water supply. The president is also responsible for collecting any amount due to the Consortium, in any form, including state, local and provincials fundings. The President office is elective, and it is normally renewed every three years.

The water use is regulated by acts that establish shifts of the claimants (hourly in the past, and daily at present). These acts are documented for Perlezzi, Caroso, and Caregli since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. and represent the existence of a centuries-old shared practice. Similar systems are described by Ugo Plomteux<sup>48</sup> for the Graveglia Valley.

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<sup>48</sup> H. Plomteux, *Cultura contadina in Liguria, la Val Graveglia*, Sagep, Genova 1981 (2000).

In each hamlet, the cleaning of outlets pipe and of the main irrigation channel is done collectively once a year by all users. In Perlezzi, Committees allow the maintenance of civic uses on common lands as pastures, through the Rural Consortium for Livestock improvement.

The continuity of the practices (through transformations which partially emerged thanks to historical and archaeological investigation) over the centuries has been possible thanks to the continuous confrontation and collaboration between individuals and local groups, which in many cases defined them through the constitution of micro-institutions (Community Councils in the past, and Consortia and Committees of Common-lands, since the Sixties) and turn them in relation to the changes of the context, with a process of continuous comparison and the maintenance of a deep social network inside the Perlezzi community. The memory connected to irrigation systems and maintenance of access rights to water resources (memory of centuries-old disputes, actions and practices) creates a strong sense of belonging in the hamlets, materialised by the shared use of water and common-lands.

The practices related to that use – and within them those connected with the maintenance of irrigation system and farming – ensure the preservation of a cultural landscape of great historical interest and featured strongly suggestive that have no comparisons in other areas.

In particular, the conservation of this set of practices depends from different local micro-institution which, in many cases are strongly interrelated; among them it is possible to list:

- the Consortia of rural land improvement (ConSORZI rurali di miglioramento fondiario) of Perlezzi, Borzone, Prato, Caregli, Montemoggio, Vallepiana and Caroso. These consortia manage the historical aqueducts of each hamlets. Land cultivators participate in the consortium to use the water;
- ‘il Castagno’ s.c.a.r.l. cooperative (Montemoggio, Borzonasca), in 2012, brought together 43 producers of chestnuts (of Sturla, Aveto and Graveglia Valley), including those that maintain the irrigated chestnut (in particular, Luisa Botto of Caroso and Livia

Podestà of Perlezzi). Il Castagno (whose headquarters are in Montemoggio, Borzonasca) also promotes the commercial production of the chestnut of Borzonasca;

- the Committee of Fractional Assets Management (Comitati di gestione dei Beni frazionali) of Perlezzi, Prato, Bevena, Zanoni, Montemozzo, Vallepiana, Zolezzi hamlets;
- Perlezzi, Zanoni and 'Malga Vallepiana' Rural consortia of livestock improvement, which are associations for the improvement of animal farming. Thanks to them the mountain pastures have been maintained, preventing the spread of woods due to the abandoning of agriculture. In the areas above 800 m a.s.l., which consist of wide-open spaces, sheep and cattle still graze freely.

### **3.3 The research and the conflictual history of the Perlezzi irrigated sweet chestnut groves**

Research carried out at Perlezzi allowed the reconstruction of the irrigation system, the context to which it belonged and the relationship with the space and management of the environmental resources. Particular attention was paid to the investigation of 'water perimeters': the technical and juridical tools which make water resources available for the communities and the local social groups interested in their exploitation<sup>49</sup>. Through the crossed use of different documentary series, it was possible to reconstruct the long history of conflict, actions and practices, which today are materialised by the complex organisation of the irrigated sweet chestnut groves of Perlezzi.

The system is documented since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and has been dated back in its present form at least to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to rural ar-

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<sup>49</sup> A.M. Stagno, V. Tigrino, *Cartografia pre-geodetica, conflitti sulle risorse idriche e politiche territoriali. Un caso di studio nell'Appennino Ligure (XVIII s.)*, in E. Dai Prà (a cura di), *La cartografia storica da bene patrimoniale a strumento progettuale*, «Semestrale di Studi e ricerche in Geografia», 2, 2010, pp. 267-278.



chaeology studies on the settlements and on the terraced slopes, in particular of Perlezzi<sup>50</sup>. The continuous use of the irrigation system has ensured the survival of the original structures of the terraces and aqueducts, of which it is still possible to identify the various phases of development, associating them with the gradual development of the settlements.

The buildings of the hamlet of Perlezzi have been developed articulating in six neighborhoods (located between 500 m and 600 m a.s.l.) between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as demonstrated by the study of the dated portals of the main doors. The inhabited area is surrounded by terraces, many of which still served by an irrigation system consisting of an open-air channel whose grip at the Calandrino stream is located at 1035 m a.s.l., in the proximity of Moglia delle Artue wetland. This is an area currently composed of common lands characterized by a considerable concentration of grasslands and wetlands (locally called 'mogle'<sup>51</sup>) and in the northern part by large beech woodlands. Some parts of these fractional assets are still used both for wood and mushroom collection, and for cattle and goat grazing (and grazed by re-wilded horses). During summer the cattle moves in a fenced area managed by the Malga Perlezzi owned by Committee of management of common-lands of Perlezzi, and freely rent to the Consortium of Zootechnical improvement of Perlezzi.

Archival investigation allowed to reconstruct a long series of conflicts and disputes alternated by agreements along the 18<sup>th</sup> century (and, in particular, between 1702-1755) between the hamlets («ville» in the archival documentation) of Caroso, Caregli, Perlezzi and Prato,

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<sup>50</sup> Stagno, *Archeologia rurale* cit.; A.M. Stagno, *Paesaggi e pratiche della castanicoltura irrigua dell'Alta Valle Sturla" (Borzonasca, GE)*, Dossier inedito per la candidatura a patrimonio immateriale dell'umanità Unesco 2010; Stagno, *Gli spazi dell'archeologia rurale* cit., pp. 93-141.

<sup>51</sup> Those wetlands were studied in the framework of a project focused on wetlands as cultural evidence (AAVV, *Studio di fattibilità* cit.).

which in that period were part of the Capitanato di Chiavari, under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Genoa. The conflicts were related to the access right to water resources<sup>52</sup>. In fact, the aqueduct of Perlezzi shares the same stream with that of the hamlets of Caroso and Caregli, and, in that period, also with the common lands undivided between the various hamlets. This situation has led to many controversies over the use and ownership of the lands in which the aqueducts originated. As a consequence, towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and during the 18<sup>th</sup> c., there were a series of interventions by the Republic of Genoa, which left some very interesting archival documentation. In particular, a map produced in the 1752 by Domenico Carbonara, engineer and cartographer sent by the Republic of Genoa to draw a map of the claims of the different «ville». In the map he drew in the October 1752, all the uses were accurately described through the attestation of the «indicanti di Perlezzi, Caroso e Careggi», which, through those description, referred in particular to the attribution of placename, grazing activities and the meadow cultivation, testified the ownership of the common lands<sup>53</sup>. Fieldwork investigation (archaeological and historical ecology surveys, botanical relevés, archaeobotanical analyses, observation of applied geology and hydrology) crossed with the analyses of cartographic

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<sup>52</sup> Archival documentation related to these conflicts is preserved at ASGe, *Atti del Senato, Lettere e Copia Lettere*, Sala Senarega, 972, 1001, 3216, 3218, 3224.).

<sup>53</sup> A long report presented to the Senate by the «Commissarij Sindicatori of the Riviera di Levante» traces, on the basis of notarial acts, the sequence of sales the 'pieces of land' used as meadows that took place between 1573 and 1695. In addition these documentations provide the first attestation for the aqueducts (Caroso in 1687, Caregli in 1688 and Perlezzi in 1702). In the case of Caroso and Caregli, the first attestation refers to the agreeemens acts («*strumenti di convegno*») stipulated between the different partnerships at the time of the realization of the aqueduct commissioned (with another agreement) to a master bricklayer. In the case of Perlezzi, the first attestation relates to a dispute.

documentation allowed to reconstruct and to date the environmental context and the transformation of the common-lands, of the irrigated space and of the irrigation of system (Fig. 4)<sup>54</sup>.

In this way it was possible to relate the 18<sup>th</sup>-century conflicts, which lead to the division of the common-lands between different hamlets, to the expansion of the terraced systems in Perlezzi and in Caroso, that took place right during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, it was clear that the expansion of the irrigated terraced system was also strictly related to the expansion of local cattle breeding, and a change in the organisation of the husbandry system: previous sheds located in common-lands (where cattle stayed during summer night) were abandoned at the half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c., while sheds with superposed hay-barn, locally called ‘*ca-soni*’, progressively spread at the top of terraces, built in groups of different owners. There, during summer, cattle came back every night. This transformation could be explained with the increased need of manure to fertilize terraces.

It is interesting to note that, even if with this transformation the common lands were reduced in extension and changed the organisation related to their use, the increase of irrigated and terraced areas reinforced the shared use of resources, with particular reference to the shared use of water and paths.

In this sense, the irrigation network establishes a really evident relationship between the lands subject to common rights (once ‘*comunaglie*’, nowadays ‘*beni frazionali*’) in the upper part of the Valley, where the aqueducts originate, and the irrigated terraces further down. In the common lands there are signs of the previous irrigated meadow-pasture system and associated sites of temporary agriculture, as documented in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the present, in the common

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<sup>54</sup>The cartographic series concerns the maps of the Corpo di Stato Maggiore Sardo, *tavolette manoscritte* and *Gran Carta*, (1816-1852) sheets of the Istituto Geografico Militare (1866-1937).

lands of Perlezzi, Zanoni and more recently Vallepiana hamlets, the cattle summer grazing is still active; in winter cattle is fed also with hay produced by the mowing of chestnut terraces.

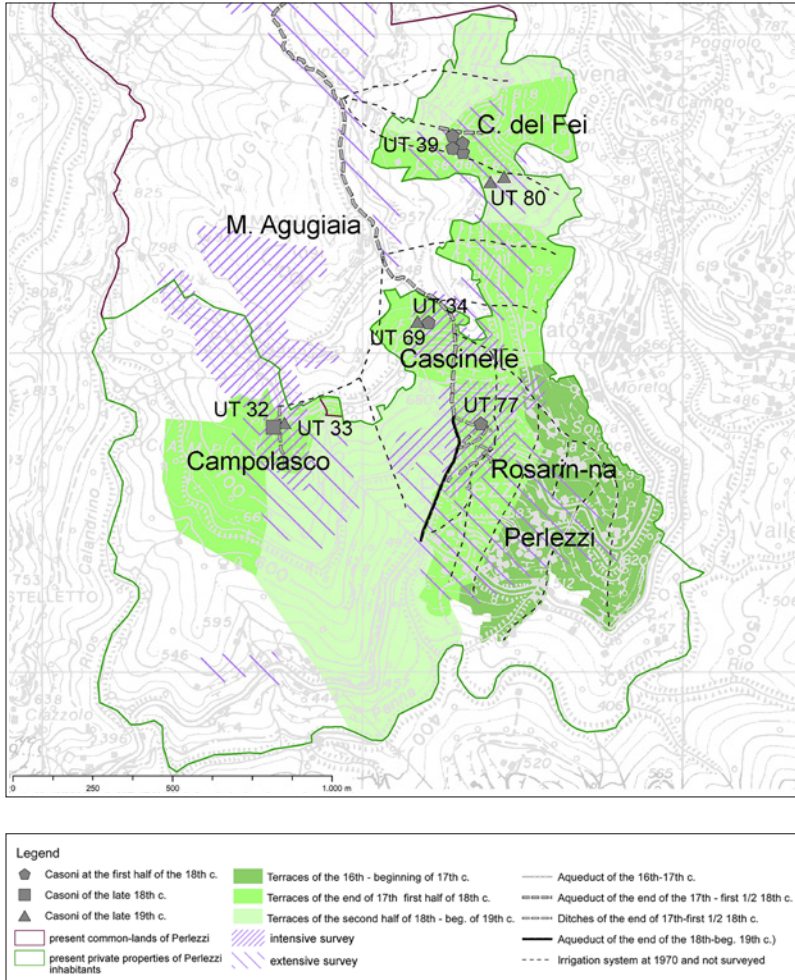
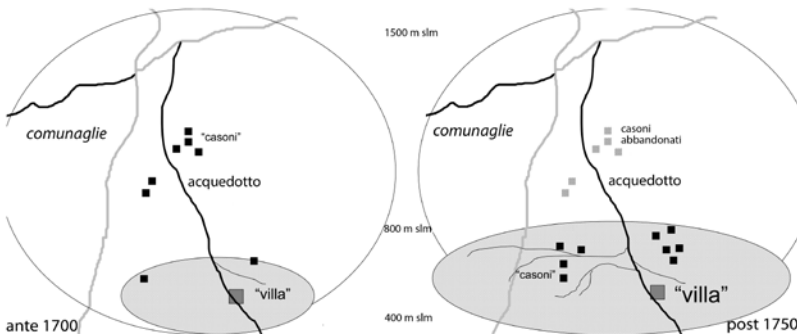


Fig. 4 Chronology of the transformation of the terraced area of Perlezzi and Sketch of transformation of the irrigated system, the extension of commonlands and of the location of ‘casoni’ during the 18<sup>th</sup> c. (from Stagno, *Gli spazi dell’Archeologia rurale* cit., figg. 3.49, p. 126 and 3.52, p. 130)



### 3.4 Irrigated terraced chestnut groves: continuity and discontinuities, risks and possibilities

The existence of the irrigation practices (of chestnut as well as vegetable gardens) has played a key role in preserving the management of these areas increasingly subject to abandonment of slopes and hamlets. The need for continuous maintenance of both the irrigation network and the breeding system allowed the conservation of the historical cultural landscape connected to these practices. On the contrary, the abandonment of these areas due to the population aging, the difficulties of manual processes and infrastructure deficiencies, entails not only the loss of historical information, but also a hydrogeological instability, dangerous for the inhabitants<sup>55</sup>. In fact, these terraced areas, in absence of maintenance, would be subject to very substantial landslides and erosion, as it is already happening in many areas of Liguria. The abandoning of the chestnut groves leads to their transformation into mixed woods, losing their historical characteristics. In this context, the policies adopted in protected areas can be counterproductive when aimed solely at protecting vegetation and not these typical characteristics of the landscape. The maintenance of the terraces could also be supported through specific measures in the regional rural development plan.

<sup>55</sup> Stagno, *Paesaggi e pratiche della castanicoltura* cit.

A critical factor in the last decade was the invasion of the chestnut gall wasp, which threatened to jeopardize all the Ligurian chestnut trees. The Liguria Region government implemented contrasting measures which, even if not so decisive, helped to maintain the cultivations.

As already mentioned, the viability of the discussed practices and landscapes related to irrigated sweet-chestnut groves depends by local actors, joined together through Rural Consortia, Committee of Fractional Assest management and agricultural cooperatives (particularly Il Castagno s.c.a.r.l.). These micro-institutions are able to access to funding (often linked to the Rural Development Plan) for the restoration and maintenance of infrastructures related to the element (in particular the irrigation system). However, the added value connected to the practices of irrigated chestnut cultivation and horticulture is not recognized as a factor that contributes to the pricing of the products, or as an element to be protected through the support of the local authorities.

The Cooperative Il Castagno s.c.a.r.l., that meets 45 producers of chestnuts from Sturla, Aveto and Graveglia Valleys, has long been engaged in the improvement of the 'Borzonasca chestnut' with the sale of chestnut flour and dried chestnuts. Resellers distribute its products in the Genoa Province (Chiavari, Rezzoaglio and La Spezia). In past years, The Cooperative Il Castagno attempted to obtain certification of the brand «*Castagna di Borzonasca*» and gain recognition as a PDO, both attempts failed due to lack of involvement of local authorities (the bureaucratic aspect was too difficult for the cooperative). Ten years ago, the cooperative put into operation a water mill which allows the grinding of chestnuts with traditional methods. Moreover, the Cooperative is part of the organic and biodynamic producers of the association «*Liguria Biologica*»; in 2006, this association – in accordance with the Cooperative – has created a demonstration project related to sweet chestnut irrigation, using as example the Caroso irrigated sweet chestnut orchard (production capacity, promotion and enhancement of the process chain using the method of 'organic farming' for the year 2005-2006 funded by the European Union under EC Reg n.1257/1999

Measure c (3) - sub-3.3, EU, Regione Liguria). This chestnut orchard is visited every year by schools of the Province of Genoa (up to 400 visitors a year).

The same Cooperative, after a few experiments, is now engaged in the construction of a social chestnut drying room (*'essiccatoio'*) that will allow to dry the chestnuts in a collective place saving time and energy (the use of the chestnut drying room requires a lot of chestnuts that a single producer is not always able to provide). The creation of a chestnut drying room would be a social element that provides the ability to maintain production even in small chestnut orchards, as in many cases happened in Sturla Valley. Moreover, the existence of these structures keeps alive the entire production process related to the chestnut.

In addition, the Mountain Community Aveto Graveglia Sturla (now closed) and the Aveto Park have been funding local communities for the maintenance of irrigation systems and their open channels.

At the present, the continuity of the collective management of common goods risks being undermined by the privatizing of aqueducts, to which the inhabitants of Perlezzi are absolutely opposed. In some cases, open pipes made of stone have been abandoned in favour of underground polyethylene pipes, more practical and efficient. So, while remaining the shared use of water, that threatens to make disappear the heritage of centuries-old traditions and practices connected to artefacts. In this area in fact, these historical 'monuments' are exceptionally well preserved, thanks to the continuity of use. At least, there are the initiatives undertaken by individual farmers thanks to the contributions of European funds of the Rural Development Plan. Other threats to the landscape are indicated in the Territorial Coordination Plan of the Province of Genoa and consist in the presence of infrastructures of great environmental impact for the artificial lake of Giacopiane, even though the water system in its 18<sup>th</sup>-century form and under collective management has survived the environmental transformations caused by the construction of the artificial lake in the 1920s.

## 4. Conclusion and reflection for the future

The two landscapes presented in this contribution, proposed in different variations, share the same territory and the same problems. These landscapes conserve a high historical and environmental density that have seen a decline starting from the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the abandonment by the population. These vulnerabilities are also common to Ligurian Apennines, generally affected by depopulation and the aging of the population, which leads to a gradual abandoning of cultivations, lack of maintenance of the terraces and a decrease in the number of farm animals and the low profitability of farming, including higher-value products (such as the Borzonasca chestnut). For these problems, the Rural Development Plan includes specific axes of financing, but they are often difficult to access because of the complicated bureaucratic procedures.

Despite this, still today, an agriculture often no longer professional but familiar, persists and allows the conservation of large cultivated spaces and the transmission of knowledge to the new generations, which recognize in these practices a cultural and identity value.

The Italian law recognizes the importance of the historical practices that lead to cultural landscapes. However, this does not materialise into incentives or tax relief for those who keep such practices, especially when are not so visible, like those described in this paper.

Agricultural policies, in particular the Rural Development Plans (RDP) of the last few years have partially encouraged some people to stay or return in these areas to start new production activities, even if in some cases unrelated to tradition. But if until a few years ago the main problem was that of not being able to organize a promotional network, today there is a flourishing of groups, such as the Slow Food Community of the Fontanabuona Valley, the community of «*Produttori di nocciola delle Valli del Tigullio*», the *Consorzio Ospitalità Diffusa* «*Una montagna di accoglienza*» (helped by local institution as Natural parks or cultural associations and museums), who organize themselves



to promote their productions and, through them, their territory. By the point of view of the promotion of local products the most active institution are the Aveto Regional Natural Park and the Municipality of Borzonasca, which every year, in collaboration with the Borzonasca Pro Loco, organises, since 2003 the important event «Agricastà», totally focused on chestnuts. In this context an action which could be better exploited is the «*Strada del Castagno*» (Chestnut route) (Regional Law 13/2007), promoted by the Local Development Agency GAL Valli Genovesi through Genoese Valleys (including Sturla and Graveglia Valleys) with the aim to discover the chestnut tree world, now managed by the homonymous Association.

Numerous difficulties remain which these organized groups underline discussing about them with the local administrations, including the Liguria Region, and which concern the orientation of the funds provided for by the RDP, with the request for the identification of measures adequate to the different realities that can be recognized. It is necessary to be clear that local producers, through practices related to the maintenance of agriculture, are the promoters of the protection and conservation of a rural and environmental heritage of great value, decidedly interesting from a touristic point of view.

As already underlined, although Italian legislation recognizes the importance of historical practices that lead to the formation of these landscapes, there is still a lack of actions to help those who, with effort, whether professional farmer or not, maintain these practices, through incentive: *e.g.*, RDP measures aimed at the conservation of historical agricultural practices, funds intended for culture, plans for the protection of biodiversity, funding and participation in tourism or gastro-nomic promotion events, or tax relief. In particular RDP would have the possibility also to provide special funding axes related to the preservation of historic agricultural practices and their cultural landscapes, in accordance with guidelines of the Common Agricultural Policy, the European Landscape Convention and the FARO convention.

The advanced age of those who carry out these practices in the area could be mitigated by the presence in Fontanabuona Valley of one public secondary educational institution related to agricultural and local food B. Marsano, present since more than twenty years which could guarantee the formation of new generations prepared to develop initiatives that put together production following the historical conservation practices of the biodiversity of cultivars, rethinking traditional dishes in an innovative way.

It should also be noted that in this part of the Apennine mountain the internet connection is not still appropriate, a factor which increase the problems of producers, who meet more difficulties to quickly place their products in the market. It is desirable that local administrations take the opportunity of PNRR funds aimed at improving the IT infrastructure network.

The research and the different projects conducted by LASA in the Tigullio highlighted how, in the recent past, the different local administrations had operated in a different and separate way with very different results. In some areas, attention to agricultural production has been translated into weekly markets, actions aimed at enhancing local productions also by encouraging the establishment of Pro Loco.

Elsewhere, in areas where the presence of industries was stronger, only after the crisis of the valley companies, and thanks to the initiatives of producers and operators in tourist reception, an organized system began to exist. It is from these positive experiences that it is necessary to start, in order to show also to those administrators less sensitive to the rural and environmental issues that the prospects that the Apennine mountains offer are relevant and that innovative and absolutely sustainable economies in environmental terms could start.

**The mathematician and the beans.  
Food productions, map production and the struggle  
for water in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Val Bisagno  
(Genova, Italy)**  
*Nicola Gabellieri, Daniele Tinterri\**

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to assess possibilities and limits of geo-historical sources in the reconstruction of local food production systems of the past. For this purpose, we start from some resource conflicts related to the possession of water, originated by the construction of the Genoese aqueduct in the Bisagno Valley (Genoa, Italy) during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as they are registered in cartographical and documentary sources kept in local archives. Thereby, we want to underline the fundamental importance of geo-historical research in describing the evolution of food production in local contexts. In fact, in recent times great attention has been devoted to historical aspects of agricultural or rural production in our country, inducing as a consequence a relevant demand for historical analysis<sup>1</sup>. Nonetheless, the studies originating from this wide

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<sup>1</sup> A wide debate has taken place in Italy in the last years about the possibility of defining features of historical environments and agro-silvo-pastoral productions through the application of concepts issued from studies of historical geography and ecology. Among others, see M. Agnoletti (ed.), *Paesaggi rurali storici. Per*

demand lack frequently the necessary in-depth and critical analysis of historical sources and, in many cases, they even completely disregard a diachronical approach, which is on the contrary unavoidable when tracing an analysis of a food production system.

In the following pages, we will trace an overview of the local food production systems as they can be depicted in the Bisagno Valley by means of the documents of the *Padri del Comune*, *i.e.* through the historical sources occasioned by the conflicts for the control of the water supply. Bisagno is one of the two main rivers of the Genoese region (Fig. 1). Its drainage basin, the Bisagno Valley, measures approximately 92 km<sup>2</sup> and cuts transversally the Apennine hills, encircling the historic centre of Genoa to the East side and flowing into the Ligurian Sea in the locality named '*la Foce*'.

On the one hand, this case study allows us to meditate on the possibilities of geo-historical analysis of the sources of conflict to investigate local production systems; on the other, it gives us some insights into the relationships between rural practices and local water management systems, which can be very conflictual as well.

The methodological background for the present research can be traced back to different studies carried out in Liguria to identify individual landscape biographies, as well as for the historical characterisation

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*un catalogo nazionale*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2010; R. Cevasco, *Sulla "rugosità" del paesaggio*, in «Études de lettres», 1-2 (2013), pp. 323-344; M. Quaini, *A proposito di «storia scippata». Una storia applicata ad ambiente, territorio, paesaggio?*, in «Quaderni storici», 159, 3 (2018), pp. 821-836; V. Ferrario, A. Turato, *Quali politiche per i paesaggi rurali storici in Italia? Riflessioni su alcune recenti iniziative pubbliche, attraverso l'esame di due casi studio*, in «Ri-Vista. Research for landscape architecture», 17, 2 (2019), pp. 78-93; D. Moreno, *Storia ambientale applicata. L'archeologia delle risorse ambientali e l'ecologia storica dei siti*, in «Quaderni storici», 167, 2 (2020), pp. 281-310; N. Gabellieri, A. Gallia, *Patrimonializzazione di vigneti "storici" ed "eroici": riflessioni di geografia storica a margine di un decreto ministeriale*, in «Geostorie», 30, 1-2 (2022), pp. 23-44.

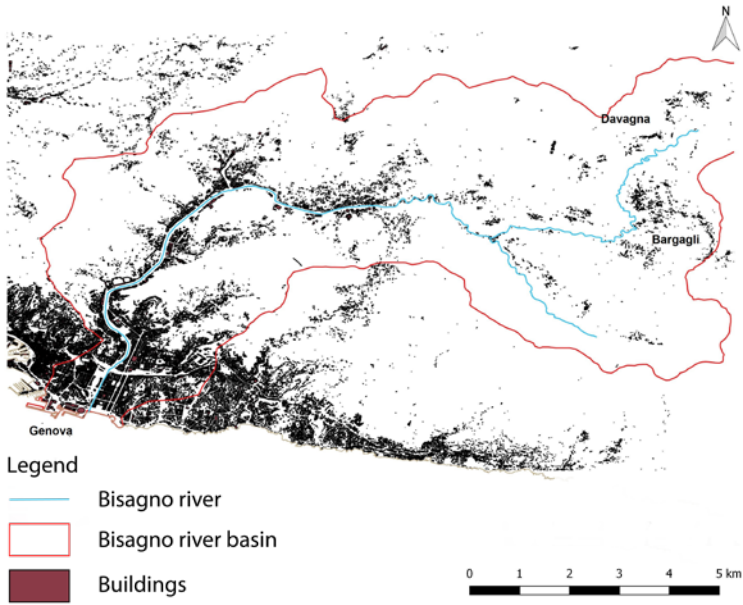


Fig. 1 Bisagno valley, with the indication of the Bisagno river, the hydrographical basin and the built-up areas. The urban plans have been extracted from the *Carta Tecnica Regionale* issued in 2007 by the Regione Liguria

of local productions<sup>2</sup>. The aim of the theoretical and methodological approach of these researches is to read anew, through a regressive approach, the material landscapes as they can be considered in all their complexity

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<sup>2</sup> To mention some examples of local scale research applied to specific Ligurian environments, see R. Cevasco (ed.), *La natura della montagna*, Oltre Edizioni, Sestri Levante 2013, pp. 476-485; N. Gabellieri, V. Pescini (eds.), *Biografia di un paesaggio rurale. Storia, geografia e archeologia ambientale per la riqualificazione di Case Lovara (promontorio del Mesco – La Spezia)*, Oltre Edizioni, Sestri Levante 2015; D. Moreno, M. Quaini, C. Traldi (eds.), *Dal parco “letterario” al parco produttivo. L’eredità culturale di Francesco Biamonti*, Oltre Edizioni, Sestri Levante 2016; for its approach to European landscape biography, see J. Kolen, H. Renes, R. Hermans (eds.), *Landscape biographies. Geographical, historical and archaeological perspectives on the production and transmission of landscapes*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2015.

and stratification, and to interpret their social and environmental developments, *i.e.* the processes leading to their definition and characterization. This approach is intended to abandon the traditional opposition between society and environment through the investigation of production systems and local practices that exploit environmental resources over time and thereby forge specific territories and landscapes<sup>3</sup>.

This work is based on documentary sources which need an accurate critical analysis. This analysis must take into account the context and the motivations presiding the document production and it must clarify both the possibilities and the limits of the sources at our disposal. In methodological terms, giving preference to a local point of view allows a more accurate identification of social players, as well as of local activities and knowledge, *i.e.* the elements which have influenced and, consequently, contributed to define the local environment<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, it should be observed that the documents are frequently produced as a consequence of jurisdictional and economical conflicts, *i.e.* when the struggle for power or resources makes it necessary for some social player to obtain recognition of the legitimacy of his territorial control<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> D. Moreno *et al.*, *L'approccio storico-archeologico alla copertura vegetale: il contributo dell'archeologia ambientale e dell'ecologia storica*, in G. Caneva (ed.), *La biologia vegetale per i beni culturali*, vol. II, Nardini Editore, Firenze 2005; D. Moreno, C. Montanari, "Más allá de la percepción": *hacia una ecología histórica del paisaje rural en Italia*, in «Cuadernos geográficos», 48 (2008), pp. 29-49.

<sup>4</sup> Raggio O., *Immagini e verità. Pratiche sociali, fatti giuridici e tecniche cartografiche*, in «Quaderni storici», 108, 3 (2001), pp. 843-865; R. Balzaretti, M. Pearce, C. Watkins, *Ligurian landscapes: microhistory and environmental history*, in Balzaretti R., Pearce M., Watkins C. (eds), *Liguria Landscapes. Studies in archaeology, geography and history*, Accordia Research Institute, University of London, London 2004, pp. 1-6.

<sup>5</sup> For the concept of 'transcription' and for the pragmatic objective of the written source, see R. Cevasco, V. Tigrino, *Lo spazio geografico: una discussione tra storia politicosociale ed ecologia storica*, in «Quaderni storici», 127, 1 (2008), pp. 207-242; A. Ingold, *Naming and mapping national resources in Italy (19th century)*:

This aspect can be explained also by considering the peculiar political organization of the Republic of Genoa during the Modern Age. Actually, the statal bureaucracy of Genoa lacks monitoring tools by which a constant control and management of the territories under the Genoese jurisdiction could be effectively enforced<sup>6</sup>. In our specific case, the documents taken into account can be regarded as useful tools for imposing territorial control and power<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, the first paragraph depicts the context in which the documental sources at our disposal were produced, *i.e.* the archive of the *Padri del Comune* of the Republic of Genoa. These documents were issued as a consequence of the conflicts arousing in relation to the water management of the public aqueduct in Genoa. The second paragraph intends to show how these sources can be used to describe the 18<sup>th</sup> century local food production.

'Foodscapes', *i.e.* the landscapes identified or conditioned in their materiality and perception by food production, distribution and consump-

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*proposition for a history of categorizing "natural resources"*, in M. Armiero M. (ed.), *Views from the South. Environmental Stories from the Mediterranean World (19th-20th centuries)*, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Istituto di studi sulla Società del Mediterraneo, Napoli 2006, pp. 51-65; A. Ingold, *Écrire la nature. De l'histoire sociale à la question environnementale*, in «Annales», 66, 1 (2011), pp. 11-29, particularly pp. 23-24.

<sup>6</sup> In this respect, the Genoa case can be distinguished from other Italian states, which are developing monitoring and governance tools during this very period. See for example A. Guarducci, *L'utopia del catasto nella Toscana di Pietro Leopoldo: la questione dell'estimo geometrico-particellare nella seconda metà del Settecento*, All'Insegna del Giglio, Borgo San Lorenzo 2009.

<sup>7</sup> D. Turnbull, *Cartography and Science in Early Modern Europe: Mapping the Construction of Knowledge Spaces*, in «Imago Mundi», 45 (1996), pp. 5-24; M. Quaini, *Cartographic Activities in the Republic of Genoa, Corsica, and Sardinia during the Renaissance*, in D. Woodward (ed.), *The History of Cartography*, Vol. III, *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2007, pp. 854-873.

tion both in rural and urban areas, have been frequently studied by scholars in geography in the last years<sup>8</sup>. On the contrary, studies devoted to analyzing territories dedicated to food production in past centuries have been lacking. The great tradition of studies in the fields of history and historical geography related to agriculture has been widely disregarded.

Nonetheless, even the studies that show a lack of interest in the diachronical approach have been obliged to ascertain that food production has always conditioned and has in its turn been conditioned by local resources and by the relationship of local communities with them<sup>9</sup>. These relations can be influenced, both nowadays and in the past centuries, by forms of land possessions, availability of and access to environmental resources, local and long-distance patterns of distribution. The relations between urban and rural areas also need to be re-considered, because the role of the latter have been too often dismissed as simple suppliers of the former. According to Carlo Cattaneo, «la città formò col suo territorio un corpo inseparabile»<sup>10</sup>. Such interpretation has been adopted by many scholars in order to understand the production relationships between cities and countrysides in Ancient and Modern times, and the rural production systems related to the fulfillment of urban needs<sup>11</sup>. It has often been stated that rural areas have

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<sup>8</sup> V.J. Del Casino, *Social geography I: Food*, in «Progress in Human Geography», 39, 6 (2014), pp. 800-808; T. Sedelmeier, O. Kuhne, C. Jenal, *Foodscapes*, Springer, Wiesbaden 2022.

<sup>9</sup> M. Roe, *Editorial: food and landscape*, in «Landscape Research», 41, 7 (2016), pp. 709-713.

<sup>10</sup> C. Cattaneo, *La città considerata come principio ideale delle storie italiane*, Vallecchi, Firenze 1931, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> Sereni E., *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1961; L. Gambi, *Le «regioni» italiane come problema storico*, in «Quaderni storici», 34, 1 (1977), pp. 275-298; C. Visentin, *Le relazioni città-campagna nella Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano di Emilio Sereni*, in M. Quaini (ed.), *Paesaggi Agrari*, Silvana Editoriale, Cinisello Balsamo 2012, pp. 85-95.



adapted their structure in order to comply more efficiently with the needs of urban centres. On the contrary, the present case study allows us to detect highly conflictual relationships with reference to resource management and territorial control on the part of urban magistrates.

Rural practices are thus considered, on the one hand, as a result of the historical and environmental context in which they are situated; on the other, for their direct contribution to the formation of the historical landscape itself. Given that we can consider such a one-to-one correspondence as a postulate of this kind of research, the scholar considering these issues cannot limit his investigation of historical rural practices exclusively to the issue of food production. This aspect presents actually tight connections with many other themes, such as water management, struggles for resources, landscape evolution, land ownership and the role of the city center in the shape of the countryside. Some of these themes constitute the subject of the last paragraph of this article.

## **2. The *Padri del Comune* and the conflicts around the aqueduct**

From the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Bisagno river has been acting as the most important water source for the town of Genoa, both by catching underground water and by channelling superficial water from the river. The first building of the aqueduct, involving a water supply point on the left bank of the river near the settlement of Staglieno, is dated back to 1295. The channel, approximately 30 cm wide, ran with a slight gradient down to the neighbourhood of Castelletto, before reaching the ancient harbour of the town (Fig. 2).

As the town population grew, the historical aqueduct was progressively extended, in order to reach for more distant water<sup>12</sup>. In 1355 the aqueduct

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<sup>12</sup> G. Temporelli, N. Cassinelli, *Gli acquedotti genovesi*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2007, p. 19.

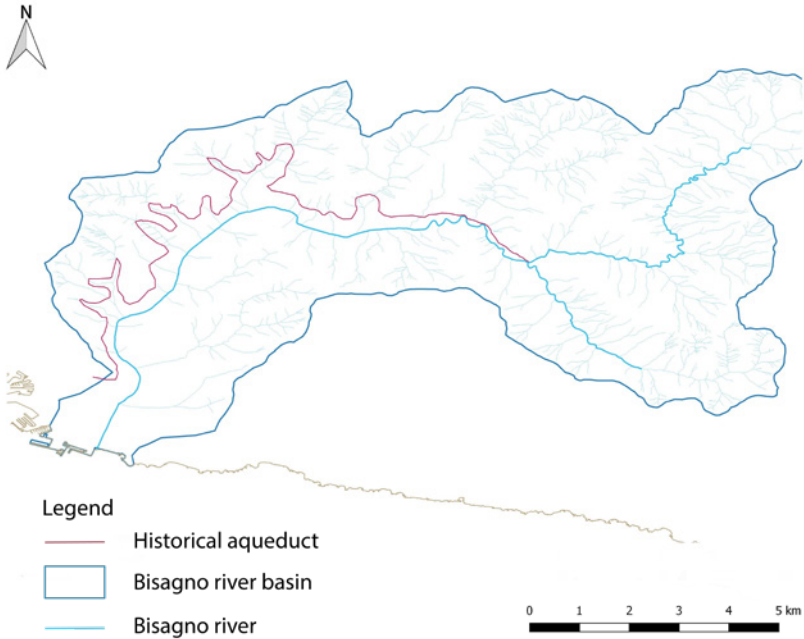


Fig. 2: Bisagno valley, with the indication of the river stream, the hydrographical basin and the itinerary of the ancient aqueduct

was extended in the Bisagno Valley up to Trensasco and, in 1622, up to Cavassolo; in the city, the aqueduct water flow was constantly increased, the infrastructure restored and increased in height. As a testimony of the aqueduct itinerary, many architectural elements still stand nowadays, such as channel, arches and public washhouses. Local toponymy still records the presence of the aqueduct<sup>13</sup>. By 1639 the last section was concluded, reaching Schiena d'Asino, near the locality today called La Presa, where the Bisagno river originates from the confluence of the Bargaglino and Lentro rivers<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> P. Stringa, *La strada dell'acqua. L'acquedotto storico di Genova, tecniche ed architettura*, Sagep, Genova 1980.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of the building phases and the renovations of the aqueduct, based on a vast documentary analysis, see C. Guastoni,

The water was extracted from the river until 1917, when it was finally declared unsuitable for human consumption. Therefore, water supplies began to be obtained beyond the Appennine watershed<sup>15</sup>. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the management and maintenance of the aqueduct were entrusted to the *Padri del Comune*. This magistracy, possessing jurisdictional prerogatives, had been instituted during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was destined to the harbour management; successively, many other tasks were entrusted to it, such as sewerage surveillance, street cleaning, supervision on doctors and pharmacists and the maintenance of street furnitures, city walls and water supplies. Financially independent, the magistracy derived relevant incomes from fines inflicted to people infringing its regulations and from the aqueduct charges, which were reinvested in important public infrastructures.

The archive of the *Padri del Comune*, which includes documents spanning from 1412 to 1814, has been partially conferred to the Historical Archive of the Municipality of Genova. Documents related to the aqueduct maintenance are numerous and they include account books, inspection reports and correspondence about trials, decisions and regulations, as well as projects for infrastructures such as bridges, canalizations and water supply points, furnished with drawings, plans and cartography.

The water grabbing by the city of Genoa, regardless of the needs of the hinterland, has not gone without conflicts and oppositions. The aqueduct building, with special regard to the last sections until Cavassolo (concluded in 1622) and Schiena d'Asino (concluded by 1639), aroused numerous conflicts in relation to water control and to the plots of land where the aqueduct was built. Already on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1631, the owners of the thirty-two mills located in the Valley were received by the *Collegio dei Padri del Comune*

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*L'acquedotto civico di Genova: un percorso al futuro*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2004, especially pp. 23-56.

<sup>15</sup> R. Rosso, *Bisagno. Il fiume nascosto*, Marsilio, Venezia 2014, p. 70.

to discuss about water distribution<sup>16</sup>; the following year, they wrote to the *Collegio* in order to ask for the «rifacimento al danno patito e che tuttavia pattuiscono per esser stati privati dell'acqua, che fu entrodotta nel nuovo acquedotto di Cavassolo»<sup>17</sup>. The *Collegio* accepted their requests and accorded a compensation to the mill owners; on June, 3<sup>rd</sup> the *Deputato all'acquedotto* reached the aqueduct section, making a list of the 32 mills and of their respective owners and drafting an esteem of damages and of the subsequent compensations<sup>18</sup>. Lawsuits on these compensations ensued for years and we find petitions issued by the heirs of some of these owners still in 1642<sup>19</sup>. But, which is even more important, after this case the *Deputati* began to visit and inspect periodically the aqueduct section in order to draft damage esteems, to plan cleaning and upkeep operations and to control the respect of regulations on the part of the valley inhabitants. Inspection reports contain the list of the observations made, ordered by reference to the localization near the canalization. For instance, «servendo à l'illustrissimo magistrato la visita del pubblico acquedotto cominciando dalla presa di Schiena d'Asino e continuando fino al Luogo di Pino», in 1683 the *Deputato* inspects the water point on the stream, after its partial destruction, lists the bridges in need of maintenance and plans the covering of some aqueduct sections which are particularly exposed to landslides from the hill slopes<sup>20</sup>. Once the construction of the aque-

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<sup>16</sup> Archivio Storico del Comune di Genova [Historical Archive of Genoa Municipality] (ASCG), B. 365 Mugnai del Bisagno (1640-1710), Nota del Collegio dei Padri del Comune, 20 maggio 1631.

<sup>17</sup> «The compensation for the damages that they have suffered and are still suffering because of the lack of water, which has been diverted into the new aqueduct of Cavassolo». ASCG, B. 365 Mugnai del Bisagno (1640-1710), Decisione del Collegio dei Padri del Comune, 25 giugno 1632.

<sup>18</sup> ASCG, B. 365 Mugnai del Bisagno (1640-1710), Visita fatta dall'Illustrissimo Magistrato Gaspare Francone, il 3 giugno 1632.

<sup>19</sup> ASCG, B. 365 Mugnai del Bisagno (1640-1710), Lettera di Giulia Baghino, 1642.

<sup>20</sup> ASCG, B. 365 Mugnai del Bisagno (1640-1710), Relazione del 1683; 7 maggio, visita all'acquedotto e lavori da farsi di Giovanni Battista Costanzi.

duct was concluded, the infrastructure was divided in 12 areas, called «*cure*», to be entrusted to 12 local prominent men for surveillance, custody, cleaning and reparation of little damages. Those encharged must have not carried out their duties properly, given that in 1722, when Bartolomeo Lomellini concluded his office as *Deputato all'acquedotto*, he wrote:

Siccome i dodeci custodi, che sono da vostra signoria illustrissima eletti per tener netto e purgato tutto il giro dell'acquedotto [...] senza vedersene un minimo profitto, mentre passano gli anni senza che facciano alcuna denuncia de disordini et inconvenienti, che si commettono al detto acquedotto, anzi se in occasione di qualche pioggia occorre tenerlo netto, e purgato da quelle materie, che si sono introdotte, in vece di compire all'obbligo, per cui sono precisamente eletti, si fanno le spese di tali dispacci con denari della loro casa, e riesce in tal forma quasi inutile la loro cura, perché non concepiscono alla loro obbligazione<sup>21</sup>.

Be this statement true or not, it is a fact that from the third decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century inspections by the *Deputati* become more and more frequent. Three are the major problems they have to face: aqueduct reparations, tree cutting and water unlawful appropriations.

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<sup>21</sup> «Given that the twelve watchpersons, which have been chosen by your Excellency to keep neat and clean the aqueduct in all its length [...] without any actual effect up until now, while years pass by with continuous complaints against disorders and inconveniences, which are perpetrated against this aqueduct. On the contrary, when it is necessary, because of the rains, to keep it clean and free from debris which are introduced in it, instead of fulfilling the duty for which they have been chosen, these persons keep spending money from their house for messages and communications, and thereby their job appears to be completely useless, because they don't fulfill their obligations». ASCG, B. 137 Relazione sopra il dispaccio et altri lavori da farsi al pubblico acquedotto, 1721, Relazione dell'Illustrissimo sig. Ansaldo Grimaldo dep. al pubblico acquedotto circa i lavori da farsi.

The reparations of the idraulic structures were frequently made necessary by the progressive decay of the building materials (such as wood, for example) or by the frequent landslides that obstructed the open-air canals. We may cite a peculiar case, that of the inspection made by Ansaldo Grimaldo in 1721 on the damaged bridge of Tassara. In his report to the *deputato*, he states:

si è trovato che un tale pregiudizio è determinato dalla coltura fatta nella parte superiore del detto acquedotto, essendovi stato lavorato, poste vigne, alberi e piantate mascere contigue non solo alla maschetta, ma etiamdio sopra delle medesime [...] suddetto acquedotto non sarebbe stato pregiudicato, se si fosse dalli vicini abitanti lasciato il sito, tanto superiore, come inferiore, senza coltura, come prescrivono le leggi [...] mentre, quando fu fabbricato suddetto acquedotto, tali siti erano del tutto gerbidi, et presentemente essendosi questi lavorati, si è smossa la terra<sup>22</sup>.

Attached to the report, a topographical sketch in colours shows the bridge encircled by the unlawful cultivations (Fig. 3).

Following this report, the *Collegio* ordered to all the responsible landowners to pay for the restoration of the aqueduct and to remove «*tutti gli alberi, vigne, ed altri impedimenti*»<sup>23</sup>. The proximity of trees to

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<sup>22</sup> «I found out that this problem has been determined by cultivations made in the superior part of the aqueduct, because works have been made, vineyards have been implanted, as well as trees and terraces have been built near the canals, even on top of them [...] this aqueduct wouldn't have been damaged, had the nearby inhabitants kept the site, both in the superior and inferior section, without cultivations, as the law prescribes [...] on the contrary, when this aqueduct was built, these lands were completely bare. Afterwards, because of cultivations, the earth has been turned over and moved».

<sup>23</sup> «Every tree, vineyard and every other obstacle». ASCG, B. 137, Collegio dei Padri del Comune, Letta della relazione dell'Illustrissimo Ansaldo Grimaldo, 30 giugno 1721.



Fig. 3 Illustrative coloured sketch of the Tassara Bridge and nearby cultivations. Source: ASCG, B. 137, Collegio dei Padri del Comune, Letta della relazione dell'Illustrissimo Ansaldo Grimaldo, 30 giugno 1721

the canalizations was perceived as a core problem for the very preservation of the facilities. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 1778 and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1785, the *cancelliere* Giacomo Agostino Ratto found it expedient to issue two different provisions. The object of these provisions was a law issued in 1532, which was recalled to order that

dovessero togliersi, e sradicarli gli Alberi, e Viti, che trovarsi piantati in vicinanza del pubblico Acquedotto, cioè le Pianta de' Fichi, e Gelse, e la Vigna entro la distanza di palmi quindici, e di palmi dieci le altre Pianta di qualunque forte a tenore della Legge dell'Anno 1532 [...] e sradicate tutte le Pianta Salvatiche<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> «Trees and vineyards, which have been planted near the public aqueduct, be removed and eradicated, more specifically fig trees, mulberry trees and

Following these provisions, numerous pleas were presented to the *Collegio dei Padri del Comune*, asking to change a law which «*va a cagione de particolari proprietarij dei fondi adiacenti*»<sup>25</sup>. These pleas were sometimes subscribed, sometimes presented in the anonymous form of a *biglietto da calice*<sup>26</sup>. Even the request presented by Domenico Spinola, who owned one of the villas adjoining the canalizations, was rejected<sup>27</sup>. The *deputato* Giuseppe Durazzo and the *soprastante* Giovanni Storace carried out three inspections between 1785 and 1789, in order to verify that the tree chopping had been executed; in their reports, they give the exact amount of trees cut, as well as their species and owners, divided into *cure*<sup>28</sup>. The years around 1780 proved to be particularly complicated for the magistracies of the Republic, and high in conflicts over the valley

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vineyards at the distance of less than fifteen spans, and other plants of every sort at the distance of less than ten spans, as it is prescribed by the law of the year 1532 [...] and every wild plant be eradicated». ASCG, B. 368, 1585 a 1797 acquedotti e fonti pubblici, Biglietto da Calice, 1786, Supplica sul taglio degli alberi.

<sup>25</sup> «damages the private owners of the plots of land lying near the aqueduct». ASCG, B. 368, 1585 a 1797 acquedotti e fonti pubblici, Biglietto da Calice, 1786, Supplica sul taglio degli alberi.

<sup>26</sup> About the institution of the *biglietti di calice* and of the *lettere orbe*, which consisted in petitions and anonymous complaints addressed to the *Maggiore* or *Minor Consiglio*, the *Padri del Comune* and the *Supremi Sindicatori*, see C. Bitossi, “*La Repubblica è vecchia*”. *Patriziato e governo a Genova nel secondo Settecento*, Istituto Storico Italiano per l’Età Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome, 1995; E. Grendi, *Lettere Orbe. Anonimato e poteri nel Seicento genovese*, Palermo, Gelka, Palermo, 1989.

<sup>27</sup> ASCG, B. 248, Pratiche pubbliche: 17 ottobre 1786, lettera ai Padri del Comune di Stefano Lavagna, in nome dell’Illustrissimo Domenico Spinola.

<sup>28</sup> ASCG, B. 249 – 290 – 1, 28 marzo 1789, Perizia ai danni dell’acquedotto e nota alberi presenti sul pubblico acquedotto B. 248, Pratiche pubbliche: 15 ottobre 1785, Giovanni Storace, Promemoria dell’Illustrissimo Deputato al pubblico acquedotto.



resources. During the summers, water scarcity was becoming customary in the town of Genoa. In 1783, the owners of the town mills wrote to the *Collegio dei Padri del Comune*, complaining about the lack of power due to the scarcity of the water flux along the aqueduct<sup>29</sup>. The following year, the magistrate of the *Padri del Comune* remarks that water is not «*capace a scorrere, ed arrivare alle fontane pubbliche per il bisogno de Poveri, per i quali specialmente è stato fabbricato l'acquedotto*»<sup>30</sup>. We don't know whether the *Collegio dei Padri del Comune* was actually worried about the needs of lower-class people, or if it was more concerned by the fear of losing high incomes derived from selling drinkable water to the ships moored in the harbour; whatever be the case, the *deputato*, the *soprintendente* and the *cavalieri della camera* carried out numerous inspections along the aqueduct.

A 1548 law, dated June 30th, recalled by a provision of 1664, forbade the use of water derived from the Bisagno Valley canalizations for agricultural purposes during the summer months, from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>. Already in 1722, the *deputato* Ansaldo Grimaldo contested to the inhabitants of the valley a «*usurpazione d'acqua più di quella, che portano i bronzini permessi, è stato ricavato avessero fatto un tal abuso generale, oltre ogni lecito*». He therefore ordered to the *cavaliere di camera* to remove the unlawful water points<sup>31</sup>. For a second time, in 1784, «*il magistrato de Padri del Comune, essendosi occupato*

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<sup>29</sup> ASCG, B. 776, Perizia di Gio: Batta: Storace, 1784.

<sup>30</sup> «Capable of flowing, so as to reach the public fountains in order to satisfy the needs of poor people, for whom the aqueduct has been specifically designed». ASCG, B. 368, 1585 a 1797, acquedotti e fonti pubblici, Relazione del magistrato del pubblico acquedotto circa li molini di città, 1784.

<sup>31</sup> «An unlawful appropriation of water, in a quantity superior to the one which is allowed by the water supply points, thereby perpetrating a general abuse, against all law». ASCG, B. 137, Relazione sopra il dispaccio e altri lavori da farsi al pubblico acquedotto: Circa le usurpazioni di acqua e remozione dei bronzini e rebocchi nella cassa del pubblico acquedotto, 19 ottobre 1722, Ansaldo Grimaldo Deputato al pubblico acquedotto.

ad indagare le cagioni per le quali nella stagione d'estate le pubbliche fontane rimangono asciutte [...] ha riconosciuto, che principalmente ciò procede dall'assorbimento ne fanno li Bronzini de Particolari»<sup>32</sup>. To tell the truth, in his report the magistrate simply copies complaints and anonymous *biglietti di calice*, where every actor involved discusses his own opinion about the problem. For instance, an anonymous states that water scarcity is the consequence of the large concessions for drawing water, accorded by the *Padri del Comune* to private owners and millers to gather money for the aqueduct construction and maintenance. The magistrate rejects this accusation, stating that

è falso, che l'acqua resti scemata per causa de Molini, essendo certo che dopo aver servito per essi tutta rientra nell'Acquedotto. Ne è credibile che l'acqua stata concessa a Particolari dopo la fabbrica possa non che superare, ma neppur eguagliare la quantità accresciutasi mediante la nuova fabbrica<sup>33</sup>.

In the following month, the magistrate inspected the aqueduct itinerary in order to analyze the water supply points. «*N. 118 bronzini, chi più,*

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<sup>32</sup> «the magistrate of the *Padri del Comune*, after considering the causes which induce the lack of water in the public fountains during the summer season [...] has come to the conclusion that this scarcity is caused by the water absorption of private water supply points». ASCG, B. 368, 1585 a 1797, acquedotti e fonti pubblici, Relazione del magistrato del pubblico acquedotto circa li molini di città, 1784.

<sup>33</sup> «it is false that the lack of water is due to the mill activity, given that mills return all the water into the aqueduct after use. At the same time, it cannot be stated that the water conceded to private owners exceeds, or even equals, the quantity of water which has been gained through the new structures that have been built». ASCG, B. 368, 1585 a 1797, acquedotti e fonti pubblici, Relazione del magistrato del pubblico acquedotto circa li molini di città, 1784.

*chi meno eccedenti*»<sup>34</sup> are recorded. Moreover, these faucets were situated in the tanks in a position inferior to the one allowed by regulations, thus catching more water at a time. Amidst the water points exceeding the dimensions imposed by regulations, the magistrate enumerates those of the Balbi family, of the mill of the *Ospedale degli Incurabili*, of the *Conservatorio delle Figlie del Rifugio*, as well as those of *Villa Ansaldo*. Given the importance and influence of the persons and institutions listed, the inspection wasn't followed by any direct provision.

In 1784, the abbot Leonardo Ximenes was summoned to Genoa. The well-known Jesuit was, at that date, at the utmost of his reputation. After writing numerous essays in the field of mathematics, hydraulic engineering, geography, astronomy and cartography of Tuscany, he had been in charge of the drainage of the Bientina Lake and the Maremma for the Grand Duke of Tuscany from 1757 to 1770. Moreover, he had taught hydraulic engineering at the University of Florence and he had founded and directed the astronomical observatory of San Giovanni<sup>35</sup>. During the year he spent in Genoa, he compiled three research

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<sup>34</sup> «A number of 118 water supply points, some providing less water, some more».

<sup>35</sup> A vast bibliography is devoted to Leonardo Ximenes (1716-1786) and its activity as mathematician, engineer and astronomer, with particular reference to aspects of territorial management as in the case of land draining and reclaiming in Tuscany. In fact, Ximenes, along with his contemporary Paolo Frisi, can be rightfully listed among those 18<sup>th</sup> century scientists who, at the same time, dedicated themselves to pure research and applied their studies to solving problems on behalf of State governments. His activities in land draining in the Arno Valley and in Maremma are well known to scholars. The same cannot be said for his short Genoese period, which lacks a careful reconstruction. For the biography and the studies of Ximenes, see D. Barsanti, L. Rombai, *Leonardo Ximenes, uno scienziato nella Toscana lorenese del Settecento*, Edizioni Medicea, Firenze 1987; D. Barsanti, L. Rombai (eds), *Scienziati idraulici e territorialisti nella Toscana dei Medici e dei Lorena*, Centro editoriale toscano, Firenze 1994. To consider the results of his reforms based on Enlightenment ideals and how the large scale landscape operations he

studies on behalf of the *Padri del Comune*, dealing with hydrological regulation and circulation management of the Polcevera Valley, expansion and defensive structures in the town port and expansion and renovation of the aqueduct<sup>36</sup>.

After analyzing the aqueduct and its issues, Ximenes compiled a vast report, where numerous studies and projects were presented with the aim of increasing the water flux and its declivity, so as to «somministrare alla Città una portata di acqua doppia, e più che doppia, che non ha goduto nel passato [e garantire] nel godimento continuato, e non mai interrotto dell'acqua»<sup>37</sup>. Besides providing many studies of hydraulic engineering, mathematics and physics, in his report Ximenes spent also a chapter on «fraudolenti dissipazioni delle acquedotti»<sup>38</sup>, where he writes:

Ho udito con mia grave sorpresa, che taluno dei circonvicini abitatori all'Acquidotto si faccia lecito di derivare le sue acque per innaffiare i loro beni, e giardini, e corre una voce costante, che superiormente alla Presa alle acque a Schiena d'Asino vi siano gli Uomini alla Parrocchia di Meco, i quali si fanno lecito di diramare dette Acque

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promoted acted on local customs and practices in Tuscany, see L. Maddaluno, *Forests, Woods, Roads. Agricultural Landscapes as Instruments for the Material Administration of an Eighteenth-Century Tuscan Periphery*, in C. Tazzara, P. Findlen, J. Soll (eds), *Florence after the Medici. Tuscan Enlightenment, 1737-1790*, Routledge, New York 2019, pp. 199-224.

<sup>36</sup> P. Allegrini, *Manifesto ragionato dell'editore sulla nuova raccolta delle perizie ed opuscoli idraulici del Signor Abate Leonardo Ximenes*, Firenze 1785, p. XVII.

<sup>37</sup> «provide the town with the double, or even more the double, of the water flux that it already enjoyed in the past and to ensure a continuous and uninterrupted supply of water». ASCG, B. 738, Ximenes L., *Relazione sull'acquidotto di Genova contenente i suoi difetti, e gli opportuni rimedi per rendere stabile, e sicura l'opera di detto acquidotto*, [1784], art. X.

<sup>38</sup> «unlawful wastes of water».

verso i loro Campi, consumandone così una buona quantità. [...] defraudato nelle sue medesime sorgenti per l'ingordigia biasimevole di pochi villani. [da risolversi con] un articolo, non già d'idraulica, ma di pubblica polizia<sup>39</sup>.

After this report, a new social player comes to the scene, *i.e.* the «villains» living on the hills, who join the owner of villas in the lower valley. In 1788, the new *deputato all'acquedotto* Francesco Negrone, together with the *soprastante* Storace and the *cavalieri di camera*, carries out a new inspection in the valley above the water point of Schiena d'Asino, in the direction of the sources of the Bisagno and Bargagli rivers. By his inspections, he demonstrates that «li contadini, esistenti in suddetta situazioni, si servono delle vivagne e Sorgenti proveniente dai suddetti Pubblici Sorgenti per adaquare i loro campi, per cui la

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<sup>39</sup> «I've heard, with my great disappointment, that some people residing in the area of the aqueduct derive water from it against every regulations, in order to irrigate their properties and gardens. Moreover, many claim that people of the parish church of Meco pick up water from the valley above the water point at *Schienna d'Asino* in order to provide water for their fields, thus consuming a great amount of water [...] [The aqueduct] is thereby deprived of water in its very sources for the reprehensible greed of a few villains. [This issue can be resolved] with an article of public policy, more than with an hydrological study». *Ibidem*, art. V. The echo produced by Ximenes studies among Genoese contemporary scholars must have been vast, since the *Collegio dei Padri del Comune* was asked some years later to introduce researchers and teachers in Genoa in order to improve the knowledge of trigonometry, mathematics, optics, with the aim of introducing in the town a profession that could be of great advantage to the city. Moreover, the petitioners asked to buy some instruments that had been used by Ximenes, such as a case with compasses, set squares, a pantograph to copy plans and so on. ASCG, B. 247-26, 15/7/84, strumenti di idraulica e idrostatica: relazioni ai Collegi sulla necessità di introdurre materie per migliorare l'arte del "ben livellare" come fu fatto di recente dall'Abate Ximenes, Lettera di Pier Agostino del 9 agosto 1784 ai Padri del Comune.

Città, ne presenti tempi di gran siccità, ne resta quasi totalmente priva»<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 4).

The results of Negrone and Storace's inspection were illustrated not only by a written record, but also by an adequate cartographical presentation<sup>41</sup>. In the same days, a *biglietto di calice* read like this:

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<sup>40</sup> «the villagers living in this district use water derived from public sources in order to irrigate their fields, thereby depriving almost completely the town of its water during the drought periods». This statement is expressed in the cartography elaborated by Storace, entitled «*Tipo che dimostra le situazioni, ove ne' Tempi Estivi, gli Contadini, da qualche Anni in qua, si fanno lecito di tratenere le Acque Vivagne e Sorgenti per adacquare i Loro Campi, provenienti dalli Publici Fossati, che anno il suo Principio, dalla Montagna della Scofferra, e dall'ingù. Le quali Vivagne Discendono, Racolte, ad introdursi nelle Due Prese, a piedi della Montagna detta di Schiena d'Asino, et indi nel Pubblico Acquedotto. Per causa delle quali adaquazioni, la Città in detti Tempi, ne resta quasi priva Totalmente, come si è provato nell'Anno 1784, per cui si fece parimente dall'Infrascritto un simile Dissegno che fu presentato ai Serenissimi Collegi dall'ora Magistrato Luca De Fornari all'ora Deputato al Pubblico Acquedotto mentre vi era il Matematico Ximenes che questo si dà l'onore di rinnovarlo, Claudio Storace, 27 settembre 1788*» (map demonstrating the situations where farmers, during summer months in the last years, collect water from sources to irrigate their fields, taking it from public furrows originating from the Scofferra pass. Said water sources flow into two water canalizations at the bottom of the mountain called Schiena d'Asino, hence into the public aqueduct. Because of these irrigations, the town during these months lacks almost completely water, as it happened in 1784. Consequently, a similar sketch has been presented to the *Serenissimi Collegi* by the magistrate Luca de Fornari, at the time *deputato al pubblico acquedotto*, when the mathematician Ximenes was here. I have here the honour to renovate this study. Claudio Storace, September 27th, 1788). Archivio di Stato di Genova, Fondo Cartografico, C.02.28.0926-Genova-[B.7.331]. See also C. Barlettaro, O. Garbarino, *La raccolta cartografica dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova*, Tilgher, Genova 1986.

<sup>41</sup> For further inquiries about topographical representations, see N. Gabellieri, *Conflitti per le risorse ambientali e produzione cartografica: la cartografia storica settecentesca dell'acquedotto di Genova*, in «Geotema», 58 (2018), pp. 95-102.



Fig. 4 «Tipo che dimostra le situazioni, ove ne' Tempi Estivi, gli Contadini, da qualche Anni in qua, si fanno lecito di tratenere le Acque Vivagne e Sorgenti per adacquare i Loro Campi, provenienti dalli Publici Fossati, che anno il suo Principio, dalla Montagna della Scofferra, e dall'ingiu. Le quali Vivagne Discendono, Racolte, ad introdursi nelle Due Prese, a piedi della Montagna detta di Schiena d'Asino, et indi nel Publico Acquedotto. Per causa delle quali adaquazioni, la Città in detti Tempi, ne resta quasi priva Totalmente, come si è provato nell'Anno 1784, per cui si fece parimente dall'Infrascritto un simile Dissegno che fu presentato ai Serenissimi Collegi dall'ora Magistrato Luca De Fornari all'ora Deputato al Pubblico Acquedotto mentre vi era il Matematico Ximenes che questo si dà l'onore di rinnovarlo, Claudio Storace, 27 settembre 1788». Source: Archivio di Stato di Genova, Fondo Cartografico, C.02.28.0926-Genova-[B.7.331]

La città è da più mesi senz'acqua con grande incomodo di tutti. Non si dica provenire dalle poche piogge, la vera causa proviene perché l'acqua del Condotta è divertita da molti particolari per uso delle alberature delle Ville, e di qualche fontana. Dal 1785 a questa parte va sempre dal mese di maggio mancando l'acqua per tutta l'estate [...] Si fece la spesa di far venire il Qimenez, quale è restata vana, poiché non si è parlato più del suo progetto, benché il Magistrato lo avesse approvato, ed anche pensato ai mezzi d'eseguirlo [Ximenes] ha inteso dire che ciò sia provenuto da che in Montoggio molti terreni che prima erano zerbidi ora sieno stati coltivati e seminativi. Egli non esamina il punto se ciò sia lecito a farsi, ma dice che quando anche ciò sia lecito non dovrebbero coltivare detti siti, e non permettere che la città penuriasse d'acqua<sup>42</sup>.

### 3. Local food production in the sources

The landscape of contemporary Val Bisagno results from evolutions which have taken place in Liguria since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The lower part of the valley is now part of the urbanistic pattern of the town of Genoa and is occupied by the neighbourhood of Foce,

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<sup>42</sup> «Since many months by now, the supply of water to the town is very scarce, which causes great inconvenience to everybody. This is not due to scarce rainfall. The true reason is that water is derived from the aqueduct by many private persons, who use it to water trees in their villas and for their own fountains. From 1785 onwards, there's lack of water from May till the end of summer. [...] Money has been spent to summon Qimenez, but this expense has been useless, since his project hasn't been mentioned anymore, notwithstanding the approval of the magistrate, and nobody has debated how to apply it. [Ximenez] has heard that this lack of water derives from the fact that, in Montoggio, many lands once uncropped, are now cultivated. He doesn't specify whether this goes against the law or not, but he states that in any case these plots of land should not be cultivated, in order not to leave the town without water». ASCG, B. 249-241, Copia di biglietto di Calici, 17 ottobre 1788.



Albaro, Brignole, Marassi and Staglieno. While the lower part of the valley is nowadays densely inhabited, the upper sector has been almost deserted and largely reforested during the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>43</sup>. Phenomena such as urban development in the plains and the abandonment of agricultural practices on slopes are largely represented in many Italian regions. Nonetheless, this trend has reached such a peak in the Bisagno valley, so as to make this valley a highly significant case study. At the same time, in the last years the Bisagno Valley has become sadly famous for the numerous floods that have taken place in its territory, in 1970, 1992, 2010, 2011 and 2014.

Nonetheless, this valley is still remembered by elderly people as one of the principal food production areas of the whole Liguria<sup>44</sup>.

As early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in order to meet the needs of the city markets, the Bisagno district began to be organized on a pattern of terraces and rural settlements called *ville*. The importance of this trend can be understood by considering how Genoese legislation focused its attention on it since the beginning, in order to hinder the illegal appropriation of land by privates and to avoid the fragmentation of the rural landscape. A decree issued by the *Padri del*

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<sup>43</sup> R. Cevasco, D. Moreno, *Pendici liguri: riscoprire le relazioni tra suoli e copertura vegetale*, in P. Cesaretti, R. Ferlinghetti (eds.), *Uomini e ambienti. Dalla storia al futuro*, Bolis Edizioni, Bergamo 2014, pp. 46-67.

<sup>44</sup> In Genoese dialect, the expression *besagnin*, i.e. inhabitants of the Bisagno valley, is still used to indicate greengrocers, since fruits and vegetables were carried from the nearby Bisagno valley into the city. See, for example, G. Casaccia, *Dizionario genovese-italiano*, vol. I, Guido Mondani Editore, Genova 1876, p. 75: «*Bezagninn-a s.f. Erbajuola, erbajola, erbarola e volg. Cavolaja: colei che vende o rivende ortaggi, come cavoli, carciofi, rape, sedano, ecc.; nome derivato del torrente del Bisagno, presso il quale sono orti, ove si coltivano esclusivamente civaje ed erbaggi*», i.e. «*Bezagninn-a s.f. Grocer, the woman who sells vegetables such as cabbages, artichokes, turnips, celeries, etc. the noun derives from the Bisagno river, where many vegetable gardens and orchards are installed, in which cabbages and vegetables are exclusively produced*».

*Comune* in 1561 reiterate the provisions against field enclosures in the Bisagno valley, «*quominus cives spaciandi gratia ad recreandum animum libere possint per hortos ipsos vagare et pertransire*»<sup>45</sup>. Anyway, the *villa* landscape becomes stable and, from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, noble and merchant families frequently spend the summertime out of the city, in rural districts rich in vineyards and orchards<sup>46</sup>. This organization is known as *agricoltura di villa*, i.e. villas' agricultural system: around the nobiliar estates, cultivated gardens were irrigated by a dense pattern of little furrows<sup>47</sup>. The tenure system was characterized by vast estates, where the plots of land encircling the *villa* were rented to peasants<sup>48</sup>. For instance, the properties of the Brignole-Sale family, which have been studied by Repetto, were constituted by numerous plots of land spread all along the Bisagno river course: wine was produced (wine of better quality was attributed to landowners, while second choice wine was given to tenants or destined to be sold in taverns)<sup>49</sup>, as well as wheat

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<sup>45</sup> «in order to allow citizens to stroll around freely in gardens and orchards, so as to relax and enjoy the landscape». M. Quaini, *Per la storia del paesaggio agrario in Liguria. Note di geografia storica sulle strutture agrarie della Liguria medievale e moderna*, Camera di Commercio Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura, Savona 1973, pp. 69-70.

<sup>46</sup> *Le ville del Genovesato*, vol. I, *Caratteri generali. Il Centro*, Valenti Editore, Genova 1985.

<sup>47</sup> E. De Negri *et al.*, *Catalogo delle Ville Genovesi*, Italia Nostra, Genova 1967, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> Quaini, *Per la storia del paesaggio agrario in Liguria* cit.

<sup>49</sup> Bartolomeo Paschetti, a physician from Verona, in his essay *Del conservare la sanità e del vivere de' Genovesi*, Genova 1602, pp. 337-342, cited in Quaini 1973, p. 112, thus describes wine coming from areas adjoining Genoa «[...] gli vini piccoli tutti sono generalmente asperi e acerbi più o meno secondo l'uve e i luoghi dove sono situate, più o manco caldi, più o manco esposti al sole [...] Tali sono i vini delle vostre ville, tali quelli di Bisagno e Pozzevera parlando in generale, che in alcuni luoghi si fanno maturi e mediocrement grandi, come nella Valle di Pozzevera

and a small amount of oil; with regard to farm animals, a small amount of sheeps and cows can be recorded, whereas swines were more abundant in the upper part of the valley<sup>50</sup>.

Still by 1840, in his general description of the regions forming the Kingdom of Sardinia, Casalis writes that «nella coltura degli orti sono a ragione lodati i contadini di Finale, di Savona, del Borghetto (Albenga), del Geriale, del Bisagno e di Chiavari [...] non pochi macelli sul Bisagno introducono di soppiatto molta carne in città»<sup>51</sup>.

Written sources produced by the magistrate for the aqueduct allow us to describe this food production system more fully. For instance,

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sono i vini della Costa di Rivarolo e di Coronata, nella valle di Bisagno quelli di Siro di Stroppa e di Montecignano [...]» (wines of lesser quality are in general sour and bitter, depending on the grapes and the place where vineyards are situated, whether they are more or less hot or more or less exposed to the sun. [...] Of such quality are the wines of your villas, for example those of the Bisagno and the Polcevera. In some places, these wines ripen and they become of better quality, as it happens in the Polcevera valley with wines from the Costa di Rivarolo and Coronata, in the Bisagno valley with wines from Siro di Stroppa and Montecignano). Moreover, as it is stated by Girolamo Gnecco in his essay *Riflessioni sopra l'agricoltura del Genovesato co' mezzi propri a migliorarla e a toglierne gli abusi e vizi inveterati*, Genova 1770, p. 358, cited in Quaini 1973, p. 115, the only way to improve the output of the lands of the Polcevera and Bisagno valley is to implant vineyards, in order to supply the town, which lacks 170.000 *mezzarole* of wine, representing the equivalent of 5 million liras.

<sup>50</sup> M. Repetto, *La società contadina tra XVIII e XIX secolo. Le proprietà della famiglia Brignole-Sale nei territori della Val Bisagno e della Val Polcevera*, Libro Più, Genova 2002, pp. 28-31.

<sup>51</sup> «farmers from Finale, Savona, Borghetto (Albenga), Geriale, Bisagno and Chiavari are rightly praised [...] many slaughterhouses on the Bisagno river bring furtively great amounts of meat inside the town»; G. Casalis, *Dizionario geografico storico-statistico-commerciale degli stati di S. M. il Re di Sardegna*, 28 vv., Torino, 1833-1856, 1840, p. 304 e 401.

we know that, when the aqueduct was built, at least 32 watermills were present in the upper Bisagno valley: this is not a great amount but it has nonetheless some relevance, especially if we think that they ground exclusively wheat produced in the Bisagno valley. In addition to wheat production, the importance of fruit and vegetable production can be confirmed if we consider the frequent complaints made against the landowners along the Bisagno for illegal water withdrawal, as well as the resistance opposed by these same landowners to cutting down trees along the canals. Storace compiles a list of the trees he ordered to chop down during his visit in 1785, thus giving us a good sample of tree species present in the orchards. Going north, Storace mentions mulberries, downy oaks, figs, apples, peaches, cherries, hornbeams and plum trees. When he reaches the village of Cicala, chestnut trees and vineyards take the orchards' place<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> As we read in Storace's report, in Stefano Musso's sector a big mulberry tree has been chopped down, as well as a tree in Domenico Spinola's wood. In Berto Oneto's wood a tree and many durmasts have been chopped down. In Raffaele Stresino's villa he found out that a fig tree and an apple tree had been cut. In Carlo Radi's villa many canes, a fig tree and 7 mulberry trees have been cut, while in Giacomo Gentile's villa 11 mulberry trees, 2 trees and 5 durmasts have been chopped down. In Domenico Spinola's house he found out that 5 fig trees, 3 apple trees, 6 mulberry trees, 18 peach trees, 1 plum tree and 1 cherry tree had been cut down. Under the surveillance of Antonio Camojrone in Gio Batta Pietropiano's villa he recorded many canes, 8 mulberry trees, 5 fig trees and 4 cherry trees. In Tupino Giuseppe's villa 3 fig trees and 8 hornbeams have been cut down. In Alberto Tupino's villa 4 fig trees and 10 hornbeams have been chopped down. In Gotterdo's section, in Tapino's villa 4 fig trees and a mulberry tree have been cut down. In Agostino da Pino's villa 3 fig trees have been chopped down. In Andrea Ansaldo's villa a fig tree and 3 plum trees have been cut down. Near Cicala mills 6 mulberry trees and 40 palms of vineyard have been cut down. In addition to this, near Montaldo mills 7 mulberry trees have been cut down. B. 248, Pratiche pubbliche, Giovanni Storace, 15 ottobre 1785, promemoria della visita al Pubblico Acquedotto.

The existence of two different production systems, the one characterizing the lower part of the Bisagno valley and the other the higher one, can also be detected in the description made by Casalis: «Entrando nella parte orientale della provincia, si mostra la Valle del Bisagno, che ha due mandamenti, Albaro e Staglieno. Verso le foci è larga discretamente, ed ornata di palazzi magnifici e ville dilette. Ma ben presto si restringe, e queste strettezze, e le molte curve del Bisagno, ed i monti in alcune parti nudi di piante, le danno un aspetto poco lieto»<sup>53</sup>. In fact, during the inspections near the bridge of Tassara, pastures are mentioned, alternating with cultivations on terraces<sup>54</sup>.

To depict this second landscape, far less known than the villas cultivations in the plain, Negrone and Storace's inspection of 1788 proves very useful, along with the map produced by the latter. Reporting about his visit, Storace specifies that the water of the streams flowing into the Bisagno are taken by some local inhabitants, *i.e.* Francesco Dongo, Giovanni Vignè and the Cevasco brothers. The

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<sup>53</sup> «When you enter the eastern part of the district, you find the Bisagno valley, which is divided in two districts, Albaro and Staglieno. Near to the river mouth, the valley is large enough and sprinkled with magnificent palaces and charming villas. Soon after, the valley becomes narrower, and these narrow places, the frequent Bisagno meanders and the hills, which are often bare, give to the valley an unpleasant look». G. Casalis, *Dizionario geografico storico-statistico-commerciale* cit., 1840, p. 316.

<sup>54</sup> «Si è trovato che un tale pregiudizio è determinato dalla coltura fatta nella parte superiore del detto acquedotto, essendovi stato lavorato, poste vigne, alberi e piantate mascere contigue [...] mentre, quando fu fabbricato suddetto acquedotto, tali siti erano del tutto gerbidi» (we found out that this damage has been produced by cultivations in the upper part of the aqueduct, where land has been cultivated, vineyard implanted, as well as trees and terraces [...] on the contrary, when this aqueduct was built, these lands were totally bare). ASCG, B. 137: Relazione sopra il dispaccio et altri lavori da farsi al pubblico acquedotto, 1721, Relazione dell'illustrissimo sig. Ansaldo Grimaldo Dep. al pubblico acquedotto circa i lavori da farsi.

water, led into an irrigation system made up of wooden canals, was used for the mills and for land irrigation, particularly for chestnut trees and terraces cultivated with beans. This habit is accused of depriving the town of its water<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> «Nel fossato della Parochia di Traxo, si è ritrovato un canale di legno, che dà acqua fresca con troglio, ed un solco nel terreno, che tramanda l'acqua ne Boschi per adaquare le castagne, ed una villa, il quale Bosco e Villa lo conduce Giovanni Vignè. Segue dall'insù col molino del Magnifico Francesco Dongo, dove è il prato, che primi adaquavano, ove vi era ed è un canale fatto nel scoglio, che prima serviva per dar l'acqua al molino del suddetto Magnifico Francesco Dongo. In seguito dell'insù altro vivagno d'acqua, che viene dal Fossato della Pieve di Bargagli, detto Leo, ossia Leco, in cui vi è una presa, che raccoglie una vivagna abbondante la quale serve per far girare due molini, cioè uno doppio l'altro, essendosi ritrovato al disotto della chiusa diverse fasce piene di faggioli secchi, con n. 10 aperture, che si aprono e chiudono da contadini con zerbi, alla sponda di detta chiusa, la quale passando l'acqua ne solchi del terreno, servono per adaquare suddette fasce, le quali sono condotte da Michele e Antonio Fratelli Cevasco, molinari di detto luogo. In seguito all'insù nel luogo della Parrocchia di Traxo, dice vi sia una sorgente d'acqua grossa, ossia vivagna, della quale acqua se ne servono per adaquare i Boschi, che esistono in giro al medesimo fossato, come le fasce di faggioli, e detta acqua suddetti molinari che stanno dall'ingìù hanno detto di dividerla solamente nel tempo d'inverno, e di estate essere trattenuta per adaquare suddetti boschi o fasce. Altra vivagna all'insù, che passa in una chiusa, che conduce l'acqua ad altri due molini si è ritrovato due campi di faggioli al di sotto di suddetta chiusa, condotte da Francesco e Giovan Battista Cevasco fratelli, ne quali vi sono n. 7 aperture, che si aprono e chiudono con zerbi, i quali servono per adaquare suddetti campi. In altra fascia ossia campo, che conduce Filippo Cevasco, vi sono due altre aperture, alla sponda della suddetta chiusa, che si aprono e chiudono le quali servono per adacquare detta fascia piena di faggioli, che è quanto. Ed il tutto come più chiaramente si può riconoscere dal presente Tipo». (In the ditch of the parish of Traxo, I found a wooden canalization, which carries fresh water to the woods in order to irrigate the chestnuts trees, and a villa, which are both managed by Giovanni Vignè. Above that, there is a mill owned by the excellent Francesco Dongo with a meadow, watered by a canal cut into the rock, that was used before to carry water to the mill of the above mentioned

Beans and chestnuts were the main products of this sector, under the jurisdiction of Bargagli: simple food, very different from the rich orchards down in the plains<sup>56</sup>. Nonetheless, these cultivations needed a complex terracing and irrigation system. Irrigated cultivation of chestnut trees and vegetable gardens, in connection with the aqueduct, are evoked in adjacent areas, such as the Sturla valley, at least from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards: these agricultural systems have even been included in the *Catalogo Nazionale dei Paesaggi Rurali Storici*, i.e. National Catalogue of Historical Rural Landscapes<sup>57</sup>.

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Francesco Dongo. Above that, another water source, coming from the ditch of the Pieve di Bargagli, known as Leo, or Leco, where there is a water supply point, gathering water from an abundant source to carry it to two mills, turning one after the other. Beneath the sluice, many terraces filled with dry beans, with ten openings, opened and closed by peasants with turfs on the side of this sluice, thus letting water pass in the furrows to irrigate the terraces cultivated by Michele and Antonio Cevasco, brothers and millers in that site. Above that, in the parish of Traxo, an abundant water source gives water to irrigate woods adjacent to that furrow, as well as bean terraces. The millers living nearby say that they share water only in winter months, keeping it during the summer to water woods and terraces. Another water source is present up in the valley. It is led into a sluice, carrying water to two more mills. Beneath this sluice, I found two bean fields, cultivated by the brothers Francesco and Giovan Battista Cevasco, with 7 openings, which may be opened and closed with turfs to water the fields. In another terrace, cultivated by Filippo Cevasco, there are two more openings on the side of the sluice, to water a terrace filled with beans. And that's it. All the above can be clearly seen in the present map). Claudio Storace, *Tipo che dimostra le situazioni...*, 27 settembre 1788. Archivio di Stato di Genova, Fondo Cartografico, C.02.28.0926-Genova-[B.7.331].

<sup>56</sup> From Casalis' essay, Bargagli and the two parish churches of Traso and Viganego appear to abound in good pastures. Moreover, they produce wheat, corn, beans, potatoes, peas, chestnuts and grapes (G. Casalis, *Dizionario geografico storico-statistico-commerciale* cit., 1840, p. 146).

<sup>57</sup> A.M. Stagno, C. Molinari, *Orti e castagneti irrigui terrazzati dell'Alta Valle Sturla*, in M. Agnoletti (ed.), *Paesaggi rurali storici. Per un catalogo nazionale*,

To conclude, written sources record strong differences between the lower and upper Bisagno valley. In the plain, a complex food production system made up of villas and gardens; on the hills, an equally complex system comprehending agriculture, forestry and pastures, in which the land is exploited by alternating pastures, forests, chestnut trees and terraces. The former system is dedicated to wheat and fruit cultivation and is oriented to the town market, while the latter combines a town-oriented production (cattle breeding) with local products destined to rural population, such as chestnuts and beans. Both systems are nowadays completely unrecognizable because of the deep socio-economical changes which have modified the above-described landscape. During the last decades, beside the vast urban development in the plains, an extensive reforestation can be recorded, an aspect less present in the public debate, but no less dangerous for the environmental stability. Fig. 5 shows the present location of the site described by Storace in 1788 as *«fagioli in fasce annaquate»*, i.e. beans in irrigated terraces: this place is nowadays completely covered by a forest, as the orthophotograph shows.

#### 4. Remarks and further developments

This study doesn't pretend to be complete and exhaustive. New research threads will be opened, both by investigating historical sources, and possibly through field investigations that may confirm or, far more interestingly, refute what the written sources tell. Nonetheless, this brief presentation shows the possible contribution that geo-historical sources can give in the field of historical description of local food production and individual rural landscapes. Storace's map marks the climax of a long controversy between the magistrates for the aqueduct and other social

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Laterza, Roma-Bari 2010, pp. 189-191; A.M. Stagno, *Orti e castagneti terrazzati irrigui a Perlezzi e in Alta Valle Sturla*, in R. Cevasco (ed.), *La natura della montagna*, Oltre Edizioni, Sestri Levante 2013, pp. 476-485.





Fig. 5 A detail of the territory of Traso in comparison between the «*Tipo che dimostra le situazioni*» by Claudio Storace (1788; above) and the aerial photo of 2006 (Geoportale Nazionale)

players throughout the 18th century. This source has been found in the *Fondo Cartografico* of the State Archive of Genoa; as it frequently happens, it has been separated from its original context of production, *i.e.* the fund of the *Padri del Comune*. Following the traces leading from the document to its production context allows us to show how the writ-

ten source doesn't give a neutral representation of reality, but is on the contrary the result of different strategies implemented by various social players. These strategies often derive from conflicts which, despite their local range, may assume such importance as to implicate one of the most illustrious engineers of the time, Leonardo Ximenes. His study and project stress the point of the conflicts existing between the interventions on the part of urban authorities and the customary agricultural practices put into being by the communities of the inner valleys.

Thanks to the cartographer's activity, inspections take a further step forward: Storace provides some evidence to prove that the hydric crisis is to be mostly attributed to water catchments above the aqueduct, thus allowing the town of Genoa to exercise its jurisdiction over the hill inhabitants. Therefore, his work not only describes reality, but also contributes to the construction of jurisdiction<sup>58</sup>.

Given the purpose of this study, to argue whether the hydric crisis could be the consequence of inappropriate water withdrawal by farmers living in Traso or not, is not a matter of interest; instead, it is essential to show how documents are produced in an effort to tackle the above described social conflicts and how to extract references to local products from this kind of files. Cartography can therefore be considered as a major tool of embezzlement and transformation, produced in specific contexts by players having administrative and jurisdictional purposes, besides of the scientific ones.

These references allowed us to show the extreme complexity of the Bisagno valley, the presence of various landscape and rural contexts, some oriented to town consumption, some conceived for local con-

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<sup>58</sup> Similar cases are attested in different areas of Liguria. For the conflict on private or community exploitation of water in the adjacent Sturla valley and for the resulting cartography, see A.M. Stagno, V. Tigrino, *Cartografia pre-geodetica, conflitti sulle risorse idriche e politiche territoriali. Un caso di studio nell'Appennino Ligure (XVIII-XXI s.)*, in «Semestrale di studi e ricerche di geografia», 22, 2 (2010), pp. 267-279.

sumption; to individuate the species of fruit trees spread in villas and orchards; to demonstrate the importance of terracing and irrigation systems for forest and land management in a territory which is nowadays completely abandoned and reforested.

For a long time, historiography has generally agreed about the central role played by urban settlements in shaping the Italian agrarian and rural landscape. More recently, such subaltern role of rural spaces has been rediscussed<sup>59</sup>. The case study of Bisagno valley shows that the rural areas close to the urban ones are contested and conflictual spaces, with disputes between valley and mountain communities; at the end of the Ancient Regime, one of the most important cities of the Mediterranean negotiated with the inner communities for food and water supply. However, written sources report information only from the perspective of urban magistrates.

Sources do not only highlight the abandonment of Genoese periurban agriculture during Modern Age. They also show how these rural activities were made possible thanks to a complex irrigation system: an intricate net of canals and furrows to carry water to mills, to irrigate chestnut woods and terraces, to water orchards and vegetable gardens. This study thereby demonstrates how water management was a consequence of the technical solutions adopted for the water exploitation and of the conflicts aroused by issues such as the control and possession of water. Therefore, the water management system cannot be considered as a result of a «natural» hydrographic net, but is on the contrary produced by a socio-economical organization. This water management system disappears along with the abandonment of rural practices, but the effects of this abandonment for the management of hydrogeological risks in such a vulnerable valley cannot be ignored and are still to be studied.

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<sup>59</sup> D. Moreno, O. Raggio, *Dalla storia del paesaggio agrario alla storia rurale. L'irrinunciabile eredità scientifica di Emilio Sereni*, in «Quaderni storici», 100, 1 (1999), pp. 89-104.

This study is not concluded; on the contrary, it aims to present a geo-historical research methodology on a local scale which can be applied to every 'individual landscape' of our country, as well as to raise questions about how to use written sources in order to investigate traces left by past production systems, which are nowadays completely lost.

# Topographical art, travel accounts and the landscape history of viticulture in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italy

*Pietro Piana, Ross Balzaretti, Charles Watkins\**

In this chapter we consider the way in which the drawings and paintings that travellers and visitors made when visiting Italy, together with their written accounts, can provide useful insights to the history of viticulture. Landscape historians and geographers have long used landscape and topographical art to understand the social and historical implications of past land management practices on current landscapes<sup>1</sup>. Several authors have stressed the advantages of topographical art in understanding changes in agriculture, gardening, forestry, historical ecology and urbanisation<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Howard, *Change in the landscape perception of artists*, in «Landscape Research» 9(3) (1984), pp. 41-44; J. Bonehill, S. Daniels, *Paul Sandby, Picturing Britain*, Royal Academy of Arts, London 2009; P. Piana, C. Watkins, *Questioning the view: Historical geography and topographical art*, in «Geography Compass» 14(4) (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12483>

<sup>2</sup> J. Barrell, *The virtues of topography*, in «London Review of Books» 35(2013), pp. 17-18; S. Daniels, *Mapping the metropolis in an age of reform: John Britton's London topography 1820–1840*, in «Journal of Historical Geography» 56 (2017), pp. 61-82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2016.12.010>; L.

In Italy Emilio Sereni made use of paintings and drawings to illustrate and explore the history of Italian agriculture as has Ambrosoli in his study of agricultural botany<sup>3</sup>. Landscape and topographical views of the Alps and the Apennines have been used to date and map landscape changes. Zumbühl, Steiner and Nussbaumer analysed topographical views of the Mer de Glace by the Swiss painter Samuel Birmann (1793-1847) to assess the glacier's fluctuation since the 1820s and Giardino *et al.* examines historical iconography for the study of past geomorphological processes such as landslides, floods and avalanches. Nesci and Borchia examined paintings by Piero della Francesca (c. 1415-92) to interpret the geological landscape of the Montefeltro (Central Italy) and link landscape dynamics with climate change and geomorphological processes<sup>4</sup>.

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McLoughlin, *Vegetation in the early landscape art of the Sidney region, Australia: accurate record or artistic licence?*, in «Landscape Research», 24(1) (1999), pp. 25-47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426399908706549>; P. Piana, R. Balzaretti, D. Moreno, C. Watkins, *Topographical art and landscape history: Elizabeth Fanshawe in early nineteenth-century Liguria*, in «Landscape History», 33(2) (2012), pp. 65-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01433768.2012.739397>; P. Piana, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretti, *Saved from the sordid axe: Representation and understanding of pine trees by English visitors to Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth century*, in «Landscape History», 37(2) (2016), pp. 35-56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01433768.2016.1249723>; R. Bruzzone, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretti, C. Montanari, *Botanical relics of a lost landscape: herborising 'upon the Cliffs about the Pharos' in Genoa, March 1664*, in «Landscape Research», 43(1) (2017), pp. 20-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2016.1274966>; P. Piana, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretti, *Rediscovering Lost Landscapes, Topographical Art in North-West Italy, 1800-1920*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2021.

<sup>3</sup> E. Sereni, *History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape*; translated with an introduction by R. Burr Litchfield (Princeton, NJ, 1997); M. Ambrosoli, *The Wild and the Sown: Botany and Agriculture in Western Europe 1350-1850*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997.

<sup>4</sup> H.J. Zumbühl, D. Steiner, S.U. Nussbaumer, *19<sup>th</sup> century glacier representations and fluctuations in the central and western European Alps: An*

Grape vines are depicted in many drawings and paintings, and some early paintings, such as Lorenzetti's fresco *Effects of Good Government in the City and the Country*, Siena c. 1337-40, show vineyards as part of the landscape background of the city. Tim Unwin in his important historical geography of viticulture and the wine trade examines several drawings and paintings of wine making<sup>5</sup>. In this paper we focus on the drawings and descriptions of Italy made by visitors, mainly English, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Vines were grown in 18<sup>th</sup>-century England, but overwhelmingly in the hothouses of the rich, rarely outside<sup>6</sup>. It is unsurprising therefore that northern travellers in southern Europe often commented on vines, which to locals must have seemed a normal part of the landscape. Many travellers made general comments about the importance of viticulture and the appearance of vineyards but several also gave precise descriptions of the modes of cultivation. Some of their drawings provide valuable evidence for the pattern and distribution of vineyards, surrounding land uses and varied growing methods. Many 18<sup>th</sup>-century travellers to Italy noted that vines were trained up trees and

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*interdisciplinary approach*, in «Global and Planetary Change» 60(1-2) (2008), pp. 42-57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloplacha.2006.08.005>; M. Giardino, G. Mortara, L. Borgatti, O. Nesci, C. Guerra, C.A. Lucente, *Dynamic geomorphology and historical iconography. Contributions to the knowledge of environmental changes and slope instabilities in the Apennines and the Alps*, in G. Lollino, D. Giordan, C. Marunteanu, B. Christaras, Y. Iwasaky, C. Margottini (eds.), *Engineering geology for society and territory*, Vol. 8, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York 2015, pp. 463-468; O. Nesci, R. Borchia, *Il contributo della geomorfologia allo studio di alcuni paesaggi in opere pittoriche del Rinascimento Italiano: un esempio dai quadri di Piero della Francesca*, Proceedings of the International Conference *I paesaggi del vino* (Perugia, 8-10 May 2008).

<sup>5</sup> T. Unwin, *Wine and the vine. An historical geography of viticulture and the wine trade*, Routledge, London 1991.

<sup>6</sup> J. Robinson (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006, p. 253.

then «festooned» between them. The regularity with which this observation was made by travellers with very different interests suggests that this was indeed the preferred mode of training vines at this time. «Festoons» became a cliché but there were also references to other training methods, and often authors commented that these were characteristic of particular regions, reinforcing their sense that they were travelling across a locally diverse and politically divided peninsula, not unified until the 1870s.

Alexander Drummond, travelling in the middle of 1744 in the vicinity of Lake Garda, described vines being supported by mulberry trees which were planted in regular rows with grain planted in between<sup>7</sup>. He sketched this arrangement on the 'Monte Provizano', and this was engraved as a large plate which showed vines 'festooned' between the trees. The image appears stylised and it has proved impossible to locate this hill using map evidence. Drummond was travelling south between Rovereto and Peschiera del Garda along the road which follows the River Adige, passing through Borghetto. According to Sereni wine in the Verona area never lost its fame, «not even in the dark centuries of the Middle Ages»<sup>8</sup>. Sereni uses Domenico Veneziano's *Adorazione dei Magi* to show the rational and well-organized vineyards of the Verona hills with sheep grazing between the vines. Wine is still made in this area (*e.g.* Tenuta San Leonardo, founded 1724, one of the best 'Bordeaux style' wines in Italy)<sup>9</sup>. The *Travels* was prepared for publication by Tobias Smollett who appears to have had a considerable input to the form and content of the final text<sup>10</sup>, and this influenced his own,

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<sup>7</sup> A. Drummond, *Travels through different cities of Germany, Italy, Greece, and several parts of Asia, as far as the banks of the Euphrates*, Strahan, London 1754, pp. 19-20. Drummond was British consul at Aleppo (1754-1756).

<sup>8</sup> Sereni, *History of Italian Agrarian Landscape* cit. p. 189.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sanleonardo.it/en/>

<sup>10</sup> K. Turner, *Drummond, Alexander (d. 1769), traveller*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004-09-23). Retrieved 7 Dec. 2017, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/entry/101000>



much more famous travel book, published in 1766<sup>11</sup>. Smollett, travelling from Genoa to Rome in January 1765 noted that

The country from Sarzana to the frontiers of Tuscany is a narrow plain, bounded on the right by the sea, and on the left by the Apennine mountains. It is well cultivated and inclosed, consisting of meadow-ground, corn fields, plantations of olives; and the trees that form the hedge-rows serve as so many props to the vines, which are twisted around them, and continued from one another<sup>12</sup>.

Occasionally, specific types of local wine (and by implication grape varieties) were noted by travellers. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, one of the most famous travellers of the age, writing to her daughter Lady Bute on 10 July 1748 from her house in the country near Gottolengo south of Brescia, stated that «they make a very good sort of Wine they call Brusco»<sup>13</sup>. This came from «a great number of wild vines which twist to the Top of the highest Trees». Lady Mary used the vine stems to make bowers with turf seats from which she could view the landscape, as befitted an aristocrat of high status<sup>14</sup>. This ‘brusco’ was conceivably like the modern Lambrusco made further east around Modena, Parma and Reggio Emilia. Lady Mary lived in this area effectively as an exile for twenty years and her estate was quite large. In this letter she described it in detail:

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[oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8062](https://oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8062) and J. Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800*, New Haven and London 1997, p. 314.

<sup>11</sup> *Travels through France and Italy*, London 1766.

<sup>12</sup> T. Smollett, *Travels through France and Italy*, ed. F. Felsenstein, Oxford 1979, p. 213.

<sup>13</sup> *Brusco* can mean ‘sharp’ or ‘rough’ which may suggest what the wine tasted like.

<sup>14</sup> Lady M.W. Montagu, *Selected Letters*, ed. I. Grundy, London 1997, p. 332.

My Garden was a plain vineyard when it came into my hands not two year ago, and it is with a small expence turn'd into a Garden that (apart from the advantage of the climate) I like better than that of Kensington. The Italian Vineyards are not planted like those in France, but in clumps fasten'd to Trees planted in equal ranks (commonly fruit trees) and continu'd in festoons from one another<sup>15</sup>.

Here she produced «a variety of wines».

A remarkable album of 232 drawings made by the painter, poet and naturalist George Keate (1729-97) survives from his travels through France, Italy and Switzerland 1754-6. Three of these topographical drawings focus specifically on viticulture. There are two from France: *The Method of Cultivating the Vines in Burgundy* and *The Method of cultivating the Vines in DAUPHINY* (now the departments of Isère, Drôme, and Hautes-Alpes) and one from Tuscany<sup>16</sup>. These show very effectively the different modes of growing vines. In Dauphiny all the lower growth was trimmed from the vines allowing movement of air through the vineyard. The vines are trained along a trellis system, while in the Burgundy example the vines are grown up individual poles, and the lower foliage is retained. In both cases, there is no evidence of other crops being grown between the closely spaced rows of vines. The third drawing by Keate shows a vintage in Tuscany

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<sup>15</sup> Montagu, *Selected Letters* cit., p. 333.

<sup>16</sup> G. Keate 1754-6 'The Method of Cultivating the Vines in Burgundy'. [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=3473810&partId=1&searchText=vines+italy+&images=true&page=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3473810&partId=1&searchText=vines+italy+&images=true&page=1); 'The Method of cultivating the Vines in DAUPHINY.' [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details/collection\\_image\\_gallery.aspx?assetId=1266433001&objectId=3473814&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=1266433001&objectId=3473814&partId=1); 'A Vintage in Tuscany Oct 1754' [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details/collection\\_image\\_gallery.aspx?assetId=1266595001&objectId=3474405&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=1266595001&objectId=3474405&partId=1).

and was made in October 1754. This depicts a very different form of vineyard, and shows the vines carefully trained from tree to tree, as described by Drummond and Montagu in northern Italy. The species of tree is not identifiable, but they are likely to be elms, mulberries or poplars, the latter being particularly common in the Val d'Arno, where vines were «maritata ad altissimi pioppi» (trained to very tall poplars)<sup>17</sup>. It is a very different image from the two French ones as it shows the vineyard at the season when it is full of activity. The grapes are picked by men and women. The higher growing vines are picked from ladders leant against the trees and full, small baskets are handed down to someone standing below. These small baskets are used to fill larger baskets nearby. On the left a donkey is loaded up with two of these baskets ready to be taken from the vineyard. The distance between the rows of trees and vines is significant and there is plenty of room for intercropping.

The traveller William Beckford (1760-1844) witnessed the vintage near Mantua in September 1780. He saw peasants «mounted upon elms and poplars, gathering the rich clusters from the vines that hang streaming in braids from one branch to another»<sup>18</sup>. Visiting the castle of the Garzoni family near Lucca he «took refuge under a continued bower of vines, which runs for miles along its summit»<sup>19</sup>. Beckford «fell upon the clusters... like a native of the north». In this scene grapes and wine are associated with luxury, one of Beckford's favourite subjects (he was one of the richest men in England at this period). Later Beckford and his companion (the opera singer Gaspare

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<sup>17</sup> E. Repetti, *Dizionario Geografico Fisico Storico della Toscana*, Firenze 1833, p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> W. Beckford, *Italy, with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*, Bentley, London, 1834, p. 78. The original version of this book, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* (ed. R.J. Gemmett, Stroud, 2006) was published in 1783 and soon suppressed. This sentence is the same in both versions.

<sup>19</sup> Beckford, *Italy* cit., p. 89.

Pacchierotti) drank the wine made there which «defied the richest wines of Constantia to exceed it»<sup>20</sup>.

Many travellers were aiming to reach Rome, and they often stayed there for several months. There was a lively resident community of English artists in the 1770s and 1780s and Richard Stephens (2016) points out that compared to earlier artists who preferred to paint street scenes, palazzi and Baroque churches, artists such as Francis Towne and John Robert Cozens «focused less on its modern splendour than on its ancient remains» and frequently emphasised the rural scenery around Rome.<sup>21</sup> Francis Towne's pen, ink and watercolour 'View near Rome, two miles from the Porta Salaria' of 1780 shows a fork in the road, with an ornamental gateway as the focus. This is the gateway to Signor Martinelli's vineyard; like many vineyards near cities and alongside main roads it is walled to protect the grapes from theft. Signor Martinelli provided lodgings at his farmhouse for many visiting artists, including John Robert Cozens, Thomas Jones and John 'Warwick' Smith. This was an early form of agritourism where artists and other visitors could stay and enjoy the scenery and wine away from the bustle of the city.

One of the best known and documented travellers to Rome, Naples and Sicily was Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) who wrote a full account of his Italian travels of 1786-8. He was astonished by the fertility and productivity of the Italian agricultural landscapes and was fascinated by the vineyards. On 11 September 1786 he noted near Bolzano that the «foothills are covered with vineyards. The vines are trained on long, low trellises and the purple grapes hang gracefully from the roof

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<sup>20</sup> *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents*, p. 136 «defied Constantia and the Cape to exceed it». Beckford was making a big claim as the sweet Constantia was the most famed 'new world' wine of this period: Robinson, *The Oxford Companion* cit., pp. 192-193.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Stephens, written label for the exhibition *Light, Time, Legacy: Francis Towne's Watercolours of Rome* (British Museum, 21 January -14 August 2016), [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_Nn-2-10](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_Nn-2-10)

and ripen in the warmth of the soil so close beneath them». He pointed out that although there was much meadowland in the valley bottom, even there «vines are grown on similar trellises, which are placed closely together in rows, between which maize is planted»<sup>22</sup>. Some of the vineyards next to the road were protected by high walls.

Other walls which were not high enough had been built up with stones, brambles and so forth to prevent passers-by from picking the grapes». In addition many «vineyard owners spray the vines nearest the road with lime. This makes the grapes unpalatable but does not spoil the wine, since it is eliminated during fermentation»<sup>23</sup>.

Goethe was fascinated by the way that vines were trained from tree to tree. On 19 September 1786 he noted that the road from Verona to Vicenza was «wide, straight and well-kept» and went «through fertile fields. There trees are planted in long rows upon which the vines are trained to their tops. Their gently swaying tendrils hung down under the weight of the grapes, which ripen early here. This is what a festoon ought to look like». The ground between «the vine rows is used for the cultivation of all kinds of grain, especially maize and millet». The grapes were being harvested and he was

delighted to see carts with low wheels shaped like plates and drawn by four oxen carrying large tubs in which the grapes are bought from the vineyards to the wine presses. When the tubs are empty, the drivers stand in them. It reminded me very much of a triumphal Bacchanalian<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> J.F. von Goethe [1786–1788] *Italian Journey*, translated by W.H. Auden and E. Mayer, London 1962, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Ivi, p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> Ivi, p. 63.

A few months later near Capua (25 February 1787) while travelling through fields of wheat

Rows of poplars are planted in the fields and vines trained between their widespreading branches. It was like this all the way to Naples [...]. The stems of the vines are unusually strong and tall and the tendrils sway like nets from one poplar to another<sup>25</sup>.

While at Naples on 17 March 1787 he noted that «Every time I wish to write words, visual images come up, images of the fruitful countryside [...]» He went on «Here the soil produces everything, and one can expect three to five harvests a year. In a really good year, I am told, they can grow maize three times in the same fields»<sup>26</sup>. The artist Wilhelm Tischbein acted as a companion and guide and introduced him to many other artists. Tischbein was resident in Italy and was appointed director of the Naples Art Academy in 1789. In the 1790s he made a series of etchings as illustrations to Homer and in a letter of 8 November 1796 describes his etching intended to illustrate the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus in some detail (Fig. 1). It was to show how Polyphemus wanted to keep the superabundant productivity of his land to himself<sup>27</sup>. Tischbein emphasised that no one could ‘gain any conception’ of the «fruitful location» who «has not seen Italy». The picture shows «on one small piece of land everything needed for man’s nourishment and sustenance: corn for bread, wine for drinking, flax for clothing, wood for building, meat for eating». It is «a forest of grapes, where the garlands of vines stretch from one tree to another and are lost in the shadowy distance. The heavy, full grapes hang down to touch the ripe corn, and the sun shines on these

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<sup>25</sup> Ivi, p. 184.

<sup>26</sup> Ivi, p. 209.

<sup>27</sup> *Odyssey* IX, lines 106-111.



Fig. 1 Wilhelm Tischbein: Ideal view of Polyphemus's island based on the countryside around Naples; frontispiece for Heft IV of *Homer nach Antiken gezeichnet*, Göttingen: Heinrich Dieterich, 1801-5 and Stuttgart: J G Cotta, 1821 Etching (Wikimedia Commons)

clear containers of must and distils the dew they have sucked up into heavenly drink; some glisten like purple, others like gold, others are covered with a soft blue haze. The place is filled with a cloudy mist, which soaks the fruit, and the sun rises behind and warms and ripens it»<sup>28</sup>. His description shows how the popularity of classical authors with many northern visitors and how their classical knowledge informed the way that they appreciated the Italian landscape. Goethe

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<sup>28</sup> A. Griffiths, F. Carey, *German Printmaking in the Age of Goethe*, London 1994, no. 86 ([https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1993-0509-1-39](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1993-0509-1-39))

himself noted on 12 September 1786 at Lake Garda, when reading Virgil's description of the lake, that «This is the first line of Latin verse the subject of which I have seen with my own eyes»<sup>29</sup>. It also shows how the contemporary Italian agricultural landscapes influenced their readings and understanding of classical authors<sup>30</sup>.

The agronomist Arthur Young, who was rather more sober and practical than Beckford or Goethe both in his habits and as a writer, travelled across northern Italy in the autumn and winter of 1789. He published an account of this trip in 1794<sup>31</sup>. In this lengthy work there is a short but interesting section on vines<sup>32</sup>. Earlier in the work he had noted that in the region of Parma, which suffered from bad frosts, in November the vines are «turned down, and the end shoots buried in the earth to preserve them; yet in a wet season they suffer by this treatment, as well as in all seasons, by being stript from the trees, in order to undergo this operation»<sup>33</sup>. Given the purpose of his work and his deep knowledge of farming in England, it is not surprising that Young was much more precise in his descriptions than Drummond, Smollett, Montagu and Beckford. Like them, he noted that for the most part vines were trained up trees. In Piedmont, up willows with vines «fastened from mulberry to mulberry»<sup>34</sup>. Around Brescia ash and maple with mulberries at the ends of rows «but not trained up». Near Vicenza up pollarded trees «with three or four spreading branches» and

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<sup>29</sup> Fluctibus et fremitu assurgens Benace Marino [*Georgics* II V 159-60], Goethe, *Italian Journey* cit. p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> The title given to etching is 'Oenotria tellus' which is a term referring to the promised land of Italy towards which the Trojans and Aeneas were heading (Virgil *Aeneid* I, line 532; VII, line 85).

<sup>31</sup> A. Young, *Travels, During the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789*, London 1794, in two volumes (Volume Two on Italy). Ingamells, *Dictionary*, p. 1036.

<sup>32</sup> Young, *Travels*, pp. 238-242.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, p. 149. He cited references to this practice in the Roman author Strabo.

<sup>34</sup> Ivi, p. 238.



around mulberries hanging «in festoons from tree to tree». A similar practice was adopted around Padua but there vines were more valued than mulberries despite richer soil giving bad wine<sup>35</sup>. Bologna was similar with most vines on the plains rather than the hills. One landowner (Signor Bignami) trained his vines «in the French way» with poles (*echalats*) «four or five feet square» because «he finds that these always give better wine than the vines trained to trees»<sup>36</sup>. Tuscany was different with some vines espaliered and others trained to «small posts» on lines in arable fields. Near Modena, large trees supported the vines which gave «the appearance of a forest»<sup>37</sup>. Around Piacenza, rows of vines up long poles but not up trees. Near Pavia «a new method, a single row of vines, with a double row of poles, with others flat so as to occupy four ridges»<sup>38</sup>. Young also included the interesting detail that grape pips were used to produce lamp oil, at Lainate near Milan<sup>39</sup>. Throughout his *Travels* Young referred to farmers he had met giving his work more authority than most. Unfortunately, his book was not illustrated which makes it sometimes hard for the reader to visualize the exact way in which vines were trained.

Young's account can usefully be compared with that of the Swiss agronomist Frédéric Lullin de Chateauvieux (1772-1842) whose *Travels in Italy* was published in English translation in 1819<sup>40</sup>. Chateauvieux

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<sup>35</sup> Ivi, p. 239.

<sup>36</sup> Ivi, p. 240.

<sup>37</sup> Ivi, p. 241.

<sup>38</sup> Ivi, p. 242.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi, p. 238.

<sup>40</sup> *Italy, its Agriculture, &c. from the French of Mons. Chateauvieux*, trans. E. Rigby, London 1819. References to the edition published in Norwich, 1839. A different translation appeared as F. Lillin [sic] de Chateauvieux, *Travels in Italy, Descriptive of the Rural Manners and Economy of that Country*, London 1820. It was quite widely and positively reviewed at that time. The work first appeared in French (*Lettres sur l'Italie*) before 1820 (date of the second edition) with a revised and expanded edition issued 1834.

travelled more widely than Young, reaching as far as Montecassino in the south and commented on vines as he went. Like our other travellers he noted vines growing up trees in Lombardy, especially poplars and oaks<sup>41</sup>, maples or cherries in Santena (TO)<sup>42</sup>, but mulberries and poplars in Val d'Arno, Tuscany<sup>43</sup>. In contrast, in Lazio the vines were not trained over trees but against *treillages* (trellises) of reeds<sup>44</sup>. This was so at Velletri described as having a more excellent wine culture than anywhere else in Europe,<sup>45</sup> which continues to be an important wine country ('Colli Romani', mostly white wine) today:

The environs of this city are planted with vineyards, admirably well managed, The vines, in regular lines, are skilfully tied to *treillages* made of large reeds, thus presenting suites of espaliers as far as the eye can reach. There are pretty houses in every vine field, and the whole country exhibits the most chearful and active exertions<sup>46</sup>.

Further south in Campania vines climbed up notably tall trees (forming «a sort of natural vineyard») near Posillipo. These elm trees were «large enough to admit vines growing upon their branches, and to pass from tree to tree, so as to produce many rows of garlands, laden with bunches of grapes hanging one, above another»<sup>47</sup>. Near Montecassino the vines were not «tied in festoons to the elm trees, nor in lines near

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<sup>41</sup> *Italy, its Agriculture* cit., p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Ivi, pp. 21-22.

<sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 76.

<sup>44</sup> Ivi, p. 110.

<sup>45</sup> Ivi, p. 156.

<sup>46</sup> Ivi, p. 168.

<sup>47</sup> *Italy, its Agriculture* cit., p. 194. «Under this shade I noticed some young bean plants, growing very vigorously, and which were sown after harvest; this nascent vegetation reminded me of the spring in my own country».



Fig. 2 Anonymous, c. 1820 Roman vineyards

the ground, as near Albano, but supported on large trellises, formed of large branches». The vines «grow twelve or fifteen feet high, and spread in bowers, from which the grapes are pendant. This shade is so thick that nothing vegetates under it; but the air is always temperate, and the long vine branches preserve the richest verdure during the summer»<sup>48</sup>. Another way of growing vines depicted in an anonymous topographical drawing of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Rome is in rows of tripods of wooden poles (Fig. 2).

As the customary Grand Tour was transformed into something more like modern tourism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, visitors to Italy continued to notice vines in their descriptions, published or not. They continued to find much picturesqueness in the vineyards they saw, in part because they were perceived to be 'traditional', with vines trained up trees and other crops grown underneath, as 18<sup>th</sup>-century visitors had described. Both authors and readers were familiar with earlier accounts, in what was an increasingly saturated market. A good example of this can be found in Leitch Ritchie's *Heath's Picturesque Annual for 1832* whose readers were advised that

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<sup>48</sup> Ivi, p. 236.



Fig. 3 William Brockedon (1828) Bordighera

The vines are here as much for ornament as use; the poetical taste of the Italian displays itself in the thousand forms they are made to assume. The orchards are hung with these beautiful festoons (again!); the corn grows under their rich canopy, that float high above the field.

Here Ritchie's romantic imagination seems to have got the better of him for surely the vines *were* grown for their grapes and wine. But he persisted: «Nowhere do we see, as in France and Germany, a *field of grapes* – vying in elegance with a field of potatoes»<sup>49</sup>. He was referring to the landscape around Domodossola, the sub-alpine valleys north of

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<sup>49</sup> L. Ritchie, *Travelling Sketches in the North of Italy, the Tyrol and on the Rhine*, *Heath's Picturesque Annual for 1832*, London 1832, p. 87 original italics. In a copy of this book someone (possibly a 19<sup>th</sup>-century reader) has written 'Yes they do near Florence.' The volume was illustrated with engravings from drawings by Clarkson Stanfield but none of these show vines.

Lago Maggiore, and the comparison with other viticultural landscapes is interesting both for what it says about the various ways grapes were grown across Europe but also for its stress on Italy's poetic landscape and, by implication, its southern backwardness.

The painter and writer William Brockedon (1787-1854) made many visits to Italy in the 1820s. His view of the coastline looking towards Ventimiglia from Bordighera (1828) carefully depicts a small vineyard with low growing vines between the road and the shore line (Fig. 3). To the right of the road is a patch of *Arundo donax* reeds the stems of which were frequently cut to help form the trellis work along which the vines were trained. Domenico Monterumici, who was sub-prefect of Sanremo between 1877 and 1880 noticed that vines in Sanremo were kept low and they were supported by poles or reeds<sup>50</sup>. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vineyards at low altitudes in the area were progressively abandoned in favour of higher locations<sup>51</sup>. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century 70% of the grape production in the Western Riviera was around Bordighera and Ventimiglia, mostly red wines (Rossese) with a little white (Marsarda). Bordighera and the Sasso Valley were also the only areas where the dessert grape *uva da tavola* was produced.

A watercolour by Luigi Garibbo (c. 1825) of a similar date shows dense vines on a set of terraces in the Bisagno valley at Staglieno, where no vines grow today<sup>52</sup>. The watercolour shows vines planted along the edges of the terraces, and near the houses they are supported on stone

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<sup>50</sup> D. Monterumici, *Notizie statistiche – geografiche ed agricole sul circondario di Sanremo*, Treviso 1881, from A. Carassale, A. Giacobbe, *Atlante dei Vitigni del Ponente Ligure*, Arma di Taggia 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Carassale, Giacobbe, *Atlante dei Vitigni del Ponente Ligure* cit.; A. Carassale, *Problemi e prospettive della vitivinicoltura nella provincia di Porto Maurizio (1860-1923)*, in A. Carassale, A. Lo Basso (eds.) *In terra vineata. La vite e il vino in Liguria e nelle Alpi Marittime dal Medioevo ai nostri giorni*. Studi in memoria di Giovanni Rebora, Philobiblon, Ventimiglia 2014, pp. 109-131.

<sup>52</sup> Centro DocSAI, Collezione Topografica del Comune di Genova.

pillars to provide shady harbours a technique that was particularly common near Savona<sup>53</sup>. Vineyards are frequently mentioned in contemporary written documents. The agronomist Girolamo Gnecco argued that in Genoa and the surrounding areas vineyards were only profitable on infertile slopes whose soils were too poor to support olive or mulberry plantations<sup>54</sup>. He noted that peasants planted cereals and cabbages on the terraces with the vines. Luigi Maineri, argued on the contrary that the lands surrounding the city of Genoa, especially the Polcevera and the Bisagno Valleys, were well suited for viticulture<sup>55</sup>.

John Ruskin celebrated the landscape of the Val d'Aosta in a poem of 1835:

Fortresses arising round;  
Rocks, with ruined castles crowned;  
Vineyards green with trellised rail<sup>56</sup>.

In 1851 he told his father that he had travelled «some fifty miles through scenery of continually increasing magnificence». He enthused over the 'huge chestnut trees, springing out four or five trunks in a cluster' and described the valley as «literally roofed over with continuous trellises of vines»<sup>57</sup>. Wine production was of enormous importance to the economy of the Val d'Aosta in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as it is today (Fig.

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<sup>53</sup> M. Quaini, *Per la storia del paesaggio agrario in Liguria*, Savona 1973, p. 117.

<sup>54</sup> G. Gnecco, *Riflessioni sopra l'agricoltura del genovesato co' mezzi propri a migliorarla, e a toglierne gli abusi, e vizi inveterati*, Stamperia Gesiniana, Genova 1770, pp. 154-155.

<sup>55</sup> L. Maineri, *Seguito de' Pensieri patriottici sopra l'Agricoltura*, in *Avvisi*, 18 April 1778, p. 350, from Quaini (1973).

<sup>56</sup> J. Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol II, George Allen and Unwin, London 1903-4, p. 432.

<sup>57</sup> Ruskin, *The Works*, vol. XIV, p. 236, fn 1 Ruskin to his father, 26 August 1851.



Fig. 4 Traditionally trained vines at Morgex 7 August 2018

4). The principal grape was Torrette<sup>58</sup>, the name of the hill above the village of Saint Pierre, and the vineyards were planted in rows, supported by poles and kept low to take advantage of the sun and heat from the rocks<sup>59</sup>. The soil is very poor and rocky and the vines grow through the rocks, supported by narrow dry stone walls<sup>60</sup>. The wine was sweet and the artist John Brett appears to have appreciated it as he recorded the name and location of the vineyards on a written note in one of his Aosta sketchbooks. The Rev. S. W. King noted that the «grapes were nearly ripe in the continuous vineyards» at Torrette which «are the most celebrated in this district, producing a good sound wine

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<sup>58</sup> Rev. S.W. King, *The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps*, John Murray, London 1858, p. 109. Torrette is a red wine made using Petit Rouge grapes, indigenous to this valley: J. Robinson (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006, p. 515.

<sup>59</sup> L.F. Gatta, *Saggio sulle viti e sui vini della Valle d'Aosta da vendere*, ed. R. Sandi, Aosta 2014, pp. 42-44.

<sup>60</sup> A. Zuccagni-Orlandini, *Corografia fisica, storica e statistica dell'Italia e delle sue isole*, R. Società Agraria, Firenze 1838, p. 265.

of a light claret quality» clearly a comparison which King's middle-class Victorian readership was expected to understand<sup>61</sup>.

King noted that the grapes were supported on trellises «on a sort of elongated battlement like pillars, built on neat rough cast and white-washed walls». These presented a «charming» sight from the road. These structures can still be seen today in some places notably in the vicinity of Chambave and Nus, but the vineyards in this area are generally trained low up wires in straight lines now (i.e. the classic French technique). He reported, however, a «mysterious wine disease» which had affected plants for «some years» and was «still on the increase»<sup>62</sup>. This was probably *oidium*, a type of powdery mildew<sup>63</sup>. Crucial to the success of these vineyards was, and is, an efficient irrigation system. Droughts were frequent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Casalis argued that the countryside of Saint Pierre would be more productive if irrigation was improved<sup>64</sup>. The importance of viticulture is also shown in Edouard Aubert's drawings of narrow terraces so characteristic of the area<sup>65</sup>.

Some travellers commented on their own involvement in local harvests. In the 1870s and 80s a small number of British women who had settled in and around Florence wrote about the local agriculture, including viticulture. Tuscany had long been a significant producer of

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<sup>61</sup> King, *The Italian Valleys* cit., p. 109

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> J. Robinson (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006, pp. 543-544. First recorded in the United States in 1834, and then in France in 1845. It could not have been phyloxera as this disease only arrived in Italy around 1870: G. Gale, *Dying on the Vine: how phyloxera transformed wine*, Berkeley 2011, p. X.

<sup>64</sup> G. Casalis, *Dizionario geografico storico-statistico-commerciale degli stati di S.M. il Re di Sardegna*, vol. 19, Gaetano Maspero Librajo, Torino 1849.

<sup>65</sup> E. Aubert, *Vallée d'Aoste*, Amyot, Paris 1860; D. Moreno, *Valle d'Aosta*, in M. Agnoletti (ed.), *Italian Historical Rural Landscapes*, Springer, Dordrecht 2013, pp. 167-174.



wine and the Grand Dukes had taken some interest in regulating the production and sale of Chianti as early as 1716<sup>66</sup>. British visitors tended once again to romanticise wine in this region. Janet Ross (1842-1927) and ‘Leader Scott’ (pseudonym of Lucy Baxter, 1837-1902), two of the leading lights of the ‘Anglo-Florentines’, wrote about peasant viticulture as practised on their own and neighbouring estates. Although both were sincere in their efforts to portray local peasant life and their own roles in it because both were outsiders, fairly well-off and, in the case of Ross, imperious, their descriptions have to be treated with a degree of caution. Ross got into print first with an essay called ‘Vintaging in Tuscany’ published in *Macmillan’s Magazine* in 1875<sup>67</sup>. This described a «vintage party» in 1874 (the best vintage for twenty six years) at a local villa in the lower Val d’Arno opposite Monte Morello, where Italians and British collaborated in harvesting. The vines were grown on *pergole* (trellises)<sup>68</sup>. However, the 78 year-old retired estate manager (*fattore*) kept an eye on «his especial pets, the vineyards *alla francese* (vines cut low in the French fashion, and not allowed to straggle from tree to tree as is the Tuscan usage)»<sup>69</sup>.

Various grape varieties were mentioned: Sangiovese, Aleatico, Colorino and Occhio di Pernice, all still grown here today. Ross also mentioned that in the two decades prior to this vintage the «iodium» disease (*oidium*) had significantly reduced the grape crop.

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<sup>66</sup> Robinson (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Wine* cit., pp. 162-63.

<sup>67</sup> Reprinted several times including J. Ross, *Old Florence and Modern Tuscany*, J M Dent, London 1904, pp. 119-130 the version cited here. Mrs Ross’s involvement with the vintage at Poggio Gherardo is described by S. Benjamin, *A Castle in Tuscany. The Remarkable Life of Janet Ross*, Murdoch Books, Millers Point 2006, p. 105 with photographs at p. 138.

<sup>68</sup> Ross, *Old Florence and Modern Tuscany*, p. 120.

<sup>69</sup> Ivi, p. 121. A vine climbing up a tree is shown in the engraving by Adelaide Marchi (facing p. 120).

Lucy Baxter also wrote about one vintage party (in either 1886 or 1887) hosted by Countess Benveduti in her 'Tuscan Sketch' called 'The Vintage' set on one of the Benveduti estates also in the southern Val d'Arno<sup>70</sup>. Here «festoons» of vines were grown with olives and peaches in between and corn underneath. Their vines were trained traditionally not in the «straight, low espaliers of the French viticulture»<sup>71</sup>.

At the vintage the Countess and her guests (including a party of English girls who «really worked» unlike the local aristocratic youth) were involved to a degree in the actual harvest. At the dinner the guests had to taste all the wines made on the estate which were: red, *vino stretto* (first fermentation without the must), white, *vin santo* and Aleatico. Most interesting was a new wine made from the «uva Isabella», «strawberry grapes, an American variety recently introduced»<sup>72</sup>. The wine was here made in a «primitive» way rather than the «more scientific French manner» adopted by some local landowners in recent years.

Both of these accounts shed some light on Tuscan viticulture in this period, although local sources are obviously more detailed. However, the impression they gave of 'Italian' viticulture was rather one-sided. The local peasants seem to have done the hard work at vintage time, and the British 'helpers' had the luxury of a better lunch eaten away from them afterwards. Class and ethnic boundaries were maintained, as was necessary given that the intended readership was a middle-class British one which regarded Italian peasants as inferior. A perhaps more objective view was taken by Helen Zimmern (1846-1934) writing in 1906<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> L. Scott, *Tuscan Studies and Sketches*, T Fisher Unwin, London 1888, pp. 161-180.

<sup>71</sup> Ivi, p. 170, plate on p. 169.

<sup>72</sup> Robinson, *The Oxford Companion* cit., p. 363 a *Vitis labrusca* hybrid developed in South Carolina in 1816.

<sup>73</sup> H. Zimmern, *Italy of the Italians*, Pitman, London 1920, the updated fifth edition which is cited here. C. Creffield, (2004-09-23). Zimmern, Helen

In her chapter on *Agrarian Italy*, Zimmern – a liberal journalist who wrote an important biography of Schopenhauer and knew Wagner and Nietzsche – pointed out that wine production was the most profitable of Italy's agricultural activities<sup>74</sup>. It was especially important in the hills as only olives and vines would grow there. To counteract their many diseases the peasants sprayed the plants with sulphur-dust from a «queer tin apparatus»<sup>75</sup>, something which was apparently not done in the Aosta valley twenty odd years before when that disease had been, in the words of the Rev. King, «mysterious». Zimmern stated that Chianti was the best wine of Italy and, interestingly, that wines in Italy were not «doctored» as French, German and Spanish vintages were: «It is hardly likely that the making of wine in the French sense will ever take root in Italy. The Italian has too great a horror of falsified wine»<sup>76</sup>. Once again, the sense that Italians were innocent, traditional and romantic about their viticulture comes across even in this deliberately more neutral account. Evidence from accounts of Italian viticulture written by Italian travellers shows otherwise. For example, Giacomo Navone and Davide Bertolotti who both travelled in across Liguria in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were much less romantic in their descriptions of viticulture, especially Bertolotti whose work bristles with statistics and apparent objectivity<sup>77</sup>.

Travellers' accounts of viticulture in Italy therefore reveal some useful information about styles of cultivation in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centu-

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(1846–1934), translator and author. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 14 Dec. 2017, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-55284>.

<sup>74</sup> Zimmern, *Italy of the Italians* cit. p. 251.

<sup>75</sup> Robinson, *The Oxford Companion* cit. p. 666 used against powdery mildew.

<sup>76</sup> Zimmern, *Italy of the Italians* cit. p. 254.

<sup>77</sup> G. Navone, *Passeggiata per la Liguria occidentale fatta nell'anno 1827*, Ventimiglia 1832; D. Bertolotti, *Viaggio nella Liguria Marittima*, 3 vols, Eredi Botta, Turin 1834.

ries. The drawings and accounts provide clear evidence that viticulture was widespread, including in places where it is now less common (*e.g.* the flat plain of Lombardy and the suburbs of Genoa). The drawings, paintings and travelogues created expectations of what Italian viticulture was meant to look like. The methods of training varied but were almost always unlike modern practices or, apparently, contemporary French practice (with the odd exception). The 'wild' nature of Italian viticulture and the 'picturesque' nature of all the festooned vines helped to shape ideas that Italy was an exotic and romantic land, which helped in turn to attract readers for travel writing. However, they also provide evidence of local innovation with the importation of American varieties, of the use of sulphur and increasingly it would seem of the adoption of French methods, perhaps diffused via agricultural schools.

# The evolution of beekeeping practices and their landscapes in the northwest Apennines

*Rebekka Dossche\**

*If the bee disappears from the surface of the Earth,  
man would have no more than four years left to live.*

(wrongly attributed to A. Einstein)

Einstein's bee quote has been used often during the fashionable attention growth of our dearest impollinators. From local farms and organisations to continental policy briefs, the quote has become a mantra to raise awareness about the threats that the honeybee disappearance poses to food security and ecosystems<sup>1</sup>. While the reasons for the honeybee loss are related with a complexity due to the contemporary context of rapid environmental and political change, various activities on bee conservation<sup>2</sup> have become quite fashionable. Or, as Phillips states<sup>3</sup>, honeybees are human companions of longstanding; and therefore our futures are entangled.

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP (United Nations Environment Program), 2010. *Global Honey Bee Colony Disorders and Other Threats to Insect Pollinators*. UNEP, Nairobi.

<sup>2</sup> A. Byrne, U. Fitzpatrick, *Bee conservation policy at the global, regional and national levels*, in «*Apidologie*», 40(3) (2009), pp. 194-210.

<sup>3</sup> C. Phillips, *Following beekeeping: More-than-human practice in agrifood*, in «*Journal of Rural Studies*», 36 (2014), pp. 149-159.

One main reason for pollinator declines may be the loss of floral resources due to changes in land use and management. It is clear that those changes have an impact on the herbal and floral species present in the landscape, and therefore also create shifting of the presence of pollinators. So, the entanglement of bees and beekeepers is enlarged towards both their action as interaction, resulting in the landscape. Being aware of the historic organisation and presence of bees, beekeepers and their landscape, can be an added value for studying the reasons of pollinators' decline in certain areas.

While most literature on bees is concentrated on the purely biological or technical assessments, little attention has been given to an understanding of the capacities and contexts of bees and beekeepers. Especially from a historic point of view. As Phillips states, there is a need to recognise the more-than-human relations of beekeeping and the implications of these shared practices.

This study wants to underline the importance of historic resources on bees and beekeeping to draw a good idea of the local practices within a landscape context of rural mountain areas that historically were characterised by an agro-silvo-pastoral landscape management system. This contribution contains an empirical case study in the Piedmontese Apennine region, characterised by an historic agro-silvo-pastoral management system that was largely abandoned in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and currently is invaded by other vegetative species due to the lack of land management.

## **1. Methodology and data collection**

In order to understand the symbiosis of landscape transformations, its actors and rural practices, various data sources (historical, topographic, land register and physiographic maps, aerial and orthographic photographs and semi-structured interviews) and multiple methods of analysis are found to be the most appropriate. The research is illustrated with a case study in Val Borbera, located in the northwestern Apennines.

### 1.1 Historical survey

From the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, ‘modern’ forestry techniques and schemes were devised by enlightened agricultural ‘improvers’ who sought to replace historical agro-silvo-pastoral land management and usage practices in Liguria. The data collected by these contemporary agricultural ‘improvers’ provides evidence of old land-management practices<sup>4</sup>.

In Liguria, a questionnaire (*Inchiesta Generale*) circulated by the *Istituto Nazionale*<sup>5</sup> – ‘a group of doctors, naturalists, agriculturalists, and lawyers from the emerging Genoese bourgeoisie who were concerned with propagating the French enlightenment ideology’<sup>6</sup> – is used for the analysis. The survey consists out of 35 questions on various elements of the parish’s social, cultural, political and economic life. For this research two questions were considered for the local land use analysis:

- [14] the extension of the territory, the extent of cultivation and non-cultivation on the plain, hilly and mountainous areas;
- [17] whether the mountains and non-cultivated areas were covered by pasture or by trees and shrubland, and the extent and quality of the woodlands;

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<sup>4</sup> D. Moreno, *Escaping from ‘landscape’: the historical and environmental identification of local land-management practices in the post-medieval Ligurian mountains*, in R. Balzaretto, M. Pearce, C. Watkins (eds.), *Ligurian Landscapes: the environmental and cultural history of eastern Liguria*, Accordia Research Institute, London 2004, pp. 129-140. Specifically see page 131.

<sup>5</sup> P. Scotti, *L’Istituto Nazionale (Genova 1798-1806)*, in «Atti della Accademia Ligure di Scienze e Lettere», XXXV (1979), pp. 330-339.

<sup>6</sup> Moreno, *Escaping from ‘landscape’* cit.; R. Hearn, R. Dossche, *Apicultural Spaces as Biocultural Places: A Comparative Temporal and Spatial Examination of Beekeeping Practices and Their Contextual Landscapes in the Northwest Apennines*, in M. Agnoletti, F. Emanuelli (eds.), *Biocultural Diversity in Europe*. Environmental History 5, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland 2016, pp. 123-139. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26315-1>

Considering the beekeeping analysis, the following question was taken into account:

- [28]: If there are bees, how to collect honey, and wax, if you collect without killing them, and their annual product?

The answers need to be interpreted in the temporal context. As was the case for the understanding of the origin and purpose of the map makers of the historical maps, it is also relevant to understand the origin and purpose of the interviewees. The main aim of the interviews was based on the quality of the production and type of products. When respondents mention ‘cultivated land’, they most certainly refer to cultivated and arable land, while ‘non-cultivated land’ includes vineyards, meadows, pasture land, chestnut plantations and coppice woodland. Nonetheless, both have an objective of production, even if they were considered not so in the *Inchiesta*<sup>7</sup>.

## 1.2 Regressive cartographic research

Different types of spatial data sources were used for the regressive analysis, covering a time period of over 200 years, based on historical maps (1828, 1852), land register maps (1811, 1950) and aerial photographs (1936, 1954, 1981, 2000, 2009-2010, 2014), in combination with the available topographic maps (1877, 1902, 1935, 1937, 1959)<sup>8</sup>. The analysis was undertaken as a longitudinal study using data from five points in time (1828, 1852, 1959, 1980 and 2014).

Doing a regressive cartographic analysis does have some implications. Other than being influenced by the map ‘constructor’ or ‘creator’, the

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<sup>7</sup> Hearn, Dossche, *Apicultural Spaces as Biocultural Places* cit.

<sup>8</sup> R. Dossche, V. Van Eetvelde, *Land Abandonment and Its Impact on the Landscape Character of Val Borbera (Northern Apennines)*, in E. Borgogno-Mondino, P. Zamperlin (eds.), *Geomatics and Geospatial Technologies*. ASITA 2021. Communications in Computer and Information Science, Cham: Springer, vol. 1507 (2022), pp. 366-384.



interpretation of the symbology represented on a map is very much dependent on the map 'user', since this last needs to understand the influences of the purpose, scale and time of the mapping, and the generalisation techniques used in the map production<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, throughout the analysis and by tackling these problems, it is essential to carefully extract the data from its best possible source. Creating a unified legend (Table 1) between the collected historical and modern maps is an important step in the analysis<sup>10</sup>. Cevasco<sup>11</sup> underlines the importance of the interpretation of the legend in combination with other historical sources (*e.g.*, archival documents, field survey, oral knowledge...).

As stated by Cevasco and Moreno<sup>12</sup>, the *Minute di Campagna* form an important and exceptional cartographic source to reconstruct the context of the historic agro-silvo-pastoral system of the Apennines. This collection of maps, called «*tavolette*» (tables), covers the whole territory of the former Ligurian Republic, and was executed by military topographers on a large scale (from 1/9.450 until 1/20.000). Every 'table' had its own style and

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<sup>9</sup> N. Vuorela, P. Alho, R. Kalliola, *Systematic assessment of maps as source information in landscape-change research*, in «Landscape research», 27(2) (2022), pp. 141-166; S. Svenningsen, *Historical cartography and aerial photographs in geography and landscape research*, PhD thesis, Roskilde University, Denmark 2015.

<sup>10</sup> R. Cevasco, *Memoria Verde: nuovi spazi per la geografia*, Edizioni Diabasis, Reggio Emilia 2007; D. Haase, U. Walz, M. Neubert, M. Rosenberg, *Changes to Central European landscapes-analysing historical maps to approach current environmental issues, examples from Saxony, Central Germany*, in «Land Use Policy», 24(1) (2007), pp. 248-263; V. Van Eetvelde, M. Antrop, *Indicators for assessing changing landscape character of cultural landscapes in Flanders (Belgium)*, in «Land Use Policy», 26(4) (2009), pp. 901-910.

<sup>11</sup> R. Cevasco, *La copertura vegetale dell'Alta Val Trebbia nelle ricognizioni topografiche del Corpo di Stato Maggiore Sardo (1816-1852): Approccio storico all'ecologia dei siti*, in «Archeologia Postmedievale» 6(6) (2002), pp. 195-214.

<sup>12</sup> Cevasco, *La copertura vegetale dell'Alta Val Trebbia* cit.; D. Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1990.

symbology, depending on the topographer/surveyor. The tables were originally published with a booklet of notes, called «*quadernetti di campagna*», where the land use and several statistics were described, but they were lost through time. The meaning of the symbology was largely depending on the military purpose of the mapmakers; ‘cultivation’ and ‘non-cultivation’ land covers are strongly related with their sense of ‘*ingombro*’, or obstruction<sup>13</sup>. An optic in which, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the cultivations are distinguished between ‘those who permit a large practicability of the land’ (like fallow land and pasture land) and ‘those who make the land impossible and difficult to trespass’ (like vineyards, peat bogs, and coppices)<sup>14</sup>. As Cevasco<sup>15</sup> states, it is important to find the key used by topographers to describe the land cover on the one hand, but also to understand how the context of the local practices at that time is represented on the map on the other hand. By confronting the symbology with the legend of the second historical collection (the *Gran Carta degli Stati Sardi di Terraferma*, maps Bobbio and Torrighlia), it became possible to better understand the first map. Also, the information of the topographical maps of the same time era was of additional importance for the interpretation. All historic maps of 1828 and 1853 were found in the local archive of the *Laboratorio di Archeologia e Storia Ambientale* (LASA - University of Genova, department of Antiquity, Philosophy and History) and were imported in a GIS-environment through georectification. Table 1 represents the interpretation of the symbology of the historic cartography (*Minute di Campagna, Corpo di Stato Maggiore* – 1828; *Gran Carta degli Stati Sardi di Terraferma* - 1852). The explanation of the symbols was mostly linked with research done by the LASA research group of the University of Genova<sup>16</sup>.



















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<sup>13</sup> Svenningsen, *Historical cartography and aerial photographs in geography and landscape research* cit.

<sup>14</sup> Cevasco, *Memoria Verde* cit.

<sup>15</sup> Cevasco, *La copertura vegetale dell’Alta Val Trebbia* cit.

<sup>16</sup> Cevasco, *Memoria Verde* cit.; Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno* cit.

	1828	1852	Interpretation	Current CLASS	Current TYPE
NOT-CULTIVATED LAND			Woodland (Bosco)	1.1 WOODLAND	3 Middle woodland Or 4 High woodland
			Woodland with grazing activity (Bosco-Pascolo)	1.1 WOODLAND	2 Coppice woodland
			Woodland with grazing activity (?)	1.1 WOODLAND	2 Coppice woodland
			Grassland for grazing (Pascoli)	1.3 GRASSLAND	1 On higher altitude
			Shrubland (Gerbido)	1.4 SHRUBLAND	1 Mixed shrubland (stones, trees, ...)
			Vineyard (Campo Vigneto)	1.6 CULTIVATED LAND	3 Vineyard
CULTIVATED			Cultivated land (Campo)	1.6 CULTIVATED LAND	2 Agricultural land, cropland, permanent fields
INFRASTRUCTURE			Village (Paese)	2.1 HOUSING	1 Historic housing
			Mill (Mulino)	2.3 INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE	1 Mill
			Water (Acqua)	3.2 WATER COURSE	1 River

Tab. 1: interpretation of the symbology in the historical maps *Minute di Campagna*, Corpo di Stato Maggiore (1828) and *Gran Carta degli Stati Sardi di Terraferma* (1852)

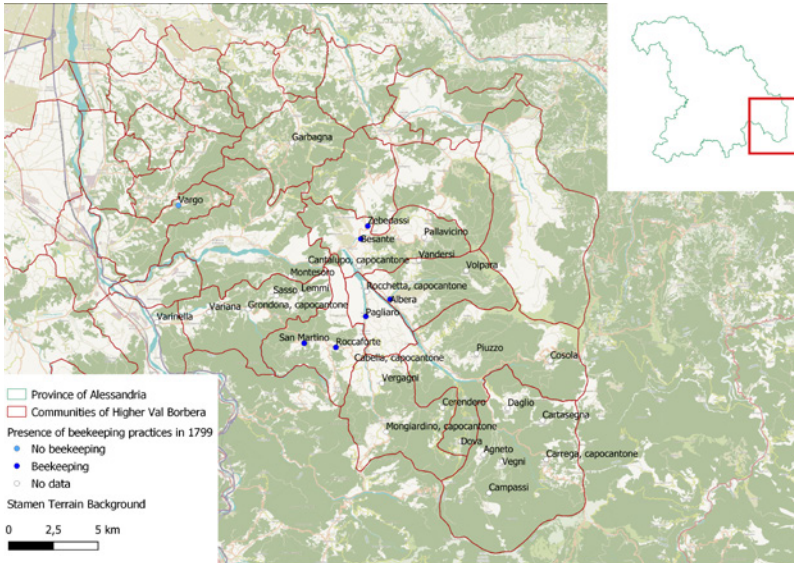


Fig. 1: representation of the beekeeping practices in the case study area

## 2. Beekeepers and practices of the past versus the present

The *inchiesta* responses provided interesting insights regarding the techniques people used to extract the honey and the wax. In Val Borbera, 31 parishes were interrogated, but only 7 of them were found in the archive (Fig. 1 and Tab. 2).

As indicated in Table 2, most of the parishes killed the bees in order to collect the honey and the wax. In the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century, this was the mainstream technique to collect the products of bees. However, at this time it would appear that new techniques to extract the honey and wax without killing the bees were being developed and being assimilated, albeit very gradually, into rural apicultural and beekeeping practices<sup>17</sup>. This technique resulted in lower production, however apicul-

<sup>17</sup> Hearn, Dossche, *Apicultural Spaces as Biocultural Places* cit.

N°	Name Parish	Quality of hives	Beekeeping techniques	Products	Annual Production
387	Pagliaro	There are small numbers of bees	Collecting killing the bees with sulphur	Honey	Some years less, some years more, depending on spring
388	Roccaforte	Not so many beehives, between 10 and 18	People from elsewhere come and kill the bees (sulphur) around the end of September	Honey and wax (for selling)	Yearly 6 per <i>rubbo</i>
389	San Martino di Roccaforte	There are many bees	Collecting through killing the bees	Honey and wax	Yearly 2 to 3 <i>libre</i> of wax, and the same for the honey
391	Besante	There is a small number of hives	Honey is collected killing the bees	Honey	Yearly 7/8 <i>rubbi</i>
393	Zebedassi	There are 2 beehives ( <i>bughi</i> )	Honey is collected mixed with the wax, killing the bees with fire and sulphur	Honey and wax	Yearly 3/8 <i>rubbi</i> of honey and wax
394_1	Albera	There are around 30 small hives	Honey and wax are collected after the bees have died	Honey and wax	The product is not of a considerable entity, as in this parish the winter is much longer than the rest of the seasons
394_2	Albera	In the parish there are around 30 hives in poor conditions	Honey and wax are collected when the bees have been killed	Honey and wax	The production is scarce because the spring arrives very late and the winter comes very early
401	Vargo	No response			

Tab. 2 overview of beekeeping, its techniques, products and annual production in Val Borbera (*Inchiesta* 1799)

turalists and beekeepers slowly began introducing it so as to maintain the bee-family for the next year, whereas the killing-technique obliged them to search for new families to repopulate the hives, be these ‘wild’ or those from other domestic sources in the parish.

### 3. Landscapes of the past versus the present

The regressive cartographic analysis shows the different transformations in land cover and land uses from 1828 until today. For these results we look at a detailed mapping of the location of Figino (Albera

Figure). Tab.3 represents the percentages of the land cover for every time slice and Fig. 2 represents the spatial land cover distribution based on the cartographic and field survey analysis.

Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the dominant land covers were cultivated land with more than 38% of the land cover, mixed with shrublands used for grazing activities and chestnut plantations, covering another 35% of the area. The disappearance of the grasslands indicates a first drastic change in these mountainous slopes between 1750 and 1850 and concerns both local bee resources and possible nesting sites for wild bees.

Open tree formations (grassland covered with small oak trees (*Quercus cerris*), chestnut pastures, beech forests and turkey oaks managed since the Middle Ages with a notch etc.) favourable to the grazing of both domestic and wild bees have been gradually replaced by permanent meadows and fields and by more closed forest formations. These open plant formations were linked to multiple land uses, on which intense sheep and goat grazing was practiced. There is a strong link between pastoral practices and the available nectar resources.

A second phase of decline is recorded with the gradual abandonment of livestock activities since the 1950s and the progressive closure of open habitats increasingly occupied by newly formed forests and coniferous reforestation. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the omnipresent rough land of 1850 and 1950 transforms into middle woodland, characterized by invasive secondary vegetation and pine woodlands. Also the chestnut plantations get abandoned and become classified as middle woodland.

We can note the progressive disappearance of open habitats (pasture, crops, gerbido, etc.) and the advance of the secondary forest as in the case represented, a mountain slope in the municipality of Albera Ligure (hamlet Figino). This change in the resources of bee grazing has certainly had an impact on the type and quality of bee products. These are, in similar areas, today more concentrated on the honeys of the forest (chestnut, honeydew, etc.).

<b>(Sub)categoria of Land Cover</b>	<b>1828</b>	<b>1852</b>	<b>1959</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>WOODLAND</b>	<b>12,06%</b>	<b>11,85%</b>	<b>14,35%</b>	<b>55,00%</b>	<b>66,80%</b>
Secondary vegetation	0,22%	0,68%	2,84%	4,48%	12,21%
Coppice woodland	11,27%	10,74%	11,06%	0,00%	0,00%
Middle woodland	0,56%	0,43%	0,43%	48,26%	46,23%
High woodland ( <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> )	0,00%	0,00%	0,02%	0,00%	0,00%
Pine woodland	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	2,26%	8,36%
<b>PLANTATION</b>	<b>22,70%</b>	<b>18,00%</b>	<b>26,36%</b>	<b>0,14%</b>	<b>0,12%</b>
Chestnut plantations	22,70%	18,00%	26,36%	0,00%	0,00%
Fruit plantations	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,14%	0,12%
<b>GRASSLAND</b>	<b>10,61%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>9,17%</b>	<b>22,62%</b>	<b>19,11%</b>
Grasslands on high altitudes	10,61%	0,00%	0,01%	0,00%	0,00%
Grasslands on low altitudes	0,00%	0,00%	9,16%	22,62%	19,11%
<b>SHRUBLAND</b>	<b>11,21%</b>	<b>26,81%</b>	<b>19,20%</b>	<b>9,02%</b>	<b>5,57%</b>
Rough ground	11,21%	26,81%	18,05%	7,36%	5,57%
Bushland	0,00%	0,00%	1,15%	1,65%	0,00%
<b>NON COVERED</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,02%</b>
Non covered substrate	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,02%
<b>CULTIVATED LAND</b>	<b>38,42%</b>	<b>38,32%</b>	<b>25,98%</b>	<b>8,22%</b>	<b>2,96%</b>
Horticulture	0,00%	0,00%	0,29%	0,41%	0,62%
Arable land	12,07%	8,36%	22,14%	6,47%	1,39%
Vineyard	26,32%	29,96%	1,33%	0,69%	0,80%
Beans	0,02%	0,00%	2,22%	0,66%	0,14%

Tab. 3 evolution of land cover of Figino (1828-2014)

## 4. Conclusion

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, beekeeping was largely part of the agro-silvo-pastoral system. Even though in small numbers, most of the local farmers had bees which were part of their family income. Analysis shows the limited production and the negligible market value.

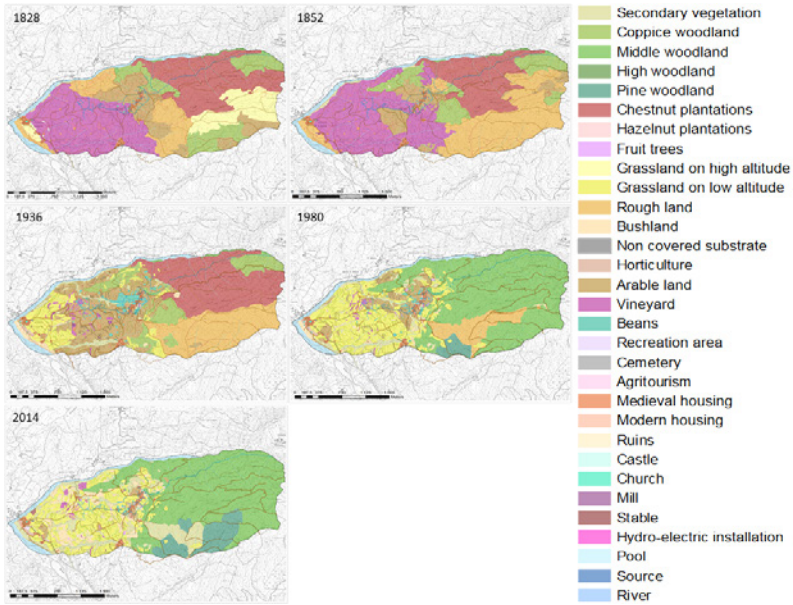


Fig. 2 land cover changes of Figino (Albera Ligure) from 1828 to 2014 (source: elaborations of the author)

With the desire for modernization of beekeeping in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>, beekeeping changed from a rural practice within a farming system towards a specialist branch of agriculture and creating professional beekeeping as main occupation (Tab. 4). But not only the keepers of bees changed, also the type of products and the beekeeping practices shifted and became more and more specialized. If we look at the way in which apiculture and beekeeping are conducted nowadays, there are large differences in the amount of people engaged in apiculture and beekeeping and the scale on which it is performed. The professionalization of apicultural and beekeeping techniques from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards is one of the reasons explaining these changes.

<sup>18</sup> Hearn, Dossche, *Apicultural Spaces as Biocultural Places* cit.



The landscapes transformed from densely inhabited rural mountain areas with a large biodiversity, towards abandoned ‘marginalised’ areas, dominated by invasive woodland of mixed species. The disappearance of various land covers through time and the dominance of just one, namely woodland, illustrates the homogenization of the rural mountain areas.

But this homogenization is not only a process that is present in relation with abandonment. It also is a result of industrialization of areas, of modernization processes and of mono-cultures, not only for agriculture in general, but also for beekeeping in specific. Therefore, this process is a result of the world we currently live in, a world in which one activity and purpose of landscapes is largely concentrated in one place, in contrast with the past, when several activities were executed in the same landscape. The cultural landscapes of the Mediterranean were characterised by landscapes with a large variety in land cover. Today, those diverse landscapes are largely transformed into homogeneous landscapes, but the landscape of the past still has its remains.

	Past (18-19 <sup>th</sup> century)	Present (21 <sup>st</sup> century)
bees	<i>Apis ligustica</i> , large variety of species Between 2 and 18 hives per family	<i>Apis ligustica</i> , <i>Apis nera</i> , Buckfast Around 200-300 hives per person
keepers	Local farmers, part of the family income in an agro-silvo-pastoral management system	Professional beekeeping, numbers
products	Honey, wax	Honey, bee-families, queens
practices	Killing hives Honey extraction	Shifting hives Chasing honey
landscapes	Densely inhabited rural mountain areas, with cultivations around the settlements, chestnut, hazelnut, and mixed woodlands ( <i>quercus cerris</i> , <i>fagus sylvaticus</i> ), and higher positioned meadows.	Largely abandoned rural mountain areas, dominated by invasive woodland of mixed species. Small open areas of historic meadows are still present.

Tab. 4: overview of type of bees, beekeepers, products, practices and landscapes in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century and today

When strategies are constructed and decisions are made to tackle the disappearance of our longstanding companion, namely the bee, geographical-historical analysis should be considered as an added value in understanding the bees, the beekeeping practices, the landscape and all of its transformations.

# Placing Watercress in 19<sup>th</sup>-century England: a shifting scene of purity, poverty and pleasure

Rebecca Ford\*

## 1. Introduction

In May 2004, a Watercress Festival was held in Alresford, a small market town in Hampshire – a county which the organisers dubbed the ‘watercress capital’ of Britain. The event was part of a campaign by the main commercial growers to boost falling sales of the crop. The festival has been held annually ever since (with the exception of the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021) and is now promoted by the local tourist board. Food stalls line the streets, there are Morris-dancers, cookery demonstrations by celebrity chefs, a watercress-eating contest; even a ‘Watercress King and Queen’ who are paraded through the town distributing fresh bunches of cress. On occasion, the public have also been able to visit local growers for a tour of the watercress beds. It is, as the Daily Telegraph reported «...a quintessentially English scene: redolent with tradition on the one hand, and a little bit silly on the other»<sup>1</sup>. It is

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<sup>1</sup> J. Wallis-Simon, *Watercress Festival 2012: tomfoolery and tradition*, in «Daily Telegraph», (2012), 25 May [available online] at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/> [first accessed Dec 2017].

also a ‘tradition’ that has been created; one that can be viewed as part of a desire to re-place food in the imagination and re-people its production – a reaction, one could argue, to the remote and faceless nature of the globalised food industry.

By firmly linking produce and place in the minds of the consumer, the festival taps into a prevailing trend for ‘re-localising’ food – a trend that emerged from the Slow Food movement of the 1980s and continued to grow after various food scares, notably the outbreak of ‘mad cow disease’ in the 1990s. It is a subject that has attracted a great deal of academic interest, though a «single definition of ‘local’ food remains elusive»<sup>2</sup> while notions of re-localisation also vary: for some it is simply «bringing food production closer to cities»<sup>3</sup>, while for others it can be defined by its marketing arrangements such as «farmers selling directly to consumers»<sup>4</sup>. Grasseni takes this further by framing it, in an Italian context, as a «*spatialization of trust*» shortening both physical and relational distance between producer and consumer<sup>5</sup>.

Food products, says Sonnino, can become ‘embedded’ in place – it is a dynamic process described as a «mobilization of values and meanings that construct a place as the ‘local’»<sup>6</sup>. An embedded food could, then,

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<sup>2</sup>J. Ricketts Hein and D. Watts (2010), *Local food activity in the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain*, in «Irish Geography», 43/2 (2010), pp. 135-147, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup>A. Gaspard, *Food relocalisation: it is not only the number of hectares that counts!* in «Urban Food Futures», (2017) <http://www.urbanfoodfutures.com/food-relocalisation>

<sup>4</sup>S. Martinez *et al.*, *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues*, in «ERR 97, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service» 4, (2010), [https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/46393/7054\\_err97\\_1\\_.pdf](https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/46393/7054_err97_1_.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>C. Grasseni, *Re-localizing Milk and Cheese*, in «Gastronomica», 14/4 (2014), pp. 34-43, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup>R. Sonnino, *The Power of Place: embeddedness and local food systems in Italy and the UK*, in «Anthropology of Food», (2007) par. 24, <https://doi.org/10.4000/aof.454>

be popularly considered to have a natural home, a place to which it belongs. This can provide an opportunity for food tourism, where visitors can taste the produce and often view the location/s where it grows or is made. Traditions can be re-invented – as in the case of saffron in Tuscany<sup>7</sup> – and foods and their production become a selling point, not only for growers/producers wishing to increase sales and engage directly with customers, but also for tourist offices keen to attract visitors to their locale. Food tourism has an important role to play in the «retention and development of regional identity»<sup>8</sup> whilst at the same time generating consumer interest in geographically locatable produce – particularly that which is grown on a small scale and can be sold and consumed close to the point of production. As Maria Fonte states:

Whereas in the agro-industrial food complex, production processes are de-territorialised, placeless and centre around the commodification of food (*food from nowhere*), the alternativeness of the local food economies is contingent on their embeddedness in the social, cultural and territorial context (*food from somewhere*) as well as in affirmation of the importance of non-monetary values in food production and consumption<sup>9</sup>.

The desire to engage with ‘food from somewhere’ as a leisure activity, is typically seen as a contemporary phenomenon and there is no major body of work on its historic manifestations. However, while large-scale

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<sup>7</sup> Sonnino, *The Power of Place* cit.

<sup>8</sup> S. Everett, C. Aitchison, *The Role of Food Tourism in Sustaining Regional Identity: A Case Study of Cornwall, South-West England*, in «Journal of Sustainable Tourism» (2008), Feb, pp. 150-167, p. 150.

<sup>9</sup> M. Fonte, *Introduction* in M. Fonte, A.G. Papadopoulos (eds.), *Naming Food After Places: Relocalisation and Knowledge Dynamics in Rural Development*, London: New York 2016, pp. 1-35, p. 1.

food tourism might indeed be a product of our current age, we should not rule out the possibility that it occurred in some form in previous eras. In this chapter, I consider the example of the Springhead watercress plantation which became a visitor attraction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was situated near London and the first part of the essay discusses the role played by watercress in the contemporary life of that city, its associations with an idealised countryside, and the symbolic space it held in the imagination. I discuss urban-rural contrasts in depictions of cress, and of its gatherers, producers and sellers. I show that over time, watercress became perceptually dislocated from the places where it was grown and became intertwined with the city and, in particular, Farringdon market. The chapter then moves on to outline why, in the Victorian era, there might have been a consumer desire to re-localise this leafy food, embedding it back in the countryside. In the second part, I examine the emergence of the Springhead plantation as a visitor attraction and performative space, and how it was promoted in ways that echoed idealised imaginings of the cultures of cress.

## **2. A Pure Country Food-Sold on City Streets**

The first commercial production of watercress in specially created beds in England is generally thought to have taken place at Springhead, near Gravesend, in 1808; prior to that it had probably been gathered from the wild and taken to the city<sup>10</sup>. The grower, according to a letter from Henry Bellenden Ker read to the Horticultural Society of London (HSL) on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1821 and published in 1822 in volume

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<sup>10</sup> Wm Craig's 1804 book on the 'Cries of London' says that watercress grown and cultivated «in gardens adjacent to the metropolis» was available at Covent Garden market, casting doubt on the 1808 date for first commercial production. However, it was 'inferior' to the watercress which grew naturally and was gathered before breakfast to be sold fresh on the streets.

IV of its Transactions, was William Bradbery. In the letter, Bellenden Ker states that Bradbery: «first began to cultivate the Water cress In February 1808, at Northfleet-Spring head [sic], near Gravesend». Once production was established, he is said to have «gathered the cress regularly for the London markets»<sup>11</sup>. For the first time, it was possible to associate watercress with a rural ‘somewhere’ rather than a bucolic ‘anywhere’.

Good quality watercress requires a source of running water, ideally from a natural spring or artesian well. It grows best on chalk or limestone, so has long been associated with the chalk streams of southern England. Being highly perishable, it needs to get to the point of sale quickly and this site on the north Kent coast not only offered a reliable source of clean, shallow, running water, but was only around 25 miles from London, thus allowing the crop to be transported easily – first by road and later by rail. The fact Bradbery felt there was a market for cultivated cress, suggests that perhaps the wild version was not available in sufficient quantities to satisfy London’s appetite. That there was a desire for cress, both for its nutritional and medicinal properties, is suggested by the horticultural writer and Fellow of the Horticultural Society, Henry Phillips (1775-1838) who wrote in his *History of Cultivated Vegetables* that watercress was not only an agreeable «breakfast salad» but was «recommended in all chronical diseases, which arise from glandular or viscerous obstructions»<sup>12</sup>. Bradbery was certainly successful. Around 1819 or 1820 he sold the Springhead plantation and moved to West Hyde, near Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire, where he planted about

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<sup>11</sup> H. Bellenden Ker, *letter read Nov 6, 1821, to Horticultural Society of London*, in «Transactions of the Horticultural Society of London», (1822), vol. IV, pp. 537-542, p. 537.

<sup>12</sup> H. Phillips, *History of Cultivated Vegetables*, Henry Colburn, London 1822, p. 373.

	1808	1821	1855	1875	1890	1899
<b>Kent</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Herts</b>		1	3	4	19	21
<b>Middlesex</b>		2	2	4	1	3
<b>Bucks</b>			8	1	7	
<b>Hants</b>				2	2	17
<b>Bucks</b>			8	1	7	
<b>Sussex</b>				1	1	2
<b>Wilts</b>					2	2
<b>Surrey</b>					1	
<b>Essex</b>			1	1	2	
<b>Oxon</b>						1

Tab. 1 Watercress Growers by County 1808-1899; compiled using trade directories and the Victoria County Histories

5 acres of cress beds, establishing an industry that flourished in the county until the 1970s. However, cultivation continued at Springhead and, as shall be seen later, its reputation as the first locus of commercial production, together with the way it could be readily intertwined with a set of values, aesthetics and imaginings, combined to construct it, in the Victorian era and beyond, as the home of watercress.

As the railway network grew, cress growers were able to move further out of the city whilst still supplying it; London was also expanding and land formerly given over to market gardens was increasingly being taken over by building development<sup>13</sup>. By 1890 there were at least 19 growers in Hertfordshire (Tab. 1).

<sup>13</sup> M. Thick, *The Neat House Gardens: early market gardening around London*, Prospect, Totness 1998.



London proved to have a huge appetite for watercress. It was consumed by all classes and prized for its fresh, peppery flavour and health-giving qualities; it was particularly valued in the winter months when few fresh fruits and vegetables were available. While the plant would have represented a valuable commodity to the grower, once it had been transported to the industrialised city it was transformed not only into a nutritious foodstuff, but also into a symbol of the countryside.

As the places of production became more remote – and perceptually, as well as literally, more distanced from the city, it was quite the opposite with the street vendors of cress; they increased in number and visibility along with London's appetite for watercress. Itinerant traders had been a feature of London life since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century and continued to be so in the 1800s. Fruit and vegetables were mainly traded by street sellers<sup>14</sup>. Watercress vendors appear to have made a great cultural impact. From the early part of the century, they were represented in paintings, poetry, novels, and children's literature and later in journalism and reformist pamphlets as well. They occupied a unique place in the public consciousness, particularly between the 1850s and 1890s.

Water, as Illich observed, has an «ability to purify as well as to clean...[it] communicates its purity by touching or waking the substance of a thing and it cleans by washing dirt from its surface»<sup>15</sup>. If the water is contaminated however, it has a capacity to poison and pollute with remarkable ease. It is not surprising, then, that watercress – while long celebrated for its benefits to health, has also been associated with

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<sup>14</sup> S. Jankiewicz, *A Dangerous Class: The Street Sellers of Nineteenth-Century London*, in «Journal of Social History», 46 (2012), pp. 391-415.

<sup>15</sup> I. Illich, *H<sup>2</sup>O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, Dallas 1985, p. 27; see also V. Strang, *Substantial Connections: Water and Identity in an English Cultural Landscape*, in «Worldviews», 10(2) (2006), pp. 155-177 and S.F. Cooper, *The Liquefaction of Desire: Music, Water and Femininity in Victorian Aestheticism*, in «Women: A Cultural Review», 20(2) (2009), pp. 186-201.

diseases such as typhoid and cholera<sup>16</sup>, as well as with liver fluke contamination. Although it prefers to grow in clean, flowing chalk streams, watercress could also be found in polluted ditches and other water bodies. As it is usually eaten raw, even careful washing may not remove dangerous microbes from the crop. Therefore, the quality and purity of the water in which it is grown is vital. Cultivated cress grown in clear water offered: «[...] perfect freedom from the spawn of the small moluscous animals which are found in ditches: and which in the spring of the year, deters so many from the enjoyment of this whole-some addition to the breakfast table»<sup>17</sup>.

In 19<sup>th</sup>-century London the increase in population, from «just over one million in 1801 to about 2.75 million in 1851»<sup>18</sup> led to the discharge of more waste into the Thames. This included raw sewage for, as Ribner explains, cesspools were linked to the sewer system from 1815 and by 1857 «some 250 tons of faecal matter entered the Thames daily»<sup>19</sup>. As the Thames «became a putrid, noisome and dead river»<sup>20</sup> increasingly associated, in creative terms at least, with ‘sin’<sup>21</sup>— crystal clear springs, and the wholesome cress which grew within them, came to symbolise the beauty of the countryside and nature; rurality from which, as Malchow

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<sup>16</sup> S. Hibberd, *Home Culture of the Watercress: Water-cresses without sewage, London 1878*. See also *Croydon Typhoid Inquiry, opening proceedings* in «British Medical Journal» (1937) 2 (4014) 1189; R. Ford, *Controlling contagion? Watercress, regulation and the Hackney typhoid outbreak of 1903* in «Rural History», 31(2) (2020), pp. 181-194.

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, *Springhead, near Northfleet, Kent* in «The Saturday Magazine», 13 Apr, 435 (1839), front page.

<sup>18</sup> L.B. Wood, *The Restoration of the Tidal Thames*, Bristol 1982, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> J.P. Ribner, *The Thames and Sin in the age of the Great Stink: Some artistic and literary responses to a Victorian environmental crisis*, in «The British Art Journal» 1, 2 (2000), pp. 38-46, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> Wood, *Tidal Thames* cit., p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Ribner, *The Thames and Sin* cit., p. 39.

describes, the populace was now divorced<sup>22</sup>. The purity of the waters in which the cress loved to grow was somehow transformed into a moral, bucolic purity that was possessed by the sellers themselves – particularly the female ones. Three stereotypes of watercress gatherers-vendors emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century: pitiful rural gatherers, romanticised rural gatherers, and urban street vendors.

The first of these was generally a desperately poor, elderly country person – usually a widow – who battles with the harshness of nature to gather cress to sell. As early as 1770, Oliver Goldsmith had depicted the watercress gatherer/seller as one of the poorest, most pitiable, people in society. In *The Deserted Village* he talks of the last lonely resident of the settlement, an elderly widow forced to gather cress, which she will then sell, in order to make ends meet:

She wretched matron, forced in age, for bread,  
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread<sup>23</sup>.

Goldsmith's character symbolises a lost way of life, as well as abject poverty. His marginalised rustic, the 'gatherer-seller' who collects and sells cress through necessity – and who battles the cruelty of nature and society – exemplifies a country life diminished by change, but proffers reminders of pastoral purity (*i.e.* watercress) to the encroaching town. Such a figure appears again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in a poem<sup>24</sup> by John Clare (1793-1864) whose works reflect his distress at the impact parliamentary enclosure was having on the land, notably around his home village of Helpston, then in Northamptonshire. His watercress gatherer is again a widow, a 'poor wretch' who has been reduced to gathering the

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<sup>22</sup> H. Malchow, *Free Water: the Public Drinking Fountain Movement and Victorian London*, in «The London Journal», 4(2) (1978), pp. 181-203.

<sup>23</sup> O. Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village: A Poem*, London 1770, lines 131-132.

<sup>24</sup> J. Clare, *The Cress Gatherer* in *The Village Minstrel*, London, 1821.

plant with her young son. The watercress is natural ‘simple produce’ gathered by the poorest in the countryside but transformed to a luxury foodstuff in the town. The townsfolk do not think about the source of this health-giving food, nor about the circumstances of the person who provides it. There is disconnection and suspicion between the town and the country.

The second stereotyped gatherer-seller is depicted as youthful, happy and attractive; usually female and an aesthetic contrast to the aged rustic. While they may collect watercress because they have few other options, they take pleasure in the gathering and are at one with nature. They personify the pastoral innocent if children – and innocently sexual if adult. They are also possessed of a strong morality and are good Christians, not in spite of their poverty, but because of it. It is a romantic and sentimental image that became increasingly popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the watercress itself, being naturally occurring, commonplace (*i.e.* suitably humble), and imbued with pure water is the ideal cultural object to help convey the notion. This stereotype first appears in an anonymous poem entitled *The Water-Cress Girl*, which appeared in a popular British ladies’ magazine in 1796<sup>25</sup>. Nell, a poor country girl, describes rising early to gather cresses which ‘bounteous nature’ provides all year round. Though barefoot, she is happy and at one with nature, her poverty effectively a virtue for it leaves her untainted by money. Nell is as wholesome and pure as the cresses she collects, which are always of the highest quality.

Visual depictions of figures such as Nell also began to appear, including a work exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1788, by the artist Francis Wheatley RA (1747-1801). Wheatley gained fame with his ‘Cries of London’ but *The Girl with Water Cresses* is an earlier work. A print of

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<sup>25</sup> Anonymous, *The Water-Cress Girl*, in «The Lady’s Magazine: or, Entertaining companion for the fair sex» 27, Nov (1796), p. 519 [available online] British Periodicals: <http://search.proquest.com/britishperiodicals/>.

an engraving is in the British Museum and shows an attractive young countrywoman standing beside a stream, holding a basket full of freshly gathered watercress. She has an innocent sexuality: bare-footed and clear skinned, but with clothing that indicates respectable poverty. This impression is enforced by a canine companion, who represents fidelity, and a cottage in the distance from which a comforting plume of smoke rises from the chimney. It is an Arcadian ideal. Nature here is bountiful, for her basket is almost overflowing with cresses, while her lack of footwear makes her appear in tune with nature – and nature's impulses.

The third stereotype of watercress vendors are people of the city, urban 'sellers' who are depicted in urban settings. And while the gatherer/sellers were not associated with a named place, just a generalised 'countryside', these vendors were very closely linked to London. They are poor and marginalised, their lives and surroundings harsh but their moral is intact; the watercress they sell is as pure as their character – although, if they are young women, it also imparts them with a sexual freshness of which they seem not entirely unaware. The first depiction of this street seller is in a romanticised painting entitled *The Watercress Girl* by Johann Zoffany (1733-1810). This shows a young, clear-skinned girl with grubby fingernails and a plaintive gaze, and was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780, together with a companion painting *The Flower Girl*. Both works were said to have been modelled by a girl called Jane Wallis, who a reviewer of the time pronounced «a most beautiful Girl»<sup>26</sup>. Zoffany's child is clearly poor, but her basket is filled with fresh green cress; she wears the red cloak that was common to female street sellers in London at that time<sup>27</sup> and has a respectable, honest expression. In this work,

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<sup>26</sup> M. Webster, *Zoffany: Painter of the Georgian Scene*, National Portrait Gallery catalogue 89, London 1977, p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> An article in an edition of *Gardeners' Chronicle* says few Londoners can fail to see: «the old red-cloaked women sorting the little bundles [of cress] at the corners of streets» (*Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1845, p. 255).

she is not depicted gathering cress from a brook; she is entirely a feature of the urban scene – a London food hawker, but one who brings with her a refreshing air of the countryside. The art critic Penelope Treadwell observes an accompanying sexual element, saying that the painting: «[...] suggests innocence and virginity in her youth, but her fingernails are dirty, her glance is knowing, while her open mouth with its opulent lips hold forth the promise of experience»<sup>28</sup>.

Innocence and sexuality, a potent duality contained within the form of the young female watercress seller; a duality drenched with the same combination of purity and potential danger possessed by watercress – and water itself. The painting must have fuelled demand in the art market for two mezzotints of it were made: the first by John Raphael Smith in 1780; the second by John Young in 1785<sup>29</sup>.

The attractive young, female watercress seller had an enduring appeal, for over one hundred years after Zoffany's work went on show, another artist exhibited a similar painting at the Royal Academy. The artist this time was Frederick Ifold (1821-1904) whose composition echoes Zoffany's, although this time the young seller has an even more uneasy mix of youth and experience. Her gaze is knowing and defensive, and her clothes shabby, but her clear skin, pretty face and the garland round her head accentuate her youth and vulnerability. The fresh cresses in her basket come at a price: a price that is etched on her face. The image of the watercress gatherer-seller continued to inspire both artists and writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are people imbued with contradictions, contradictions that say much about issues that were of importance in a rapidly changing, industrialising society: purified by water, yet potentially tainted by it too; virtuous and honest, yet close to nature and so possibly

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<sup>28</sup> P. Treadwell, *Johan Zoffany – Artist and Adventurer*, Paul Holberton Publishing, London 2009, p. 315.

<sup>29</sup> Both prints are held by the British Museum (location Prints and Drawings; reg no 1878, 0511.1015 and 1902,1011.5086).

unbounded by social mores; innocent country folk, yet streetwise town traders. And it is the watercress itself – with its favoured habitat of spring water, its nutritional qualities, its ease of incorporation into any diet, and its need to be eaten ‘fresh’ soon after picking – that facilitates these imaginings. It is worth noting that Alresford’s first watercress festival was part of a campaign which had been launched in 2003 by topless model Jo Guest, who gamely posed in a chilly watercress bed dressed only in a ‘bikini’ made of cress, under the tag-line ‘Not Just a Bit on the Side’! The photograph, with its interplay of nature, fresh water, and sexuality, unconsciously echoing 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century representations of female watercress vendors.

As the number of itinerant vendors in London grew, so the way they were perceived mutated. They seemed to carry fewer qualities of the countryside with them and instead gave off an uncomfortable whiff of the city. An encyclopaedia of London in 1841 spoke of how ‘The cry of ‘Water-cresset’ used to be heard from some barefoot nymph of the brook, who at sunrise had dipped her feet into the babbling runnel, to carry the green luxury to the citizens’ breakfast-tables’ then laments that these ‘nymphs’ are no longer heard for ‘water-cresses are now grown like cabbages in gardens’<sup>30</sup>. It is a sentiment echoed just a few years later in *Picturesque Sketches of London: past and present* where the writer acknowledges that cress sellers were still heard on the streets, but the food was:

[...] no longer borne by a nymph, who paused every now and then to throw aside the long hair which fell over her nut-brown and weather-stained cheeks [...] the figure that conjured up Sabrina and the “glassy cool translucent wave” has long since departed<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> C. Knight, *Knights Cyclopaedia of London*, Knight, London 1841, 1, pp. 137-141.

<sup>31</sup> T. Miller, *Picturesque Sketches of London: past and present*, National Illustrated Library, London 1852, p. 202.

Sabrina is a water nymph in *Comus* by John Milton, a masque written in honour of chastity.

### 3. Trading Places

By the late 1840s, Farringdon market, situated in the north-west corner of the City just off Farringdon Street, had become the main centre in London for watercress trading. It had opened in November 1829<sup>32</sup> and covered an acre and a half, with Stonecutter Street at its southern boundary and Shoe Lane to the west. Just a short walk north, was the poor Field Lane area of Saffron Hill in Clerkenwell; described as «the emporium of petty larceny» by Dickens<sup>33</sup>. Growers would send their crops to Farringdon, where it was received by dealers and sold on to itinerant street vendors who tended to be «[...] very poor persons [...] children or old people»<sup>34</sup>. Although there were other markets selling cress, Farringdon was closest to the itinerant vendors' homes in the poor residential areas of Clerkenwell. The watercress sold there was also cheap, for it was not pre-bunched as at Covent Garden but: «sold loose, out of big hampers, so they give you a large handful for a penny»<sup>35</sup>. Cutting your own cress from the beds on Hackney Marshes, which were operating from at least the 1830s, might have saved even more money, but necessitated a three mile walk there and back – a long distance on a chill winter morning.

Around this time, class divisions and the gulf between rich and poor were deepening in London, which was growing rapidly – partly due to agricultural depression which people felt had led to 'a massive influx

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<sup>32</sup> S. Leigh, *Leigh's new picture of London; or... a luminous guide to the stranger*, Leigh and Son, London 1830, p. 108.

<sup>33</sup> C. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Bentley, London 1838, p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, London 1851, p. 145.

<sup>35</sup> H. Mayhew, *Labour and the Poor*, Letter X111, in «Morning Chronicle» 1849, 30 Nov [available online] Nineteenth-century British Library newspapers.



from the countryside into the towns»<sup>36</sup>. Health and social problems were becoming evident and of increasing concern to reformers. In 1849, the journalist Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) was commissioned by the editor of the popular newspaper *The Morning Chronicle* to investigate the lives and living conditions of the working classes in London. His reports appeared as letters. On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November 1849, his letter XIII covered the 'Dealers in Watercresses', which included an interview with a 62-year-old man. His informant (who said he would be in the workhouse, were it not for his 35-year-old wife who supplemented their income by working as a laundress) told him that the vendors were mainly old men and women, who were no longer able to take on other work, and young girls who were sent out by their families to earn some extra money. Mayhew's account emphasised the harsh working environment, with vendors rising early even in winter to get to the market for around 5am. His informant, who told Mayhew he found it increasingly hard to cope with the cold himself, expressed his sympathy for the young children: «Ah! it would make your heart ache if you was to go to Farringdon market early, this cold weather, and see the poor little things there without shoes and stockings, and their feet quite blue with the cold»<sup>37</sup>.

The reports provided the basis for Mayhew's influential book *London Labour and the London Poor*, first published in 1851. In it, he described watercress sellers as:

the very poorest of the poor, such as young children, who have been deserted by their parents, and whose strength is not equal to any very great labour, or by old men and women, crippled by disease or accident, who in their dread of a workhouse life, linger on with the few pence they earn by street-selling<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1971, p. 286.

<sup>37</sup> Mayhew, *Labour and the Poor* cit., letter XI11.

<sup>38</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour* cit., p. 145.

Writing of Farringdon market, he focused on the poverty of the vendors and their honest and industrious natures. A little boy, aged about five, treads «with his blue naked feet over the cold stones as a cat does over wet ground» and is given a «few old cresses» by a kindly dealer. There is no mention of cress-gathering or harvesting; the crop now seems so divorced from its places of production that there is almost a mystery to its origins. It arrives in the city in baskets, brought by «a country-looking fellow, in a wagoner's cap and smock-frock» while one dealer sits with an open hamper in front of him «with a candle fixed in the centre of the bright green cresses, and as it shines through the wicker sides of the basket, it casts curious patterns on the ground»<sup>39</sup>.

Cress sellers, Mayhew observes: «belong to a class so poor that their extreme want alone would almost be an excuse for theft»: in the case of the women, you can't help thinking he means prostitution too. This had long been of concern to both reformers and the authorities, and «by the 1850s prostitution had become “the Great Social Evil”, not simply an affront to morality, but a vital aspect of the social economy as well»<sup>40</sup>. A late Victorian study found that a large percentage of London prostitutes had worked in jobs «such as laundering, charring, and street selling»<sup>41</sup>.

One section of Mayhew's investigation at Farringdon involved an interview with a watercress seller aged about eight. She had been selling cress for approximately a year and epitomised the image of the 'street child': «children whose activities lay outside the structure of regulatory legislation that by the 1850s had restricted juvenile employment in the textile trades and mining»<sup>42</sup>. Official concern, both about and for them,

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<sup>39</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour* cit., p. 146.

<sup>40</sup> J. R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1980, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society* cit., p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> C. Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: childhood and the idea of human interiority 1780-1930*, Virago, London 1995, p. 114.

can be seen in a report of a debate in 1853 in the House of Lords on the Juvenile Mendicancy (no. 2) Bill. The reforming peer the Earl of Shaftesbury mentioned a report carried out by Mr Clay in 1851, in which juvenile cress sellers were closely associated with thieves and beggars:

There are hundreds of poor children in all great towns training up as thieves. The children are sent out in the morning with watercress [...] &c, and at night with firewood. The whole of these children are dirty, ragged, without covering to head or feet. They must bring home a certain sum or value, whether obtained by begging, selling, or stealing<sup>43</sup>.

Mayhew's description of the un-named child is compelling:

Her little face, pale and thin with privation, was wrinkled where the dimples ought to have been [...] The poor child, although the weather was severe, was dressed in a thin cotton gown, with a threadbare shawl wrapped round her shoulders [...] When she walked she shuffled along, for fear that the large carpet slippers that served her for shoes should slip off her feet<sup>44</sup>.

Her diet seems to consist of bread and butter, or 'pudden' with gravy, and some meat on a Sunday. She doesn't mention eating the cresses she sells. However, this child is not so easily stereotyped or sentimentalised. Mayhew is taken aback at how like an adult she seemed, how world-weary: «I did not know how to talk with her. At first I treated her as a child [...] I asked her about her toys and her games [...]; but the look of amazement that answered me soon put an end to any attempt at fun on my part»<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Shaftesbury, *Juvenile Mendicancy (No 2) Bill*, Hansard, HL Deb 5th July 1853, vol. 128, cc. 1202-17.

<sup>44</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour* cit., p. 151.

<sup>45</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour* cit., p. 151.

In Mayhew's discussions with female street children «there hovers the idea of a more common reason for gentlemen stopping little girls on crowded pavements' and 'he was well aware of a common prejudice against 'girls selling watercress [...] in many cases [...] an excuse for begging' – and for other sorts of selling'<sup>46</sup>. Mayhew's cress seller though, does not appear to have encountered any unambiguous solicitation, as she informs him that no-one ever «pities me in the street – excepting one gentleman, and he says, says he: "What do you do out so soon in the morning?" but he gave me nothing – he only walked away»<sup>47</sup>.

Mayhew's accounts captured the public imagination and served to bind watercress to Farringdon market, which is portrayed as an economic powerhouse for the poor, a place of cold and competition, of hunger and hope: «To visit Farringdon-market early on a Monday morning is the only way to judge of the fortitude and courage and perseverance of the poor»<sup>48</sup>. It is a place quite estranged from any notions of romanticised rurality. The plight of the watercress sellers of Farringdon so moved John Groom, superintendent of a nearby London City Mission, that in 1866 he started offering them post-market hot drinks and breakfasts, then hot dinners and soup, before founding the Watercress and Flower Girls' Christian Mission – with headquarters in Harp Alley, just south of the market<sup>49</sup>.

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century advanced, official concern increased for the physical, intellectual and moral welfare of the urban working classes. In addition to this, and following the publication of *London Labour and the London Poor*, a genre of social journalism appeared which explored the lives and living conditions of the urban poor – particularly the 'deserving' poor. Writers

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<sup>46</sup> Steedman, *Strange Dislocations* cit., p. 118.

<sup>47</sup> Mayhew (1851) *London Labour* cit., p. 151.

<sup>48</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour* cit., p. 151.

<sup>49</sup> J.A. Groom, *The Romance of the John Groom's Crippleage and Flowers Girls' Mission 1866-1919, London 1919*; reproduction booklet, John Groom Archive, Livability.

went ‘slumming’, embarking on journeys to areas synonymous with poverty – such as the East End, St Giles and Clerkenwell – and vividly describing what they found there; unsurprisingly, Farringdon market often featured. One of the most prolific of the investigative journalists was James Greenwood (1832-1929), one time editor of the Pall Mall Gazette. In 1867, *Unsentimental Journeys; or Byways of the Modern Babylon* was published: a «collection of personal observation of experience»<sup>50</sup> with a whole chapter devoted to watercress selling. His focus is not on youthful vendors but on the elderly, his accounts emphasising their determination to work, despite being unemployable, as well as their vulnerability. They also make the cress itself seem far from appetising.

Why it is I can't tell; but there can be no doubt that the watercress is universally regarded as the last link in the chain of independent trade. While a man maintains his footing on the watercress rail of the social ladder he may claim to be considered a worthy man trading for a living<sup>51</sup>.

He talks about Mr Wicks, the 77-year-old man from whom he regularly purchased his own watercress. A former jeweller, Wicks had turned to cress selling when his sight deteriorated, purchasing his basket and delivery round from a «crease» man who was earning a good living. Through their conversations, Greenwood was «possessed of information that would enable me to start tomorrow morning» as a watercress man. Fresh produce – or produce that appeared fresh – was vital, and it was best not to purchase cress by gas or candlelight, as inferior stock could then be passed-off more readily by dealers.

The old cress seller, who often went to Hackney to purchase the crop direct from the beds, reportedly declared that on some winter

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<sup>50</sup> J. Greenwood, *Unsentimental Journeys; or Byways of the modern Babylon*, London 1867, p. vii.

<sup>51</sup> Greenwood, *Unsentimental Journeys* cit., p. 116.

mornings «the water, except the running streams in which the cresses grew, was frozen as hard as iron»<sup>52</sup>. Greenwood comments ironically on the disparity between the romantic image of gathering cress and the harsh reality: «Something pretty it is to read about “cresses from the brook”, isn't it? Quite refreshing to know that, though the cress-seller's gains are small, his labour is light and delightfully healthsome!»<sup>53</sup>

Greenwood accompanies Wicks to Farringdon Market. They arrived at 4.30am and the street sellers were already there; the dealers (most of whom were women) arrived a bit later. The itinerants:

[...] were all so very old and so very young, there were so much rags and grey hair, and rags and wizened codlin'-faced poverty, and rags and bare mites of shoulder-blades, and tiny, horridly-dirty crimson feet.

By contrast, the dealers: «had come up with their cresses by the midnight train, but had deferred business till fortified by a comfortable breakfast»<sup>54</sup>. Greenwood continues:

It would be hard to find a contrast more extreme: the saleswomen [dealers] warmly clad, ruddy and bright from the pure Sussex and Kentish air, and with that easy deportment that marks the well-to-do individual, on the one hand; while on the other was life in its ugliest shape – squalid, hopeless, ailing poverty<sup>55</sup>.

In this passage, we can see the perceived divisions between 19<sup>th</sup>-century town and country: the former a place of un-picturesque suffering, dirt and brutal poverty, the latter, a locus of health, purity and comfort.

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<sup>52</sup> Greenwood, *Unsentimental Journeys* cit., p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> Greenwood, *Unsentimental Journeys* cit., pp. 120-121.

<sup>54</sup> Greenwood, *Unsentimental Journeys* cit., p. 122.

<sup>55</sup> Greenwood, *Unsentimental Journeys* cit., p. 122

The mobility of the grower/dealers, and their ability to inhabit both the rural and the urban, is also evident. Greenwood may have dispelled the romance of cress cutting at Hackney Marshes which, being on the fringe of the metropolis, seem tainted by its corrupting influence. However, the more distant beds in Sussex and Kent are readily imagined as pastoral.

London's watercress was increasingly perceived as tainted, as evidenced by an account in a book entitled *Toilers in London* which was produced by the «British Weekly», a religious newspaper, and published in 1889. It included a description of a visit to the home of a watercress girl, a room in Soho with a bed, a «filthy mattress»<sup>56</sup> and a basket of cress under the bed, which the girl began to wash and tie into bundles. The report is keen to dispel romanticised and sentimental images of watercress vendors, and says: «[...] if people could have a look at the rooms in which water-cress is kept after it leaves the market [...] they would never eat water-cress again, not even if they gathered it for themselves in country districts»<sup>57</sup>. It goes on to suggest that watercress, pure when it is grown in the countryside, is tainted once it reaches London – both by the city and by the street sellers.

Imagine for a minute a running stream between two green meadows. Look into the clear water, and see the water-cress moved backwards and forwards by the current! Then picture it in a London market [...] see the grimy hands of the cress girl, and watch her carrying it home in her dirty apron. She [...] puts it into a bucket which is used for every imaginable domestic purpose [...] the filth of the place gives it a relish [...] That is the truth<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> British Weekly Commissioners, *Toilers in London; or Inquiries concerning Female labour in the Metropolis*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1889, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> British Weekly, *Toilers in London* cit., p. 12.

<sup>58</sup> British Weekly (1889) *Toilers in London* :12-13.

The disrupting influence of the city vendors was making the watercress crop less trustworthy. It was perhaps no wonder that consumers embraced the opportunity to re-localise this favourite food.

#### **4. Springhead ‘Pleasure’ Gardens: Re-localising Watercress**

Commercial production of watercress at Springhead, site of the beds first cultivated by William Bradbery, continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their location, close to Gravesend on the north Kent coast and around 25 miles from London, did not only allow cress to be easily transported to the city’s markets – it also facilitated traffic in the opposite direction. In the first half of the century, visitors began making excursions from London to see the watercress beds, taste the produce, admire the clear waters, and enjoy a variety of attractions.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many spas and wells had attracted visitors keen to experience the medicinal or therapeutic qualities of mineral spring water. There were large numbers of such sites in what were then the outskirts of London: locations such as Islington, St Pancras, Lambeth and Marylebone. However, many soon became more noted for their lush, landscaped grounds and the recreational opportunities they afforded than their healing waters. Sadler’s Wells, Hampstead spa, Islington spa and Kilburn Wells, for example, developed to offer a variety of diversions; these ranged from acrobatic acts, coffee houses, restaurants, gaming, and dancing. Some sites had bathing pools and baths too, with waters both warm and cold, while others became more famous for their tea and cakes<sup>59</sup>.

The largest spas, such as Sadler’s Wells, had so many attractions they ‘were effectively pleasure gardens’, performative spaces which opened

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<sup>59</sup> See J. Stevens Curl, *Spas and Pleasure Gardens of London, from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, in «Garden History», 7(2) (1979), pp. 27-68.



in the summer and «were designed to be visited in the late afternoon or evening» – unlike tea gardens which «were a Sunday-afternoon retreat»<sup>60</sup>. The pleasure garden was a feature of 18<sup>th</sup>-century London life which, like visits to the seaside, continued to provide a popular means of recreation well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The best-known were Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, on the south side of the Thames. They offered city dwellers an opportunity to experience a pastoral, picturesque environment, enlivened with thoroughly urban entertainment. While their heyday was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they were still extremely popular in the Victorian era and even in the 1850s attendances of 27,000 people a day were «not uncommon»<sup>61</sup>. Although the grounds at Springhead were occasionally advertised as ‘pleasure gardens’, this was an exaggeration and they were more characteristic of a tea garden or spa garden with, of course, the added element of being a site of commercial food production.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the numbers of people experiencing the joys of the seaside increased dramatically, with the «golden years of the English seaside resort [...] the late Victorian and Edwardian years»<sup>62</sup>. Gravesend, though not strictly on the sea but on the north Kent estuary, was popularly understood as being on the coast. It became a ‘resort’ and was frequented by large numbers of «London tradesmen»<sup>63</sup> who could take a day excursion from the city by steamboat. The development of the gardens at Springhead was possible because of their proximity to Gravesend. They were further from the river, to the south-

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<sup>60</sup> J.C. Conlin, *The Pleasure Garden, from Vauxhall to Coney Island*, Philadelphia 2013, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> M. Ball, D. Sunderland, *An Economic History of London 1800-1914*, Routledge, London 2001, p. 158.

<sup>62</sup> J. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: a Social History 1750-1914*, Palgrave Macmillan, Leicester 1983, p. 66.

<sup>63</sup> Walton, *The English Seaside Resort* cit., p. 18.

west, so required the visitor to make a deliberate effort to reach them; but were within walking distance, therefore still accessible to the day tripper. The establishment of the railway link between Gravesend and London in 1845, coupled with the opening of a station at Northfleet (close to the Springhead watercress beds) in 1849, made the gardens even more accessible.

Alfred Dunkin, a local historian, wrote a history of the Springhead site in 1848, in which he discussed archaeological finds (a Roman bath, coins and other items) discovered by William Bradbery when he began constructing the first commercial watercress beds. Bradbery, he said, had concentrated on cress production and shown no interest in these items; nor, he suggests, was Bradbery's successor as owner, Captain Harris<sup>64</sup>. W.S. Penn, in a 1966 paper on the Springhead pleasure gardens, declared that 'the gardens became most famous when J. Silvester [...] took over the gardens (1834)'. Silvester had succeeded Harris and discovered more Roman artefacts. He: «developed the gardens extensively. By 1844 he had nearly three quarters of a mile developed, perhaps covering four acres of cress»<sup>65</sup>.

It would seem that Silvester's development of Springhead began reasonably early in his tenure for, in 1839, an article appeared in a weekly publication *The Saturday Magazine* that celebrated its picturesque beauty. The article, which appeared on the front page, was illustrated with an engraving of Springhead. It depicts an idyllic, pastoral scene. There is a rustic-looking cottage, a man and a woman with a dog strolling beside the stream, and a couple of well-dressed women crossing a small bridge

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<sup>64</sup> A.J. Dunkin, *Memoranda of Springhead and its Neighbourhood During the Primeval Period*, 100 copies printed for private circulation, 1848, pp. 141-142, available to read on google books.

<sup>65</sup> W.S. Penn, *History of the Springhead Pleasure Gardens and Water-Cress Plantation (c1805-1936)*, in «Archaeologia Cantiana», 81, 1966, pp. 62-78, p. 66.

in the middle distance. No-one is harvesting the watercress, but a shovel and a basket on the banks of the stream make it appear as if someone has recently been doing so. The article declares that Springhead is «celebrated for the cultivation of Water-cresses for the supply of the London markets», and that the «quantity of this wholesome vegetable, grown expressly for the consumption of the metropolis, is much more extensive than would readily be believed»<sup>66</sup>. Details were given of the cress beds and how they were cultivated, suggesting that readers would have an interest in seeing this food in its 'home' territory. Such a visit would allow a re-placing of the plant in the countryside, instead of Farringdon market and the city streets – and perhaps a re-peopling of it too, well away from the ragged urban vendors and instead re-associated with the idealised gatherer-sellers previously discussed. There is a suggestion that Springhead is already an established attraction for:

Close to the building shown in the engraving is a space of water kept entirely clear, and inhabited by a number of beautiful trout; which, from constantly being accustomed to the sight of visitors, are sufficiently tame to allow you to watch their motions with ease, as they boldly move about in the stream<sup>67</sup>.

This pastoral depiction of Springhead was echoed a couple of years later in a tourist guide to fashionable 'watering places' published in 1841. Described as 'Water Cress Grounds'<sup>68</sup> they were accessible by 'delightful paths through fields and woods'<sup>69</sup>. The entry began by stating that the beds supplied the London markets and went on to inform readers that «Visitors may be permitted to walk in the gardens contiguous, by

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<sup>66</sup> Anonymous, *Springhead* cit., front page.

<sup>67</sup> Anonymous, *Springhead* cit., front page.

<sup>68</sup> W. Strange, *The Visitor's Guide to the Watering Places*, W. Strange, London 1841, p.16.

<sup>69</sup> Strange, *Watering Places* cit., p. 13.

making a purchase of the cresses or fruit, both of which are particularly fine. The proprietor of these grounds is Mr Harris»<sup>70</sup>.

Springhead offered a bucolic visitor experience, with the presence of watercresses a significant part of the attraction. Those that consumed cress in the city would rarely, if ever, have seen it growing – certainly not in commercial beds. A story that featured Gravesend in a periodical for women paints a picture of Springhead as a relaxing place, albeit with a rather eccentric proprietor who had 16 children and was «a droll fellow – an old English gardener, who does not stand particular as to what kind of language he may use, though all the time he means no harm». There was a performative element to a trip. Visitors could walk or drive to the gardens to:

wile away the morning – to drink ginger-beer cooled in the stream, where the trout are kept prisoners to eat the bread and biscuit visitors may throw to them [...] Returning from these gardens, it is customary to carry a large bunch of watercresses; and, upon the road that leads from thence to Gravesend, there is no lack of travellers so laden<sup>71</sup>.

A trip to Springhead allowed Londoners a chance to experience a short burst of idealised country life – a contrast not just to the city but also the gaudier pleasures offered by Gravesend.

And how quiet, how retired these country walks are still! – you might fancy yourself a hundred miles away from London; you might fancy that you were in the roads of Tiverton [...] could you but erase the rec-

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<sup>70</sup> Strange, *Watering Places* cit. p. 16. N.B. The mention of Harris as owner at this date conflicts with Penn's account, which states that he left in 1834.

<sup>71</sup> Anonymous, *The Two Henrys; or Who Is She? By the authoress of The Sisters, a Tale of the French Revolution*, in «Blackwood's Lady's Magazine and Gazette» 1846, 20, March, p. 112.

ollection of your proximity to Gravesend, which is forbidden, because ever and anon some face that you have gazed on yesterday at the pier will cross your path; and looking from the visage to the hands, there are the “Springhead watercresses”<sup>72</sup>.

An account of Springhead in a guidebook the following year, states that it was «celebrated for its water-cress plantation» and «nourished by a stream which meanders along some quarter of a mile of fruit and flower garden-ground»<sup>73</sup>. The impression conveyed is of an attraction which was popular not only because of its picturesque appearance, but also because it offered visitors the opportunity to sample foods at their locus of production «[...]visitors [*sic*] [...] congregate in great numbers, not only for the purchase of watercresses, but to feast on strawberries and other dainties throughout the summer months»<sup>74</sup>. An illustration that appeared alongside the article depicted large numbers of well-dressed visitors strolling in the grounds. The men are wearing top hats and frock coats and the women are carrying parasols, suggesting a middle-class clientele.

Nearly ten years later, Springhead still appears to be attracting the comfortably off, with an article describing how: «Open carriages [...] loaded with the more monied class of visitors [...] drive off to Springhead’ for ‘strawberries and cream, and gardens and inland scenery [...]»<sup>75</sup>.

George Dodd in *The Food of London*, was also moved to comment on the pastoral delights of a visit to Springhead, which he indicates were by now a fixture on the tourist landscape:

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<sup>72</sup> Anonymous, *The Two Henrys* cit., p. 112.

<sup>73</sup> W.S. Orr, *Summer Excursions in the county of Kent, along the banks of the River Thames and Medway*, Wm. S. Orr & Co., London 1847, p. 194.

<sup>74</sup> Orr, *Summer Excursions* cit., p. 195.

<sup>75</sup> W. Haig Miller *et al.*, *Sunday on the River*, in «The Leisure Hour», (1856), 5, p. 382.

Who that has enjoyed a steam-boat run down the river is ignorant of Springhead and its water-cresses? The joyous walk across the hay and corn fields on a bright summer's day; the rich ripe fruit in the garden; the cold and transparently-clear rivulet; the water-cress growing in the stream; the arrangements for gathering and sending to market – all are elements in a very pretty picture<sup>76</sup>.

In this, as in other descriptions, the journey to the gardens (always described in high summer) was an enjoyable part of the whole experience, immersing visitors in a material landscape as idealised as any they would have viewed in a romantic painting of the time. The abundance of nature ('rich ripe fruit') is embellished by the purity of the water in the stream – of which the watercress is a product. Even the production process is of interest and, in a setting that renders it picturesque, the portrayal of the watercress is as a wholly rural (almost un-commercial) foodstuff, re-localised in the country and untainted by the city – even though the majority of visitors were from London and would have consumed it there.

This desire to engage with, and partake of, watercress in its pure, 'home' environment might have been partly fuelled by a growing awareness of less hygienic sites of production closer to the city. There were beds in Camden Town, for instance, which one writer declared:

are planted in an old brick-field, watered by the Fleet Ditch; and though the stream at this point is comparatively pure, they owe their unusually luxuriant appearance to a certain admixture of the sewerage<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> G. Dodd, *The Food of London: A Sketch...*, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, London 1856, p. 378.

<sup>77</sup> A. Wynter, *The London Commisariat*, in «The London Quarterly Review» Oct, 190 (1854), p. 156.

Although Dodd mentions that ‘London disposes annually of 15 millions [sic] of the ‘bunches’ in which water-cress is usually tied up’<sup>78</sup> he, like others when writing of Springhead as a tourist attraction, does not comment on the contrast between Springhead’s rural beauty and the harsh environment of Farringdon market or the poverty of the itinerant vendors. It would, no doubt, spoil the idyll.

By the mid-1850s, the gardens were divided. The boundary ran through the centre of the stream and rival establishments were set up on either bank, both offering watercress to visitors. An advertisement for the ‘Original Springhead Gardens and Water Cress Plantations’ shows an increasingly commercialised operation with honey and plants for sale, made-to-order wedding bouquets and refreshments that included seasonal fruit, confectionary and ginger beer. Also available were ‘Temperance Champagne’ and ‘Nectar’<sup>79</sup>, both fashionable soft drinks reflecting the widespread influence of the temperance movement, which had spread through Britain from the 1830s<sup>80</sup>. Whether these beverages reflected the owner’s teetotal preferences, or a desire to attract ‘respectable’ visitors, particularly women, is not clear – though given that abstinence had become «a litmus test of women’s trustworthiness and influence»<sup>81</sup> it would doubtless have

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<sup>78</sup> Dodd, *The Food of London* cit., p. 378.

<sup>79</sup> Nectar referred to Soyers’ Nectar, invented in London by French celebrity chef Alexis Soyer in 1850. A carbonated drink made with raspberry, apple, quince, and lemon juices spiced with cinnamon, it was tinted bright blue and quickly gained great popularity – though, paradoxically, it was hailed as a great cure for a hangover. See R Cowen, *Relish: The Extraordinary Life of Alexis Soyer, Victorian Celebrity Chef*, Phoenix, London 2007.

<sup>80</sup> See B. Harrison, *A World of Which We Had No Conception. " Liberalism and the English Temperance Press: 1830-1872*, in «Victorian Studies», 13 (1969), p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> D. Beckingham, *Private Spirits, Public Lives: Sober Citizenship, Shame and Secret Drinking in Victorian Britain*, in «Journal of Victorian Culture», 26(3) (2021), pp. 419-434, p. 427.

helped. Their availability was certainly in keeping with the ‘pure’ image of watercress, the clear waters in which it grew, and the moral purity of those rural figures with whom this food had traditionally been associated.

By the 1860s, the grounds appear to have been developed in order to impart a more mass-market appeal, possibly in response to the gap in the market created by the closure of Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens in 1859<sup>82</sup>. *Chambers’s Guide to the Kent Coast* (1863) informed readers that Springhead, «celebrated for its water-cresses» cultivated in a «pretty rivulet», also had a «beautiful fruit-garden adjoining» but was less enthusiastic to find that: «[...] accommodation of the tea-garden kind has been added, rather detrimental to the natural features of the place, but doubtless appreciated by those for whom it is intended». Within walking distance were: «rich gardens of apples, pears, cherries [...] [and] market gardens for rhubarb, asparagus [...]» which added to the site’s bucolic appeal<sup>83</sup>.

In her narrative travel guide to the area *A Month at Gravesend* (1863) the author, Elizabeth Brabazon, described Springhead as a place where huge numbers of inhabitants of Gravesend would: «go in large parties during the Summer months to feast there on strawberries, shrimps and water-cresses». Springhead, she said was:

[...] strikingly picturesque, with its winding streamlet, its rustic bridges, and its variety of flowers, and fruit trees, amongst which fancy tents, and arbours are laid out for visitors with trays of brilliant tea-cups; [...] “*Nine-pence, Tea, Shrimps and Cresses*”<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> J. Conlin, *Vauxhall Revisited: The Afterlife of a London Pleasure Garden, 1770-1859*, in «Journal of British Studies», 45 (2006), pp. 718-743, p. 718.

<sup>83</sup> W. and R. Chambers, *Chambers’s Handy Guide to the Kent and Sussex Coast and suggestions for railway trips into the interior*, London, 1863, p. 17.

<sup>84</sup> E.J. Brabazon, *A Month at Gravesend*, Simpkin and Marshall, London 1863, p. 89.



Not only that, but Springhead now had female gypsy fortune tellers on either side of the stream, a ‘peopling’ of the site which echoed earlier associations between watercress and the rustic femininity of the gatherer seller: although «British Gypsies were considered alien, they were, at the same time, imagined as long-standing features of English rural life [...]»<sup>85</sup>. An «alluring advertisement, placed upon a sylvan tent», said Brabazon, told visitors on the Silvester side of the stream that waiting inside was: «*The old original Peggy, - No connection with the other side*»<sup>86</sup>. Her competitor advertised herself as «The Norwood Gipsy»<sup>87</sup> and, according to one contemporary writer, these «rival queens» would «chat merrily to each other in the Gipsy dialect, across the stream which picturesquely intersects the gardens»<sup>88</sup>.

The fascination with watercress production was still evident. In the travel book *Jottings in Kent*, written by William Miller of HM India Office, the writer states that the extent of the watercress culture (a ‘favourite esculent’ grown in ‘this pellucid stream’) at Springhead is «truly surprising»<sup>89</sup> and gives a short account of the method of cultivation: it was clearly a novelty for visitors to see how such a familiar plant was produced. By now the gardens appear to be attracting families as well as couples, for Miller ends the day at Springhead with:

biscuits and ale in one of the many picturesque alcoves, whilst our juveniles swing and sport amidst the many surrounding beauties, and

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<sup>85</sup> D. Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930*, Columbia University Press, New York 2006, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Brabazon, *A Month at Gravesend* cit., pp. 89-90.

<sup>87</sup> Norwood, South London, an area known as Gypsy Hill today.

<sup>88</sup> H. Woodcock, *The Gypsies; Being a Brief Account of their History, Origin, Capabilities, Manners and Customs*, Lister, London 1865, p. 54.

<sup>89</sup> W. Miller, *Jottings of Kent*, Gravesend, London 1864, p. 157.

luxuriate in fruit, and ginger beer fished out of the stream; here indeed may be found rural enjoyment [...] <sup>90</sup>.

Around the 1880s, the family that managed one part of Springhead decided to add 'spa' facilities to their site, by addition of a medically beneficial cold bath. A poster proclaimed:

Mr Silvester begs to announce to his friends the public, that he has completed the construction of his long intended Cold Bath which having been inspected and approved by several Medical Gentlemen of Eminence will be available to all visitors of Spring Head at the charge of 1s each person <sup>91</sup>.

There is no mention of the water source for this healthful bath, but it seems reasonable to assume that it would have come from the same stream in which the watercress was grown. Visitors would surely have imagined that they were being given the opportunity to bathe in those same pure waters that produced the cress they loved to consume. A similar poster reminded the public that the gardens were open daily and that «fruit in season gathered from the trees», cut flowers, breakfast or tea on the lawn, «fine new honey taken direct from the bees» and soft drinks «with Soyer's celebrated Nectar, all cool from the Spring' were all available too. Advertisements for Springhead were now able to tempt visitors with the multiple pleasures of 'Spring Head Gardens, Cold Baths and Water-Cress Plantation» (Fig. 1).

All this would not only have helped to increase visitor numbers, but also the perception of the purity of Springhead's water – and watercresses. Certainly, a local directory of 1893 refers to:

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<sup>90</sup> Miller, *Jottings of Kent* cit., pp. 158-159.

<sup>91</sup> In box in Gravesend Archives 2012, possibly now in Kent History Centre.



Fig. 1. Advertisement for Springhead c.1880. This image is held at Gravesend Library, Kent. A b/w version appeared in *Archaeologia Cantiana* (1966) ([kentarchaeology.org.uk](http://kentarchaeology.org.uk))

large quantities of very fine watercress [...] the water being absolutely pure, the cress is of a most delicate kind and should be used by all who appreciate its hygienic properties<sup>92</sup>.

The gardens continued to attract families well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, adding a «small zoo» and a «large aviary»<sup>93</sup>. A postcard of c1905 shows

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<sup>92</sup>J. Rochard, *A Descriptive and Historical Review of Gravesend and Northfleet*, no named publisher, 1893, p. 44.

<sup>93</sup>Penn, *History of the Springhead Pleasure Gardens* cit., p. 75.

that there were also children's swings – Springhead's children, unlike Mayhew's watercress girl, clearly knew how to have fun. However, the watercress beds themselves were still clearly a major part of the attraction; this same postcard shows crowds of children watching men harvesting watercress in the stream – this clearly seems to be a wholesome place for family food tourism. Other postcards, which are undated, depict the beds themselves and cress being harvested.

Around 1900, the water supply at Springhead was adversely affected by «nearby chalk quarrying» for cement and although «wind and gas engine powered pumps» and a reservoir were constructed in 1903 which helped restore some supply, «the gardens never recovered»<sup>94</sup>. Watercress continued to be grown commercially, though not to the same scale and the gardens still functioned as a visitor attraction. In 1927 the local newspaper reported that on Whit Monday (May bank holiday):

The two mile walk to the gardens, through sylvan scenery, was throughout the day alive with people, while those returning carried bunches of the succulent plant, thus proclaiming whence they had been<sup>95</sup>.

In 1933, after further industrial activity, the beds dried up completely and food tourism ceased at Springhead.

## 5. Concluding remarks

Food tourism, according to Everett and Aitchison, is «the conscious acknowledgment that food is more than sustenance; it is a cultural ar-

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<sup>94</sup> D. Eve, *Springhead Gardens and the Archaeology of Kent Watercress Beds*, in «Archaeologia Cantiana», 188 (1998), pp. 191-203, p. 195.

<sup>95</sup> Anonymous, *Springhead and Water-Cress*, in «The Gravesend Reporter», 1927, Sat 21 May, p. 7.

tefact with a myriad of facets [...]»<sup>96</sup>. It is certainly an active manifestation of the consumer's desire (or should that be need?) to re-place and re-people certain foodstuffs particularly, I suggest, those that are imbued with symbolic resonance. Foods, or some foods, can seem diminished if they become too distanced – at least in the imagination – from their meaningful locality, or from the people with whom they are idealistically associated. Foodways should be viewed as perceptual as well as geographical and, if stretched too far, can in some way be considered unsustainable.

While it is generally supposed to be a contemporary phenomenon, I have demonstrated that – at least in the case of watercress – food tourism had an historical incarnation and was a dynamic process. Unlike the case of saffron in Italy<sup>97</sup>, watercress production at Springhead was not a re-invention of tradition embraced by a village keen to attract rural tourists; instead, tourism seems to have grown, at least partly, from a consumer desire to rebuild trust in the produce they were eating. «Today's city dweller», says Bessiere, «escapes [...]from his daily routine and ordinary fare to find solace in regional and so-called 'traditional' food».<sup>98</sup> By contrast, dwellers of Victorian London escaped their daily routine to enjoy their ordinary fare in the place they felt it truly belonged. The brief case study outlined here shows that, as London grew, its inhabitants increasingly imagined the countryside – and the food grown in it – as a locus of purity. Distinctions were made between plants grown in the vicinity of the city and those grown in rural areas, as well as between urban and rural gatherers/vendors. When the opportunity arose to re-engage with watercress in an environment deemed more

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<sup>96</sup> Everett, Aitchison, *The Role of Food Tourism* cit., p. 151.

<sup>97</sup> Sonnino, *The Power of Place* cit.

<sup>98</sup> J. Bessiere, *Local Development and Heritage: Traditional Food and Cuisine as Tourist Attractions in Rural Areas*, in «Sociologia Ruralias», 38 (1998), pp. 21-34, p. 34.

natural and pleasing (perhaps literally and metaphorically 'tasteful') the public embraced it. Whilst the plant might no longer occupy the same symbolic space as it did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the success of the Watercress Festival today shows that our desire to re-localise food has not diminished. It might even have grown.

# Contadini d'acqua. La mitilicoltura nel Golfo della Spezia

Carlo A. Gemignani, Luisa Rossi\*

[...] la géographie des cuisines se révèle être, lorsqu'elle est bien perçue et protégée, l'une des meilleures garanties de la qualité alimentaire.

Gilles Fumey, *Géopolitique de l'alimentation*, 2008

## 1. Paesaggio e vocazioni produttive

Nel bel mezzo del Golfo, quasi regina di esso, sorge una nobile terra che chiamasi la Spezia e dà nome al golfo [...] le pianure e le colline che stanno al di dentro del golfo sono così feconde di caccia, come le spiagge e le cale riescono opportune alla pescatione; sicché la terra all'intorno vestita di olivi e di viti tutta verde e tutta feconda che apre nobili scene al occhio e il mare sottoposto tutto pacifico e tutto ancor esso fecondo pare che si uniscono insieme a felicitare chiunque va a godere le delizie del rinomato Golfo della Spezia<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Casoni, *Breve descrizione della Liguria e della città di Genova*, in M. Quaini

Con questi brevi tratti il corografo Filippo Casoni (1733-1811) delineava l'aspetto settecentesco del Golfo della Spezia. Una descrizione essenziale di questo estremo lembo di Liguria che, se da una parte ricalca l'immagine scenografica offerta di esso dai viaggiatori del *Grand Tour*, dall'altra ne penetra la sostanza materiale, nei suoi valori paesaggistici e nelle sue prevalenti vocazioni colturali.

Nonostante lo sviluppo militare e industriale che lo ha interessato a partire dalla seconda metà del secolo XIX, il territorio spezzino non ha smarrito la sua tradizione marinara artigianale. Accanto alla pesca, che ancora oggi si avvale di una piccola flotta (pescherecci ormeggiati lungo il Molo Thaon de Revel, alla base del nuovo ponte che immette nel porto turistico Mirabello), la mitilicoltura riveste grande importanza. Essa fornisce i molluschi – qui chiamati *muscoli* – per il mercato esterno e locale. Quest'ultimo è alimentato da una tradizione gastronomica ormai consolidata, declinata su diverse modalità di preparazione dei mitili, oggi assai apprezzate dai numerosi turisti che da pochi anni hanno iniziato a popolare la città in tutte le stagioni, grazie soprattutto al fenomenale *exploit* turistico-globale delle vicine Cinque Terre, patrimonio UNESCO.

Su questo aspetto vale la pena di aprire una parentesi che ci riporta alla metà dell'800 quando la cittadina della Spezia (12.170 abitanti nel 1848<sup>2</sup>) sembrava avviarsi verso un destino balneare sulla scia della notorietà assegnata a questi luoghi dagli scrittori e dai pittori europei che ne hanno lasciato notevoli rappresentazioni. Per iniziativa di alcuni imprenditori locali e nizzardi vennero infatti realizzati alcuni alberghi

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(a cura di), *La conoscenza del territorio ligure fra Medio Evo ed Età Moderna*, SAGEP, Genova 1981, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Nel 1861 gli abitanti erano 13.212; di conseguenza alla costruzione dell'Arsenale (1862-1869) che richiamò manodopera dalle regioni confinanti ma anche dal resto d'Italia, si passò a 26.076 unità nel 1871 e a 70.603 nel 1891. G. Felloni, *Popolazione e sviluppo economico della Liguria nel secolo XIX*, ILTE, Torino 1961, p. 362.



e stabilimenti per la balneazione<sup>3</sup>. Sarà la costruzione del grande Arsenale marittimo a imprimere una svolta decisiva – in senso questa volta industriale – alle sorti della città, mentre il ruolo decisamente turistico sarà mantenuto (oltreché dalle citate Cinque Terre) dai vicini centri di Lerici, San Terenzo, Porto Venere.

## 2. Gli esordi: saperi 'foresti' e risorse locali

Le origini della mitilicoltura spezzina sono testimoniate da diversi autori: storici e tecnici. Nell'istallazione di tale attività il ruolo di questi ultimi è stato fondamentale. Se ne occupò in modo specifico Davide Carazzi (1858-1923) figura interessante di scienziato evolucionista molto attivo nel dibattito scientifico e divulgativo del tempo. Nato a Verona ma per un periodo professore di liceo alla Spezia (dove si occupò anche dell'organizzazione del locale museo di storia naturale<sup>4</sup>), Carazzi dette alle stampe il *Manuale di ostricoltura e mitilicoltura spezzina* (su cui torneremo) nel quale racconta gli esordi di questa produzione grazie all'idea del tarantino Emanuele Albano<sup>5</sup>:

I principii furono modestissimi: una sciaia di pochi pali piantati a cinque metri di profondità, all'uso di Taranto e una cinquantina di fascine

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<sup>3</sup> P. Cevini, *La Spezia*, SAGEP, Genova 1984, pp. 70-72 e 81-83; L. Rossi, *Lo specchio del Golfo*, Agorà Edizioni, Sarzana 2003, pp. 167-168.

<sup>4</sup> B. Baccetti, *Carazzi, Davide*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, vol. 19, Roma 1976, ora online: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/davide-carazzi\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/davide-carazzi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

<sup>5</sup> D. Carazzi, *Manuale di ostricoltura e mitilicoltura spezzina*, Hoepli, Milano 1893. Dello stesso autore va anche ricordato *Contributo all'istologia ed alla biologia dei Lamellibranchi*, I, *Ricerche sulle ostriche verdi*, in «Mitteil. a. d. Zool. Stat. zu Neapel», XII (1896), pp. 381-431. La coltivazione delle ostriche è stata reintrodotta nel golfo spezzino di recente.

messe per prova verso la diga proprio nel centro del golfo. Nell'autunno qualche fascina si poté recuperare (le altre andarono disperse), e vi si trovò sopra, in tutto, un migliaio di ostriche. L'Albano raccoglieva dei mitili sulle rocce dei lati del golfo e li innestava, avviando così la mitilicoltura [...]<sup>6</sup>.

Tutte le fonti sono concordi nel collocare gli esordi negli anni 1887-1889<sup>7</sup>. Negli atti del Congresso internazionale di pesca marittima, ostricoltura e acquicoltura tenutosi a Dieppe nel settembre 1888 si trova scritto che «la culture des moules», realizzata «grâce à l'initiative du docteur Carazzi [sic] et de son associé M. Emanuele Albano [...] a été couronné de succes». Si parla di una produzione di 80 quintali di muscoli nel 1888 e di 800 quintali già nel 1893<sup>8</sup>.

In un lavoro del 1924 Tito Valenti, diretto testimone delle trasformazioni territoriali ed economiche della città e della provincia spezzina, fa un lungo cenno alla nascita della mitilicoltura. Oltre a quantificarne la produzione e i luoghi di smercio, egli sostiene che fu lo stesso Carazzi a sollecitare l'Albano a occuparsene:

Largo incremento ha nel golfo la mitilicoltura. Iniziata vent'anni orsono, auspice il Prof. Carazzi che chiamava da Taranto abili coltivatori, ha qui trovato condizioni privilegiate, specialmente riferite alla tranquillità ed all'ampiezza degli specchi acquei ed alla mancanza nelle nostre acque di taluni parassiti che distruggono allo stato larvale il seme. Copre oltre 70.000 mq di specchi acquei con una produzione che si

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<sup>6</sup> Carazzi, *Ostricoltura* cit., p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> F. Maccione, *Lineamenti di storia dell'economia spezzina dall'inizio dell'Ottocento ai giorni nostri*, Grafiche Lunensi, Sarzana 1983, p. 65; Cevini, *La Spezia* cit., p. 158, nota 20.

<sup>8</sup> F.P. Barbanente, *Miti e mitili del Golfo*, in G. Molli, F.P. Barbanente, *Muscoli del Golfo. Ricette e storie*, Edizioni Cinque Terre, La Spezia 2015, p. 18.

aggira sui 20.000 quintali annui, dei quali 4000 circa affluisce a Napoli, altrettanti nelle Puglie ed il resto si fraziona per la penisola. Occupa un centinaio di lavoratori organizzati in Consorzio e concorre in larga misura all'alimentazione delle classi povere, di quelle specialmente oriunde del meridionale<sup>9</sup>.

Recentemente Francesco Paolo Barbanente ha fondato un suo lavoro sul filo della memoria, essendo egli discendente proprio dell'Albano:

Nasceva così – scrive Barbanente – per la collaborazione del mio bisnonno materno, il biologo Carazzi e forse con qualche consiglio di Arturo Issel<sup>10</sup>, in una Spezia che stava velocemente crescendo, quell'attività, da contadini del mare, che avrebbe lasciato la sua impronta<sup>11</sup>.

Il riferimento al genovese Issel è assai significativo delle connessioni che attraversavano la geografia, le scienze della natura (geologia, biologia etc.) e le scienze storico-archeologiche nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento, cioè prima che ogni campo della conoscenza si identificasse in uno specifico statuto e si organizzasse come disciplina autonoma anche a livello accademico. Esso è inoltre significativo della stretta relazione e, nel caso di Carazzi, di collaborazione diretta, fra le scienze 'alte' e quei saperi che oggi definiamo vernacolari espressi dai coltivatori qui chiamati 'muscolai'.

L'attività promossa da Albano fu raccolta da coltivatori tarantini ma anche locali; alcuni dei loro nomi (Fago, Martera, D'Ippolito, Papoc-

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<sup>9</sup> T. Valenti, *La mitilcoltura*, in U. Formentini, T. Valenti (a cura di), *La Spezia e la sua Provincia*, Camera di Commercio e Industria, La Spezia 1924, p. 203 (rist. anast. Sala Bolognese, Forni, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> A. Issel, *Istruzioni pratiche per l'ostricoltura e la mitilcoltura*, tip. Sordomuti, Genova 1882.

<sup>11</sup> Barbanente, *Miti e mitili del Golfo* cit., p. 15.

chia, Carozzo, Borio, Guidi, Di Francesco, Godani, Majoli) accompagnano la storia di questa produzione fino ad oggi<sup>12</sup>.

Proprio come nel caso di alcune attività agricole, *in primis* la viticoltura – non a caso per la mitilicoltura si parla metaforicamente di ‘vigneti di mare’ – la coltivazione dei mitili necessita di un supporto costituito tradizionalmente da pali di legno; come, di nuovo, nel caso dei vigneti, costituiscono essi stessi elementi fondanti del paesaggio storico e delle sue necessarie trasformazioni.

Le fonti iconografiche che registrano la presenza di questi allineamenti (vivai) consentono di visualizzare almeno in parte la dislocazione degli impianti nella geografia del golfo ottocentesco e primo-novecentesco. Ne risultano le geometriche file di palificazioni emergenti dalla superficie marina nelle aree consacrate alla produzione. Esclusi, evidentemente, gli spazi acquei occupati dalle attività arsenalizie-militari, essa si collocava nelle zone interne del golfo, sia nel lato di ovest (seni delle Grazie e Panigaglia, Fezzano, Porto Venere) sia, ad est, nelle aree antistanti i quartieri di Fossamastra e di Canaletto, siti di origine della coltivazione. Mentre la produzione di ostriche, oggi risorta, non ebbe seguito, la mitilicoltura si radicò divenendo con il tempo una componente tipica dell’alimentazione e della gastronomia locale oltre che, evidentemente, del paesaggio. Le popolari marine di Canaletto e Fossamastra, cuore della produzione, erano caratterizzate dall’insediamento del tutto speciale dei pontili in legno e delle baracche su palafitte; qui i muscolai ricoveravano le barche, gli attrezzi, il cordame<sup>13</sup>: uno straordinario paesaggio del lavoro che ha a lungo testimoniato un vero e proprio genere di vita e che solo recentemente, nonostante durissime lotte (manifestazioni di piazza, esposti alle autorità, ricorsi legali) ingaggiate dai mitilicoltori sostenuti dalla po-

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>13</sup> Maccione, *Lineamenti di storia dell’economia spezzina dall’inizio dell’Ottocento ai giorni nostri* cit., p. 65.



Fig. 1 Fasi di lavorazione relative alla mitilicoltura nel Golfo della Spezia fra gli anni Quaranta e Cinquanta del '900

polazione locale e di gran parte dei cittadini, è stato cancellato dall'avanzata degli spazi della logistica.

Le prime testimonianze visuali dei paesaggi del golfo coeve alla nascita dell'attività le hanno lasciate gli spezzini Agostino Fossati (1830-1904), professore di disegno e artista riconosciuto, e Gio Batta Valle (1843-1905) tecnico del Genio presso l'Arsenale ma anche cartografo e soprattutto valente pittore. Preziosissime le 'prese' fotografiche storiche che ci informano sulle pratiche tradizionali (Fig. 1). Foto più recenti mostrano la localizzazione e la rinnovata organizzazione dei vivai dell'Isola Palmaria. (Fonte: Cooperativa Milticoltura spezzini <http://www.mitilicoltori.it>).

La mitilicoltura spezzina delle origini è esemplare della complementarità fra terra e mare a riguardo delle risorse attivate. Dalle coste circostanti, spesso scoscese, si traeva il legno per i pali fabbricati, come quelli per le viti, con il castagno. Tutte le fonti testimoniano la presenza storica del castagno in zone vicinissime alla costa: ne è un esempio la preziosa carta dell'Isola Palmaria di fine '700 di Giacomo Brusco, una rilevazione alla scala quasi catastale, che registra gli usi del suolo («Alberi d'olivo, Filagnate di Vigna, Alberi di Castagno, Piante di Roveri e

Cerri, Pini selvatici, Cipressi») <sup>14</sup>, o il quasi coevo *Libro delle Denunzie dei Stabili* che riferisce di

terra vignata, terra olivata, terra ficuata, terra fruttifera, terra seminativa, terra castagnata, terra erbiva, terra boschiva e terra incolta, bosco, bosco salvatico, bosco pineato, bosco ceduo, bosco roverato e bosco castagnato <sup>15</sup>.

La mitilicoltura fruiva dunque di una tradizione che, in funzione della coltura della vite, ha avvicinato il castagneto al mare. Come è stato rilevato, in Liguria il castagneto:

ha occupato e continua a occupare tutt'ora uno spazio senz'altro molto maggiore di quello che probabilmente aveva in origine [poiché] pur essendo nel complesso una specie moderatamente termofila esso è in grado di sopportare, entro certi limiti, intensi freddi invernali e notevoli caldi estivi, per cui la sua distribuzione altitudinale è assai ampia <sup>16</sup>.

I pali venivano conficcati per circa due metri nei fondali e uniti, a pelo d'acqua, con un reticolo di funi (*ventie*) fatte di erbe palustri. Anche queste si trovavano in abbondanza nella costa acquitrinosa del levante del golfo (gli Stagnoni), oggi completamente urbanizzata. Le corde servivano per appendere i *pergolari* o *reste*. Si trattava di corde vegetali a tre trefoli

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<sup>14</sup> Biblioteca Civica Ubaldo Mazzini, carte, *L'Isola Palmara divisa nelle Tenute delli Particolari Possidenti colla Cannellazione, e specie di Coltura contenuta nelle medesime. Misurata dal Cap.no Ing.re Giacomo Brusco*, 1790.

<sup>15</sup> Archivio Storico del Comune di Porto Venere, Archivio dell'Antico Comune, doc. 212, *Libro delle Denunzie dei Stabili della Municipalità di Porto Venere*, 1798.

<sup>16</sup> F. Orsino, *Lineamenti geobotanici della Liguria*, in «Archivio Botanico e Biogeografico Italiano», XIV, 1969, p. 224.

intrecciati insieme alla sementa con il cosiddetto «innesto a lampione».

Tra palo e palo venivano annodati alle ventie sei-otto pergolari lunghi dai 3 ai 7 metri a seconda del fondale. Nel giro di pochi mesi essi marcivano a causa della deperibilità propria della fibra vegetale per cui si rendevano necessarie frequenti sostituzioni.

### **3. Carazzi e Issel, biologia e analisi geografica al servizio della mitilcoltura**

A quarant'anni, nel pieno della propria attività di scienziato, Arturo Issel (1842-1922)<sup>17</sup> porta alle stampe le *Istruzioni pratiche per l'ostricoltura e la mitilcoltura* (Tip. R. I. Sordomuti, Genova, 1882) per conto del Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio; la stessa istituzione per la quale un anno prima, a testimonianza di una collaborazione non estemporanea, lo studioso genovese aveva pubblicato un volume di *Istruzioni scientifiche per i viaggiatori* (1881), inserendosi così in una consolidata tradizione manualistica volta a diffondere fra scienziati e semplici *amateurs* le basi logiche per ordinare testualmente i fenomeni naturalistici e geo-etnografici rilevati sul terreno<sup>18</sup>. Inquadrare la multiforme personalità di Issel nel panorama accade-

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<sup>17</sup> Un sintetico profilo biografico di Issel è stato curato da Nicoletta Morello, «Issel, Arturo», in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma, vol. 62 (2004), ora online: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/arturo-issel\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/arturo-issel_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). Su Issel esiste una discreta bibliografia soprattutto di stampo storico, archeologico, geologico e geografico.

<sup>18</sup> Su questo argomento rimando, anche per la ricca bibliografia, a M. Castelnovi, *La preparazione dei viaggiatori secondo Arturo Issel (con documenti inediti 1889-1891)*, in «Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana», serie XII, vol. XI, 2006, pp. 429-460. Sulle istruzioni scientifiche per i viaggiatori: M. Bossi, C. Greppi (a cura di), *Viaggi e scienza. Le istruzioni scientifiche per i viaggiatori nei secoli XVII-XIX*, Olschki, Firenze 2005.

mico italiano durante l'età dominata dal 'positivismo naturalistico' non è semplice. Possiamo però avvalerci della classificazione tematica data alle stampe alla morte dello studioso dall'allievo Gaetano Rovereto (1870-1952)<sup>19</sup>, costruita sulla base della ricchissima produzione scientifica del suo maestro. Saggi, memorie, note bibliografiche sono ordinati per materia – Zoologia; Antropologia, Paleoetnologia, Etnologia; Geografia fisica e morfologica; Mineralogia, Geologia; Viaggi, Lavori letterari<sup>20</sup> – e rivelano un mosaico di interessi ancora trasversali rispetto a discipline che, nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento, si stanno dotando di uno statuto autonomo. Soprattutto mostrano una costante attenzione alla collocazione e comparazione geografica dei fenomeni studiati e alle ricadute didattiche degli studi compiuti<sup>21</sup>. Non manca poi, nei testi di Issel, un forte interesse applicativo; il volume sull'ostricoltura e mitilicoltura ne è un esempio certamente non secondario.

Nonostante numerosi ritrovamenti archeologici testimonino il consumo di mitili e molluschi in vari siti preistorici, nell'800 le forme di allevamento di queste specie non sembrano basarsi su una ricca tradizione manualistica o testuale ma piuttosto sulla pratica e sulla tradizione orale<sup>22</sup>. Ciò sembra emergere anche dal *Proemio* del volume curato da

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<sup>19</sup> E. Zanoni, *Rovereto, Gaetano*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, vol. 89, Roma 2017, ora online: <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gaetano-rovereto> (*Dizionario-Biografico*)

<sup>20</sup> G. Rovereto, *In ricordo di Arturo Issel*, in «Atti della società ligustica di Scienze e Lettere», n.s. III (1924), pp. 169-193 (con bibliografia degli scritti di Issel).

<sup>21</sup> Su questo argomento rimando a C.A. Gemignani, *Arturo Issel e il milieu genovese fra Ottocento e Novecento. La dimensione culturale ed educativa della geografia*, in P. Sereno (a cura di), *Geografia e geografi in Italia dall'Unità alla I guerra mondiale*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria 2019, pp. 215-233.

<sup>22</sup> Per un generale inquadramento storico dell'argomento si rimanda alla lettura di R. Cattaneo Vietti, *Man and shells. Molluscs in the history*, Bentham eBooks,



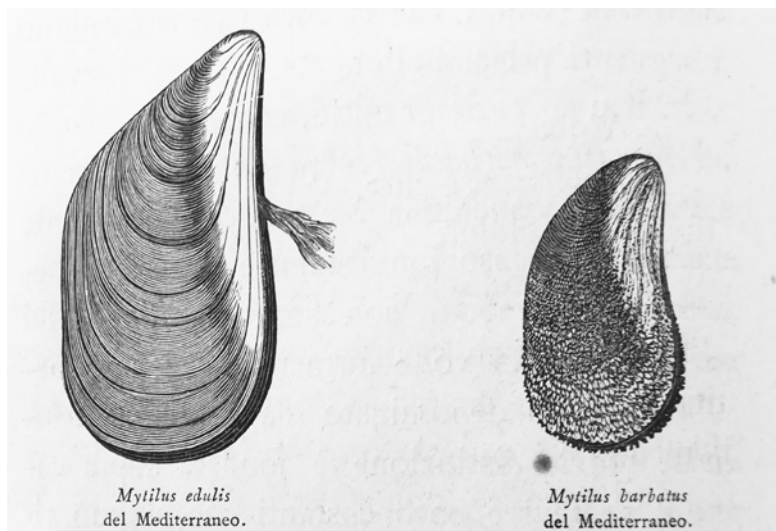


Fig. 2: Varietà di mitili. Da A. Issel, *Istruzioni pratiche per l'ostricoltura e la mitilicoltura*, Tip. R. I. Sordomuti, Genova, 1882

Issel (pp. 6-7) nel quale lo studioso ci informa che, per le caratteristiche delle acque, la coltivazione dei molluschi nel Mediterraneo «non è riuscita che in due o tre punti». Sulle pratiche di allevamento «i materiali scarseggiano per tracciare con mano sicura la via da seguirsi. Converterà dunque che coloro i quali porranno in opera questo manuale suppliscano in molti casi alla sua insufficienza coll'eseguir prove preliminari, applicando con sagacia e circospezione, a tempo debito e in giusta misura, i suggerimenti proposti» (p. 7).

A causa del pregiudizio che all'epoca portava a considerare il 'mitilo comune' «un cibo volgare»<sup>23</sup>, anche se «convenientemente ammanito,

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Sharja 2016 e, in un'ottica comparativa rispetto al caso spezzino, R. Vianello, *La mitilicoltura nelle acque meridionali della laguna di Venezia: Un esempio di agricoltura del mare*, in «La Ricerca Folklorica», 65 (2012), pp. 127-136.

<sup>23</sup> Rita Vianello ricorda che, oltre ad essere spesso identificato in maniera

esso costituisce una pietanza assai delicata» (p. 209), nell' economia del testo isseliano la parte sulla mitilicoltura è più ridotta rispetto a quella sull'ostricoltura (31 pagine su 260 totali. La prima parte della trattazione è di stampo naturalistico e biologico e mira a distinguere le diverse specie di mitili, *Mytilus edulis* – *cozze nere* –, *barbatus* (Fig. 2), *tulipa*, *adriaticus*, *minimus*, *albicosta*, in base alle caratteristiche morfologiche e ai 'principi' di materia organica e inorganica in esse contenuti.

Issel passa poi a un'analisi più strettamente bio-geografica. Le uniche aree europee nelle quali la pratica della mitilicoltura si attua «su larga scala» sono identificate nella Baia di Anguillon (Gironda, Nuova Aquitania) e nel Mar Piccolo di Taranto (p. 219) del quale lo studioso ligure fornisce una nitida rappresentazione cartografica in scala 1:40000 (inserto fra pp. 62-63), contenente l'ubicazione dei *quadri* da cozze:

apparecchi, i quali nella parte emersa non si distinguono dalla *sciaie* [per l'allevamento delle ostriche]. Al pari di queste, consistono essenzialmente in corde d'erba che pendono da corde simili orizzontali, sostenute da pali verticali. Tali corde verticali o *pergolari* giungono fino a circa mezzo metro dal fondo ed hanno una lunghezza che arriva talvolta a 8 o 9 metri. Esse fungono l'ufficio di collettori, non solo per l'allevamento, ma anche per la riproduzione, I mitili allo stato larvale emessi da pochi individui adulti lasciati per la semina si fissano a quelle corde d'erba e, senza che sia necessario trasferirli in altro luogo, si sviluppano e crescono in guisa di conseguire nello spazio di tre anni le loro dimensioni normali (pp. 216-217).

Secondo informazioni raccolte sul luogo, lo studioso indica come, a Taranto, «la produzione di cozze ascenderebbe annualmente a 15

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dispregiativa come «l'ostrica dei poveri», in alcune aree (come sull'isola di Pellestrina nella laguna di Venezia), il mitile fosse addirittura considerato velenoso: Vianello, *La mitilicoltura* cit., pp. 129-130.

o 16000 quintali in media ed avrebbe talvolta raggiunto i 24.000 quintali» (p. 217). Questi dati sono interessanti perché consentono di 'fotografare' tecniche e strutture fisiche – di cui diremo fra poco – pensate appositamente per l'allevamento dei mitili nel momento della definitiva apertura della produzione verso mercati più vasti rispetto a quelli locali («su larga scala»): il momento di nascita di una mitilicoltura semi-industriale.

Chi si occupa dell'impianto dei *quadri* deve tenere conto della profondità dei fondali che, insieme ai flussi di marea, alla salsedine e alla temperatura delle acque, rappresentano i principali fattori ambientali che influenzano la scelta dei siti più idonei alla loro collocazione, come quelli successivamente individuati nel golfo spezzino.

Il metodo «tarantino» di allevamento dei mitili si distingue da quello «vandeano» praticato nella baia di Aiguillon – «basso fondo di melma che emerge a bassa marea [...] attraversato da quattro piccoli corsi d'acqua [...]». Nulla di più squallido, di più triste di questa distesa di mobili fanghi che confina con le torbide acque dell'Oceano» (pp. 220-221) – perché quest'ultimo utilizza «apparecchi» inventati dall'irlandese Walton, «naufragato fin dal 1235 sulla costa d'Esnaudes» (p. 221): i *bouchots*. Questi sono complessi di pali di quercia disposti in serie talvolta uniti da lunghe listarelle elastiche di legno intrecciate che formano un graticcio (*clayonnage*). Queste strutture rimangono sommerse durante l'alta marea per un periodo più o meno lungo, variabile in base alla loro distanza dal mare, secondo un piano prestabilito che tiene conto dei tempi di riproduzione e di reimpianto degli individui adulti.

Dopo aver brevemente esaminato – coerentemente rispetto al metodo di comparazione geografica da lui adottato in tutto il volume – un singolare tipo di mitilicoltura praticato dei cinesi, Issel passa in rassegna le località italiane ritenute, secondo personali considerazioni scientifiche, più adatte all'impianto di ostreari e cocleari. Lo studioso ricorda come già nel 1879 il Ministero dell'Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio avesse iniziato a interessarsi della promozione dell'industria delle ostriche e dei mitili (p. 232).

Per la Liguria, Issel individua come siti idonei all'ostricoltura il «porticello di S. Andrea presso Genova»; i «seni del promontorio di Portofino e [il] Golfo della Spezia»; qui, in particolare «lungo la scogliera e del porto della Spezia, sulla scogliera esterna dell'arsenale presso l'imboccatura della darsena, nei seni del Varignano e della Castagna abbondano naturalmente le ostriche (*Ostra plicata*)», tanto che il capitano di vascello Lovera de Maria ne aveva introdotto esemplari presso la piccola darsena di S. Vito (p. 233). Per l'argomento che qui maggiormente ci interessa Issel scrive:

Non v'ha poi alcun dubbio che nella parte settentrionale del golfo, lungo il lido degli Stagnoni, abbiano a prosperare ben intese piantagioni di mitili, poiché questi molluschi spontaneamente si moltiplicano intorno ai pali dello stabilimento balneario (p. 235).

La presenza di colonie di mitili (e di ostriche) allo stato selvatico è quindi il principale indicatore utilizzato da Issel per l'individuazione dei siti idonei all'allevamento e sarà utilizzato, come già accennato, anche da Carazzi.

Undici anni dopo il volume di Issel (1893) appare infatti nel mercato editoriale italiano un secondo testo dedicato a *Ostricoltura e mitilicoltura*, inserito nella famosa collana dei Manuali Hoepli, curato da Davide Carazzi<sup>24</sup>. Dopo una lunga trattazione sulla biologia del mitile, analoga a quella di Issel, il manuale passa ad occuparsi delle fasi tecniche e commerciali della coltura e finalmente ci consente di datare la nascita della mitilicoltura commerciale spezzina. Nell'introduzione alla

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<sup>24</sup> Per una breve biografia di Carazzi si veda Baccetti, *Carazzi, Davide* cit. L'autore della voce ricorda: «Di lui rimangono soprattutto il nucleo di lavori giovanili sulla embriologia dei Molluschi (esempio impeccabile di studio sulle genealogie cellulari) ed i due validissimi trattati, sui quali si sono andate formando intere generazioni», si tratta, per questi ultimi, di *Tecnica di anatomia microscopica*, Milano 1894 e *Parassitologia animale*, Milano 1913.

*Parte seconda* (quella dedicata appunto al tema), dopo aver ricordato che «In Italia, vera coltivazione di mitili non si fa che a Taranto e alla Spezia» e che il prodotto sia conosciuto principalmente nelle Puglie e a Napoli, Carazzi ci fornisce già un'interessante dato sulla sua diffusione nel mercato italiano alla fine dell'800 «da quando se ne cominciò la coltivazione nel golfo della Spezia, lo smercio si è allargato a Milano, a Torino, a Genova, a Firenze e a Roma» (p. VIII).

Il *Capo II*, dedicato interamente alla *Coltivazione dei mitili alla Spezia*, assume i tratti di una personale cronistoria:

È stato il mio socio e compagno di lavoro Emanuele Albano di Taranto, ch'ebbe, primo, la idea d'introdurre alla Spezia l'industria dei mitili, tanto fiorente da lunghi anni a Taranto.

Fino dal 1887 facemmo una prima prova, prendendo dei muscoli di scoglio e innestandoli a pergolaro piccolo vivaio, piantato per sperimentare la coltivazione delle ostriche. Riuscita favorevole quella prima volta, l'impianto fu ingrandito di anno in anno, aumentando la produzione che nel 1888 fu di soli 80 quintali; nel 1889 di 150; nel 1890 di 350; nel 1891 di 550 e nel decorso del 1892 di 750 quintali; in quest'anno 1893 oltrepasseremo gli 800 quintali.

Il metodo adottato a Spezia è quello tarantino e si compone di diverse fasi piuttosto complesse che Carazzi descrive con grande dettaglio utilizzando un lessico che ricorda quello agronomico. Il pregio della trattazione è ovviamente dato dalla diretta esperienza delle operazioni necessarie alla coltivazione:

Sul finire dell'autunno, nella parte meno profonda del vivaio, od anche in un vivaio apposito, costruito a due, quattro metri di profondità, si stendono orizzontalmente vicino alla superficie delle corde vecchie, e in mancanza di queste anche delle corde nuove, distanti 20-25 centimetri l'una dall'altra, tutte parallele e nella direzione della traversia dominante, perché servano da collettori quando avrà luogo la fissazione

delle larve. Al principio di novembre, e poi via via a febbraio e marzo, la superficie delle corde così distese si troverà ricoperta dai piccoli mitili. Anche le corde che stanno distese orizzontalmente nel vivaio, per formare le *ventie* e le *crociere* delle camere, sono coperte nei primi mesi dell'anno dai giovani mitili ivi fissatisi. Allora si sostituiscono delle corde nuove a quelle vecchie che vengono tagliate per esser messe appositamente a far da collettore (p. 180).

Anche la superficie dei pali di sostegno del vivaio serve da collettore per i giovani mitili. L'estate è il periodo dedicato allo spianamento e al rinnovamento delle colonie e «la maggior parte di quei mitili aderenti ai pali può essere staccata e *innestata* nelle corde per farne pergolari» (*ibidem*).

Fra aprile, maggio e giugno le corde vengono tagliate, e dopo averle rinforzate coll'attorcigliare intorno ai mitili che vi sono sopra, per tutta la lunghezza, una corda nuova piuttosto sottile, si appendono verticalmente alla *ventie* e alle *crociere* nelle camere del vivaio maggiore, o, se è sempre lo stesso, nella parte dove l'acqua è più profonda. Da giugno a luglio questi pergolari, detti *naturali*, si disfano, e i mitili presi a piccole brancate e già attaccati fra loro col bisso, vengono innestati in una corda nuova (pp. 180-181).

Anche i mitili caduti nel trasferimento dal *pergolaro* vecchio al nuovo vengono recuperati e sistemati dentro cesti bassi e larghi che si sospendono con corde al vivaio «oppure buttandoli al fondo in poca acqua, vicino alla spiaggia e in luogo riparato» per poi essere raccolti dal fondo con un'apposita branca di ferro» (p. 182).

L'ultima fondamentale fase è quella della sciorinatura, che trova perfetta corrispondenza con quella descritta da Issel.

Per poter sciorinare i mitili, si costruisce alla parte estrema del vivaio, nel lato più vicino a terra, il *fuso*. Ecco come si fa: a ciascun gruppo di pali dell'ultimo filare si aggiunge un altro palo dritto piantato sul fon-

do, e che sporge dalla superficie dell'acqua un paio di metri: questi pali sono dette *colonne*, e vengono legati ai *fuerci* colla solita corda vegetale. Un metro e settanta sopra il pelo medio dell'acqua queste colonne reggono dei pali più sottili e ben dritti, messi orizzontalmente e legati alle colonne stesse con dell'altra corda.

Si forma così una specie di ringhiera, a cavalcione della quale si mettono i pergolari tirati su dall'acqua. Lo sciorinamento si ripete tre o quattro volte durante l'anno e, come si vede, sostituisce l'emersione naturale che hanno i mitili in Francia per opera della bassa marea (p. 184).

Il capitolo successivo (*Capo III*) prende in esame le specie ittiche (su tutte l'orata) nemiche dell'«ostrica del povero» (p. 192) e soprattutto ci offre una più dettagliata panoramica sui costi di produzione, i ricavi e la rete commerciale ormai attivata, già decisamente basata sul trasporto ferroviario, oltre che su quello marittimo. Trasporti che implicano anche particolari attenzioni per la conservazione del prodotto, onde evitare alterazioni dei valori nutritivi e addirittura casi di 'avvelenamento'.

Le tappe di localizzazione degli impianti per la mitilicoltura del Golfo, a partire dai pergolari sperimentali impiantati da Carazzi e Albano, sono elencate nel saggio di Marisa Vettori, *Mitili e datteri nel golfo di La Spezia*, pubblicato nel 1951 sulla rivista *Annali di ricerche e studi di geografia* (vol. 12, n. 3, pp. 93-96).

[la mitilicoltura nel Golfo della Spezia fu introdotta] nel 1887 da Davide Carazzi ed Emanuele Albano di Taranto: le aree per le colture furono limitate dapprima alla sola zona degli Stagnoni, sul lato orientale del golfo; solo in seguito si pensò alla zona occidentale, ma qui i vivai furono limitati, per esigenze militari, al seno delle Grazie. Precedentemente Giuseppe Lovera di Maria aveva, nella darsena di San Vito, iniziato un esperimento di ostricoltura. (p. 93, nota 3).

A darci misura della localizzazione e della diffusione spaziale raggiunta dalle coltivazioni all'interno del Golfo della Spezia nel secondo

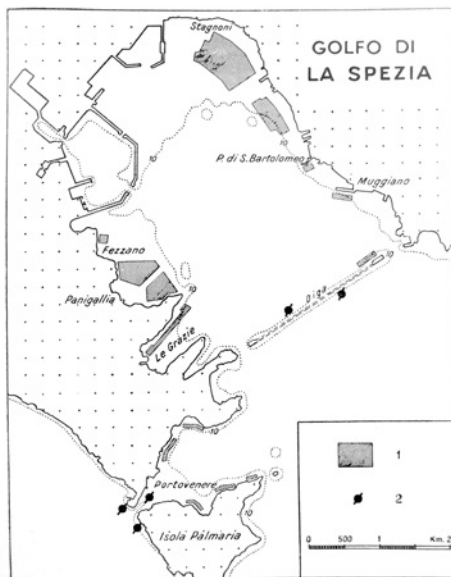


Fig. 3: M. Vettori, carta di localizzazione delle coltivazioni dei mitili (1) e dei luoghi di raccolta dei datteri di mare (2) nel Golfo della Spezia, 1951.  
 Da E. Scarin, *Guida alla XXIV escursione geografica interuniversitaria (25-28 maggio 1959)*, in «Annali di Ricerche e Studi di Geografia», Libreria Editrice Mario Bozzi

dopoguerra è quindi la carta che correda il lavoro della Vettori, utilizzata anche da Emilio Scarin nella preparazione della *XVIV escursione geografica interuniversitaria* nella Liguria orientale (1959)<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 3), nella quale le coltivazioni dei mitili andranno a costituire una tappa significativa di un variegato viaggio culturale-scientifico dedicato agli studenti e ai cultori delle materie geografiche. Le cause fisiche favorevoli a un'estensione degli allevamenti, che hanno ormai raggiunto i 253.350 m<sup>2</sup> con 90/100 quintali all'anno di prodotto ogni 1000

<sup>25</sup> E. Scarin, «Guida alla XXIV escursione geografica interuniversitaria (25-28 maggio 1959)», in *Annali di Ricerche e Studi di Geografia*, Libreria Editrice Mario Bozzi, Genova, 1959.



mq, sono da Vettori individuate nelle condizioni batimetriche locali (fondali che non superano i 10 metri) e dalla composizione fisica dei fondali stessi (uniformemente fangosi).

Le maggiori produzioni sono ottenute in acque piuttosto grasse, ed i mitili ivi coltivati risultano non solo più abbondanti, ma anche più pieni e saporiti. Al contrario nelle acque meno grasse, chiamate dai mitilicoltori locali “acque vive” o “acque salate”, la produzione è minore (circa 60/70 q.li per 1000 mq) e di qualità più scadente. Inoltre in uno stesso allevamento, il migliore raccolto si ottiene nei vivai periferici, poiché per primi ricevono le acque di corrente, ricche di *plankton*. Quando queste acque raggiungono i vivai più vicini alla costa, esse hanno già perduto gran parte, e la migliore, del loro valore nutritivo (p. 95).

Un'altra interessante indicazione che Vettori ci fornisce riguarda i materiali di costruzione dei pergolari – erbe locali per le corde, legno di castagno per la paleria – confermando l'impiego dei materiali locali già ricordato, quindi un 'ciclo locale' che, guardato con un'ottica attualistica, ci appare perfettamente 'chiuso' e 'sostenibile': «particolare cura è posta nella scelta del legname usato (quasi sempre castagno dalla corteccia intatta), perché i pali possano resistere all'azione dei sali marini, e per congiungerli fra loro» (p. 94). Un' ultima annotazione, riguardante i nemici del muscolo, merita di essere ricordata:

Un grande pericolo, per i mitili, era costituito, un tempo, dalle orate, che, a branchi, entravano nel golfo nei mesi da marzo a settembre, e distruggevano interi “pergolari”. Oggi questo pericolo è meno grave poiché le migrazioni delle orate si sono a tal punto attenuate nel nostro golfo, che se ne trovano pochissime anche nei mesi in cui in passato erano catturate in grande quantità. Un altro pericolo può essere costituito dalle temperature molto elevate, le quali fanno perdere ai mitili ogni vitalità e, perdurando a lungo, possono provocarne la morte (*Ibidem*).

Colpisce in questo caso la mancanza delle orate nel Golfo registrata nei primi anni Cinquanta, fatto che andrebbe indagato più a fondo. Oggi il Golfo della Spezia è infatti sede di numerosi impianti di allevamento delle orate mentre è totalmente vietata, a causa della distruzione degli habitat che essa comportava, la raccolta dei datteri di mare che l'autrice ricorda come «praticata in misura abbastanza vasta» (p. 96) nella parte occidentale del golfo stesso.

#### **4. Nuove pratiche per una produzione ormai tradizionale**

La mitilicoltura spezzina è oggi affidata a una cooperativa di produttori artigiani: si tratta di 86 operatori che lavorano in proprio negli spazi acquei ottenuti in concessione e che si tramandano l'attività di padre in figlio. La superficie del vivaio non deve superare i 1500 m<sup>2</sup> per concessionario poiché gli specchi d'acqua disponibili non sono numerosi. La storia recente dell'attività è caratterizzata da due importanti innovazioni: la creazione dello stabulatore per la depurazione, imposto dalla legge 192 del 1987, e la sostituzione delle palificazioni.

Lo stabulatore affidato alla «Mitolicoltori Associati» dà piena sicurezza sanitaria al prodotto lasciandone immutati i caratteri organolettici: il mitile non perde i caratteristici profumo e sapore che ne fanno un mollusco speciale anche se 'povero'. D'altra parte, le zone acquee del golfo destinate alla mitilicoltura, soggette a rigidi controlli, rientrano nella categoria delle acque «approvate» ovvero la categoria più salubre secondo le severe classificazioni della legge, cioè con un tasso inferiore ai tre colibatteri per cento millilitri di acqua marina. A causa della lunga e faticosa manutenzione richiesta dal vivaio tradizionale, i pali in legno sono stati sostituiti con tubi di ferro zincato, conficcati nel fondale e uniti a ferri trasversali che ne frenano lo sprofondamento. Le corde di erbe palustri sono state sostituite, per quanto riguarda il reticolo delle ventie, con funi di nylon, mentre le reste sono ora sostituite da reti di plastica a calza tubolare, a maglie più o meno grosse a seconda della taglia del mitile. Il palo di ferro dura 6-7 anni, mentre la rete, che non

si rovina, viene sostituita periodicamente per ragioni igieniche poiché il mitile si infila tra le maglie e si fissa, attaccandosi con il «bisso» alle pareti esterne della resta. Almeno una volta l'anno si rende necessario rinnovare la resta. I semi, che nascono nel vivaio stesso, vengono raccolti con funi gettate appositamente e lasciate libere nel reticolo.

Nel periodo estivo i muscolai provvedono alla raccolta, alla sgranatura, al lavaggio e alla scelta del prodotto, mentre in quello invernale adempiono alla manutenzione del vivaio: disfano le reste, sostituiscono i vivai guasti, rivedono il reticolo e controllano i pali. L'orario di lavoro, stabilito dallo stesso mitilicoltore, varia in base alla stagione: in genere, mentre durante l'estate si adotta quello unico che va dalle cinque del mattino alle tredici, d'inverno le uscite sono inferiori, regolate, ovviamente, dalla meteorologia.

Per raggiungere il vivaio vengono usate barche a motore trainanti lo *schio*, imbarcazione di metri 5,50 x 2, di poco pescaggio, con murate molto diritte, estremamente robusta e priva di timone. Tale imbarcazione è utile al mitilicoltore per l'esecuzione di tutti i lavori di manutenzione, per la raccolta ed il lavaggio dei muscoli, la sostituzione dei pali etc., e ha la caratteristica di poter navigare a poppavia poiché dotata di grossi scalmi posti vicino alla prua che permettono l'uso di un solo remo. L'innovazione più recente è stata l'introduzione, al posto dei pali tradizionali, di galleggianti costituiti da fusti in plastica (PVC), fabbricati appositamente ed ancorati a corpi morti sul fondo. Questo sistema, pur essendo più economico, non è molto funzionale, pertanto si tende generalmente ad utilizzare il supporto che assicura maggior quantità di raccolto. Il galleggiante è invece preferibile in presenza di fondali alti nei quali risulterebbe difficile evitare il trascinarsi e l'abbattimento dei pali: è il caso del vivaio posto sul lato ponente della diga foranea (nei pressi delle Grazie) dove il fondale misura 12 metri e le correnti sono numerose<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Dobbiamo le informazioni tecniche di questo paragrafo al sito della Cooperativa Mitilicoltori Spezzini, [www.mitilicoltori.it](http://www.mitilicoltori.it)

Per concludere: la mitilicoltura spezzina non è stata, come si è detto, il risultato dell'evoluzione (in senso tecnico e quantitativo) di più o meno antiche pratiche locali; essa è il risultato dell'incontro fra uno scienziato poliedrico, un imprenditore brillante e un ambiente naturale favorevole: il golfo profondamente incassato nella costa e quindi riparato rispetto alle forti mareggiate, il clima mite, l'ottima qualità delle acque grazie all'apporto di numerosi torrenti e sorgenti, anche sottomarine<sup>27</sup>.

Oggi i mitili sono ben radicati nella tradizione culinaria degli spezzini sulla base di ricette oggettivamente gustose che in alcuni casi ricalcano quelle di altre regioni italiane (come le napoletane «cozze alla marinara», ben diverse dalle «*moules marinières*» della cucina francese, trattate con burro e non di rado condite con *crème fraîche*), ma spesso di tradizione locale, come i «muscoli ripieni», del tutto rispondenti al gusto locale.

È, in proposito, interessante la riflessione di un autore francese su *gusto e necessità*.

Il problema – scriveva – è, in definitiva, sapere in quale misura il gusto di un popolo sia stato modellato dalle pratiche alimentari tradizionali, dipendenti a loro volta da costrizioni diverse, e in quale misura, al contrario, pratiche e gusti si siano contrapposti. Inoltre, quando è attestata una trasformazione delle pratiche, è importante stabilire se il gusto l'abbia suscitata, l'abbia seguita o vi si sia opposto<sup>28</sup>.

Affrontare il discorso in questa prospettiva richiederebbe una ricerca ben più complessa di quella qui presentata. Basti dire, con l'autore citato, che a differenza della cucina delle classi elevate, che hanno avuto sempre i mezzi e le tentazioni «per superare l'ambito regionale» la cucina locale e

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<sup>27</sup> L. Rossi, *Acque dolci, acque amare. Costruzione di una città portuale e distruzione di una città d'acqua: la Spezia*, «Rivista Geografica Italiana», f. 2 (giugno 2002), pp. 315-350.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Il gusto e la necessità*, Milano, il Saggiatore, 1994, p. 9.

la sua accettazione (o rifiuto) in termini di formazione del gusto è strettamente legata, certamente alle pratiche produttive dei luoghi, ma anche, evidentemente, alle condizioni sociali, materiali, di una data comunità. Il superamento della cucina popolare, elementare, avviene nelle fasi di prosperità: quando si supera la miseria si trovano i mezzi e il desiderio di nutrirsi meglio, si sperimentano le contaminazioni, si raggiunge «un'amicizia sincera e profonda con la terra e i suoi prodotti»; quando, in breve, si impara a «cucinare gli alimenti anziché cuocerli»<sup>29</sup>.

È appunto il caso dei muscoli ripieni alla spezzina di cui diamo qui la ricetta apparsa in una accurata (anche dal punto di vista iconografico) recente pubblicazione uscita per valorizzare le produzioni del golfo presentate da alcuni appassionati interpreti della cucina locale<sup>30</sup>.

#### MUSCOLI RIPIENI

1 kg di grossi muscoli del Golfo della Spezia

2 uova

50 g di mortadella

30 g di Parmigiano grattugiato

300 g di pomodori maturi

2 spicchi d'aglio

1 panino

latte, olio extravergine di oliva, prezzemolo, timo, maggiorana,

vino bianco, sale fino

Lavate i muscoli, eliminate il bisso e apriteli con un coltello facendo attenzione che le due valve non si stacchino. Preparate il ripieno unendo 10 muscoli sgusciati, aglio, timo, prezzemolo e maggiorana tritati, la mollica del panino bagnata nel latte e strizzata, il Parmigiano grattu-

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<sup>29</sup> Ivi, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> Port of la Spezia Cruise Terminal, *Buon appetito. Food & recipes from around la Spezia and the Cinque Terre, Italy*, 2016, p. 22.

giato, le uova e la mortadella macinata. Aggiungete pepe, un po' di sale fino e mescolate bene.

In una casseruola stufate prezzemolo e aglio tritati, spruzzate con vino bianco e aggiungete i pomodori pelati e tagliati a pezzetti. Riempite i muscoli con il ripieno e cuoceteli nel sugo a fuoco lento per 30 minuti circa, tenendo il tegame coperto.

# 'Wild' food plants in the Ligurian ancient grasslands: situating the 'prebugiun' gathering practices

Roberta Cevasco, Raffaella Bruzzone\*

## 1. A misleading position between domestic and wild

The short essay by Giuseppina Poggi, hereafter reprinted in English (Poggi in this volume), was published in 1997 in the first issue of the Italian journal *Archeologia Postmedievale*<sup>1</sup>, however it did not receive significant attention either in post-medieval archaeology or in the more recent developments of the European environmental archaeology. A premise, in which the topic of the observation scales in European environmental research was discussed explicitly – posed the problem concerning the archaeological study of «ecofacts»<sup>2</sup>. It proposed a movement – in terms of field finding and study – from paleoecological and archaeobotanical studies to the study

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<sup>1</sup> G. Poggi, *Pratiche di attivazione: effetti della raccolta tradizionale di vegetali spontanei ed ecologia storica del sito, XIX-XX secolo (Arbora, Recco, Liguria orientale)*, in «Archeologia Postmedievale», 1 (1997), pp. 95-100.

<sup>2</sup> D. Moreno, *Storia, archeologia e ambiente. Contributo alla definizione e agli scopi dell'archeologia post-medievale in Italia*, in «Archeologia post medievale», 1 (1997), pp. 89-94.

of the «ecofacts» as distinct from conventional archaeological artifacts and considered as material evidence of the histories of environmental resources. At the topographical scale of field observation, animal and plant production/activation practices with the associated local naturalistic knowledge could be regarded as new research objects for post-medieval archeology. This suggestion has remained unheard in the subsequent development of historical archeology studies for many years<sup>3</sup>.

These notes are an invitation to resume these interrupted reflections, which could also have been developed in the history of material culture studies and intend to underline a potential new interest for the gastronomic sciences and cultures, to which the definition of practices of 'activation' of the ecology of environmental resources as suggested in Giuseppina Poggi's text is a central focus.

The qualification of 'activation practices', far beyond the pure 'production' (farming) practices considered in the historical economic and food studies perspective, facilitates the linking of local ways of collecting, preparing and consuming food vegetables (foodways) with broader issues relating to the dynamics of the environmental system and the problems of its conservation, a question that assumes particular relevance in the context of the current 'ecological transition' process for a sustainable socio-environmental regeneration.

The research on *prebugiun* – programmatically proposed to archaeologists in 1997 – developed in the framework of a European pro-

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<sup>3</sup>This study of *ecofacts* as evidence of environmental resources history could easily have been developed in the history of material culture studies, a research field also neglected in Italian medieval and post medieval archeology. Recently it merged as complementary part of rural landscape archaeology, see D. Moreno, A.M. Stagno, *Storia della cultura materiale e risorse ambientali. Percorsi e incontri*, in ISCUM (ed.) *Tiziano Mannoni: attualità e sviluppi di metodi e idee*, Firenze 2020, pp. 74-81; A. Panetta, V. Pescini, V. Py-Saragaglia (eds.), *Disassembling landscape. Applied environmental archaeology and historical ecology*, special issue, in «Quaderni storici», 164 (2020).



ject dedicated to the ethnological, sensorial, socio-economic characterization of the typicality of *produits de terroir* in southern Europe<sup>4</sup>. In that context, an interdisciplinary working group was set up at the Department of Modern and Contemporary History of the University of Genoa under the title of 'Polo Etnobotanica e Storia'<sup>5</sup>. The group contributed to the historical-ethnological and historical-environmental characterization of local productions (1994-1998) in particular of the «*produit de terroir de cueillette*», proposing a high resolution historical perspective which implied – for geographers, archaeologists and naturalists – a change of observational scale and interpretation<sup>6</sup>. The ethnobotanical-historical approach used to interpret the current site vegetation cover in relation to the history of the site will launch a series of studies, inspired by the British historical ecology<sup>7</sup>, centered on a geographical microanalysis of the vegetation cover and its historical dynamics, which are still at work today.

The case study (Poggi chapter 11) is dedicated to the practice of harvesting a set of spontaneous herbs called *prebugiun*<sup>8</sup> as observed within the economy of a family farm in Arbora, a sub-valley of the Recco stream (Genoa) in the mid-nineties: a domestic economy well attested

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<sup>4</sup> L. Bérard, P. Marchenay, *Les produits de terroir: Entres cultures et règlements*, CNRS Éditions, Paris 2004.

<sup>5</sup> R. Cevasco, *L'ambiente e la storia delle società rurali europee. Attività di ricerca del Polo Etnobotanica e Storia presso il Dipartimento di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea dell'Università di Genova*, in «Società e Storia», 82 (1998), pp. 863-870.

<sup>6</sup> Moreno, *Storia, archeologia e ambiente* cit., p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> O. Rackham, *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape*, J.M. Dent, London 1976.

<sup>8</sup> We use the *prebugiun* form in this essay, adopting the phonetics of current French (for precise transcriptions see H. Plomteux, *I dialetti della Liguria orientale odierna. La Val Graveglia*, Pàtron, Bologna 1975, 2 voll., p. 1175). The phonetic and graphic differences will have to be discussed in a linguistic-dialectological context, but the importance of local variability within the same valley must be emphasized.

to in the generation of farmers of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in the valleys of the Genoa countryside (*'Genovesato'*).

The term *prebugiun* used in regional cuisine<sup>9</sup> indicates both the product of the collection of a dozen spontaneous herbs (*'fare il prebugiun'*) and their food preparation. In the Recco Valley it is still consumed boiled (adding garlic, oil and mashed potatoes) or as a filling for fried wheat pastry (*fugaçette*) or – added with quagliata (dial. *prescinseua*)<sup>10</sup> – as a filling for *pansoti*: a variety of fresh pasta which, strangely, seems to have escaped the Ark of Taste census while it appears documented in about twenty Ligurian localities in the Conservatory of Mediterranean Cuisine (<http://cucinedelmediterraneo.org/>)<sup>11</sup>. In light of the present success of the gastronomy of Liguria that favoured the development of a production for the semi-industrial market, the filling of spontaneous herbs has been variously replaced<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> As a specialist in Ligurian gastronomic literature stated, «herbs are fundamental to the cuisine of Liguria, spices are not» (C. Andrews, *Flavours of the Riviera*, Bantam Books, New York 1996). By the way Colman Andrews visited the farm of Maria Benvenuto in the site of Arbora, above Recco, appreciating Giuseppina Poggi's research.

<sup>10</sup> *Prescinseua* is an important ingredient in various Genoese dishes: a fresh coagulated milk, historically linked to the peri-urban cattle breeding (see further).

<sup>11</sup> The project entitled «Conservatory of Mediterranean Cuisine» (CCM) was commissioned by the Province of Genoa to the Soc. Charta s.r.l. («Services and Systems for the Territory and Environmental History») operating in the Ligurian territory on projects particularly attentive to the agricultural world. CCM involved several valleys sharing a strong interest in food (Graveglia, Pra, Arenzano and Recco valleys) (May-December 1999). In the Recco Valley, about 400 local products, dishes and cultivars have been reported.

<sup>12</sup> In the CCM, *pansoti* infilled with spontaneous food herbs are documented in about twenty localities in the Genoese area: in Recco, Megli, Gaggianego, Polanesi, Vexin-na with the name of *prebugiun*; in Montoggio, Borzonasca, Mezzanego, Ne, with the name of «local spontaneous herbs; in the other sites the



Fig. 1 Maria Benvenuto collecting *prebugiun* with ‘*cutelessa*’ (blunt knife) – Photo Giuseppina Poggi, loc. ‘*fondo d’Arbora*’, Recco Valley, 21 March 1994.

The practice of seasonal harvesting of *prebugiun* in Arbora (Fig. 1) is connected to 11 other production practices, as part of a complex management system working at the scale of the site and producing, in addition to *prebugiun*, firewood for the domestic fire, ‘wild’ orchids and a hay very rich in species (see Fig. 4 of Poggi’s work). The *prebugiun* of this family farm can therefore be considered a ‘co-production’ within the annual cycle of management of local environmental resources aimed at cattle breeding in the last productive phase of these slopes. In this perspective, the mixture of collected herbs ceases to be considered more or less spontaneous, as also in the case of the *gatafin* (see Pescini, Moreno in this volume): it does not fall – even in the discourse of those collecting it – in the dichotomous categories of ‘cultivated’ and

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species are replaced by borage, chard, spinach, in some cases also lettuce, escarole, nettles» ([http://cucinedelmediterraneo.org/cgi-bin/dbms/db\\_search.cgi](http://cucinedelmediterraneo.org/cgi-bin/dbms/db_search.cgi))

‘uncultivated’, ‘domestic’ and ‘wild’, but it is one of the results of the historical practices of ‘activation’ of the slope ecology<sup>13</sup>.

The cycle, as reconstructed by Giuseppina Poggi, has been repeated for decades, adapting to the changes in land use that have taken place in the spaces of the family farm, and has instigated continuous variations in the biodiversity of the grazed and mown herbaceous cover, following the general outlines of the environmental history of Liguria’s winter coastal pastures. As we will see, these slopes on the fringes of the Ligurian Sea, belonging to the ‘Montagna di Fascia’ unit, are documented as historical sites of transhumant pasture during the post-medieval period, and from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as meadows specialized in hay production.

‘Positive externalities’ – which today the technical/administrative language would include in the so-called ‘ecosystem services’ – emerge as an effect of the herb gathering economy for the Arbora site and can be generalized to the scale of the surrounding slopes: local production practices, intervening cyclically on the formation and reproduction of the herbaceous cover, have allowed (still at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) the conservation of meadows with high floristic diversity (70 species in the composition of the hay) and richness of rare plant species, such as spontaneous orchids, particularly numerous on the Arbora site (see Fig. 4 chapter 11)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup>The case under discussion relates to herbaceous species but, as mentioned, the reflection is also valid for some animal species of ethnozoological, hunting and food interest, such as hares, frogs, snails, snakes, studied from an ethnozoological perspective which includes a historical approach to ecology (see D. Moreno, *Domestico vs. selvatico. Annotazioni su tassonomia e storia locale*, in «Quaderni storici», 91 (1996), pp. 514-535; D. Ermacora, *The comparative milk-suckling reptile*, in «Anthropozoologica», 52 (1) (2017), pp. 59-81.

<sup>14</sup>In the same years, a survey on *prebugiun* was conducted at the regional scale, within a dialogue between botany and gastronomy, based on people «who still today collect or remember having collected the herbs of the preboggion» (L. Minuto, A. Bisio, F. Perucchio, V. Pronzati (eds.), *Preboggion e prescinseua*,

The research started by Poggi on *praebugiun* and, more in general, the European project on the *produits de terroir* has had a sort of continuation with the, already mentioned, applied research project entitled «Conservatory of Mediterranean Cuisine» (CCM) dedicated to the enhancement of local products, dishes and cultivars in the valleys of the Genoese area. The project produced new field observations and interviews also for the Recco Valley (Municipalities of Recco, Avegno, Uscio), carried out by Sabrina Bertolotto and Roberta Cevasco, and, despite the different setting and objective, was partly nurtured by the approach developed inside the Polo Etnobotanica e Storia. Field research tried to document not only the recipe itself as per the goal of the project, but also the existing links between culinary practices and historical management of the site. With these purposes, even within the time limits dictated by the project, a first exploration of the link that products, dishes, and cultivars keep with the spaces of production and with their historical ecology has been attempted<sup>15</sup>. *Prebugiun* gatherers (women of the generation born in the 1930s) active in different sites of the same Recco Valley allowed us to document interesting variations,

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Feguagiskia' Studios Edizioni, Recco 1997). The research led to the drafting of a list of 32 edible wild plants used for the «classic preboggion recipes», belonging to 13 families (17 out of 32 plants belong to the Composite family). Each sheet is accompanied by the vernacular name, the botanical description, the ecology, other popular uses and medicinal properties. The work is complemented by a «dictionary of local names for preboggion herbs». The potential of historical ecology to characterize local productions and, more generally, for a different conception of environmental conservation does not emerge (or remains implicit).

<sup>15</sup>This type of work is longer, more complex and articulate than one might expect from a quick collection of recipes from interviewed informants. A first consequence of this approach is the fact that, for example, it is necessary to go back several times to the same informant to follow and document the seasonality of the practices and grasp the density of relationships, as seen in Arbora, with the products, the local knowledge and the ecology of the harvesting site.

both at the level of herbs harvesting sites (ranging from the partially sown terraces/‘*fasce*’ of the olive grove to the hay meadows deriving from chestnut woodlands) and in terms of the species collected and the relative dialect terminology<sup>16</sup>. This extreme variety and variability which occurs within restricted geographic areas (linguistically homogeneous) is linked to the historical dynamic of each site and turns out to be the most peculiar characteristic of local productions<sup>17</sup>.

The work carried out for the CCM also highlights the interconnections between *prebugiun* and other local products included in the project category ‘focaccia with cheese and dairy products’. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the (relict) practice of ‘keeping’ the cows of owners of the Upper Trebbia and Aveto Valleys (on the Po side of the Apennines) and to ‘return’ them fattened after using the milk (especially for the daily production of *prescinseua*) was still present in a few sites of

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<sup>16</sup> For example, in the case detected in loc. Cotù (Recco), 16 species are collected, of which 5 – ‘*Buràscia dumèstega*’ (*Borago officinalis* L.), ‘*Buràscia sarvèga*’ (*Symphytum officinalis*), ‘*Petùsse*’ (*Hypochoeris radicata* L.), ‘*Urtiga*’ (*Urtica dioica*), ‘*Fenùggiu*’ (*Foeniculum vulgare* Miller), ‘*Gèe*’ (*Beta vulgaris* L.) – are not included in the list produced for the Arbora site (Avegno), while, in the other hand, ‘*Bel’ommu*’ (*Urospermum dalechampii* L.) Schmidt and ‘*Prèn*’ (*Ranunculus ficaria* L.) are not collected. In Polanesi (Recco) the collected species show a certain variability compared to the cases of Cotù and Arbora, with also *Hypochoeris radicata* (here called ‘*Scassadiàù*’) and ‘*Lusciandri*’ (not determined) being collected. In the upper valley, in Terrile (Uscio), the number of herbs used by the informant decreases to about 10 and varies with the seasons: in the month of January, for example, there is also a leaf of the inevitable ‘navoni’ (‘*nauin*’) (*Brassica napus* L.), etc. (Charta, *Conservatorio delle Cucine Mediterranee. Valle di Recco*, Final report 1999, unpublished).

<sup>17</sup> It also reflects on the organoleptic/sensorial characteristics of the final product, although in the generalized market it is often considered unacceptable as it cannot be controlled (Berard and Marchenay, *Les produits de terroir* cit.).

the Upper Recco Valley<sup>18</sup>. Here, the family-scale production of fresh cheese (*furmagëtta*) from cow’s milk was used in the preparation of the ‘*focaccia col formaggio*’, while *prescinseua* was (and still is) widely used in local gastronomy in the preparation of ‘*pesto*’, ‘*ripieni*’ (vegetable fillings), rice cake and other savory pies, potato meatloaf, and so forth.

## 2. Ligurian ancient grasslands: biodiversification process at work

The sites of the Recco Valley discussed in the previous paragraph have to be placed in the spatial context of a precise topographical unit known – in the chorographic sources of the 16<sup>th</sup> century – as ‘Montagna di Fascia’<sup>19</sup>. These grasslands now fall under SCI IT 1331718-Monte Fasce for the flowering of rare or endangered species like *Narcissus poeticus* and for the very rich populations of Orchids (over 35 species, some of these protected by international conventions) and numerous species of Lepidoptera. From the phytosociological point of view, they are classified as «*mesobrometi*»: Mediterranean xerophilic species and mid-European mesophilic species coexist even at such a short distance from the sea<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Charta, *Conservatorio delle Cucine Mediterranee* cit. This practice requires areas for haymaking and denotes a production system that appears to be complementary to the systems of large sheep transhumance documented between the Upper Trebbia Valley and the ‘Montagna di Fascia’ starting at least from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, see N. Gabellieri, V. Pescini, D. Tinterri (eds.), *Sulle tracce dei pastori in Liguria. Eredità storiche e ambientali della transumanza*, Sagep, Genova 2020.

<sup>19</sup> D. Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno. Storia e archeologia dei sistemi agro-silvo-pastorali*, New edition edited by Guido M.A. and Montanari C., Genoa University Press, Genova 2018.

<sup>20</sup> D. Moreno, G.F. Croce, C. Montanari, *Antiche praterie appenniniche*, in R. Maggi (ed.) *Archeologia preventiva lungo il percorso di un metanodotto*, in

In the language of historical ecology, these grasslands, bare or tree-lined, are recognized as historical or ‘ancient grasslands’ for the centuries-old continuity that distinguishes their plant communities<sup>21</sup> both as pastoral spaces and as ‘foodscapes’ (food landscapes/environments) linked to historical practices of use and activation (different from ‘alteration’). The term ‘ancient’ is not meant in historical ecology in a reductive way, in the sense of ‘consumed by use’<sup>22</sup>, but on the contrary as an environmental characteristic that enhances the sites and gives products an added value due to the complexity and uniqueness of the ecological relationships that are built over time and differentiate these habitats from others, that whilst morphologically similar are characterized by more recent interspecific interactions. In the Grand Tour travellers accounts for the mountains around Genoa (and other 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century ‘external’ observers (including forest administration servant) the misleading concept of the ‘degradation’ of a pristine Mediterranean forest habitat resulted in the descriptions of the «*montagnes pelées*» noted by Montesquieu (1726) and in the so-called «*nudes*» of Genoa (1930s). These repeated narrations attributed the destruction of a presumed

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«Quaderni della Soprintendenza Archeologica della Liguria», 4 (1992), pp. 159-176.

<sup>21</sup> In the European context see O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, J. M. Dent, London 1986; T. Dutoit, *Dynamique et gestion des pelouses calcaires de Haute-Normandie*, Publications de l’Université de Rouen, Rouen 1996. On a global scale, a recent reflection on the value of ‘ancient grasslands’ in contrast with the general assumption of their constant derivation from the ‘degradation’ of previous forests in A.N. Nerlekar, J.W. Veldman, *High plant diversity and slow assembly of old-growth grasslands*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, Aug 2020, 117 (31), pp. 18550-18556.

<sup>22</sup> Thus, for example, a written testimony of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is interpreted in R. Maggi, *I monti sono vecchi. Archeologia del paesaggio dal Turchino alla Magra*, De Ferrari, Genova 2015.



«original mantle» to woodland over-exploitation for shipbuilding purposes or for goat grazing, in line with the degradation theory of the ‘Ruined Landscape’ or ‘Lost Eden’ for the Mediterranean<sup>23</sup> which still continues to this day<sup>24</sup>.

Changing the observation scale, if we look at these slopes with an ‘insider’ perspective, actually the grassland landscape of the Genoa countryside hid a complex structure at its base: its slopes hosted a complex farming system that connected the urban economies of Genoa and the centers of the eastern Riviera to those of the two sides of the Apennine mountains, reaching the pastoral resources of the Po Valley and various sectors of the central alpine arc<sup>25</sup>. Transhumant pasture was the fundamental component of this system, at least between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the transfer of fertility from the summer quarters in the mountain common land («*alpi*», «*monte*») to the winter quarters of the peri-urban Genoa area has been functional to the establishment of a late medieval ‘*agricoltura di villa*’

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<sup>23</sup> A.T. Grove, O. Rackham, *The Nature of Mediterranean Europe: an Ecological History*. Yale University Press, New Haven 2001. On these ‘degradation’ narratives referred to historical savanna landscapes and multiple farming systems see C. Isendahl, D. Stump (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Ecology and Applied Archaeology*, Oxford University Press 2019, in particular the chapters by Anneli Ekblom (African savanna) and Federica Sulas (Ethiopia, Aksum’s landscape); on the alder-based systems of Yunnan see, among the others, S. Gros, *The Bittersweet Taste of Rice, Sloping Land Conversion and the Shifting Livelihoods of the Drung in Northwest Yunnan (China)*, in «Himalaya», the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies, vol. 34, n. 2 (2014), pp. 81-96.

<sup>24</sup> See for example V. Detsis, E. Gkadolou, K. Koutsovoulou, G. Toliás, 2022, *Long-term Landscape Dynamics to Assess Land Degradation Hypotheses – An Exploratory Study of Evidence from Travelers’ Narrations*, in «Sustainability», 14 (14) (2022), p. 8543. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148543>

<sup>25</sup> Gabellieri *et al.*, *Sulle tracce dei pastori* cit; D. Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno* cit.

(gentry suburban estate) and to its progressive intensification in the post-medieval centuries (olive groves, vineyards, vegetable gardens, irrigated crops, etc.).<sup>26</sup>

For this reason, still in the 1830s – and until the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the grasslands of the Genoa countryside located in the common land descended from the watershed up to the Ligurian sea shoreline. Here their composition in herbaceous species did not respect altimetry and climatic zoning (thus hosting ‘heterotopic’ herbaceous populations) but reflected a vertical reorganization of plant resources linked to transhumant grazing practices (see Appendix). The biodiversity of these prairies was in continuous dynamism also thanks to the reciprocal exchanges of plants – due to grazing activities – between mountain, hilly and coastal habitats acting as summer and winter grazing stations<sup>27</sup>. The wealth of good fodder species, in addition to favouring sheep and cattle breeding, and therefore dairy and meat production, also provided a space for a family economy of collecting spontaneous food herbs often aimed at the market of the urban centers of the Riviera.

Still in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dozens and dozens of *lattarole* at the first light of sunrise came down the Mountain with the milk bucket balanced on their heads to reach Genoa after walks along the *crose* system<sup>28</sup> (Fig. 2). The progressive abandonment and marginali-

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<sup>26</sup> M. Quaini, *Per la storia del paesaggio agrario in Liguria. Note di geografia storica sulle strutture agrarie della Liguria medievale e moderna*, Camera di Commercio Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura, Savona 1973; M. Calegari and D. Moreno, *Una agricoltura reinventata: “ville” e “Villani” nel Genovesato tra Otto e Novecento, Rapporti tra proprietà, impresa e manodopera nell’agricoltura italiana dal IX secolo all’unità*, Accademia di agricoltura, scienze e lettere di Verona 1984; Gabellieri *et al.*, *Sulle tracce dei pastori* cit.

<sup>27</sup> R. Cevasco, D. Moreno, *Pendici liguri: riscoprire le relazioni tra suoli e copertura vegetale*, in P. Cesaretti, R. Ferlinghetti (eds.) *Uomini e ambienti. Dalla storia al futuro*, Bergamo 2014, pp. 46-67.

<sup>28</sup> D. Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno* cit.



Fig. 2 'Lattarola d'Apparizione' drawn from life by A. Pittaluga (P. Levisy, Duché de Genes. Costumes. Dessinés sur les lieux par A. Pittaluga, P. Marino, Paris 1826)

sation of this agro-sylvo-pastoral system was linked to the afforestation/plantation schemes with conifers (in particular with black pine *Pinus nigra*) carried out by the Forest Administration on collective pastures (parish common land, *comunaglie*) since the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and with precise forestry policies up to the 1960s). The aim was to cover the 'naked' slopes («i nudi») of Genoa surroundings, considered unproductive and degraded, and so to be 'coated' by an arboreous layer, using fast growing species. The 'naked' ceased to be a foodscape for collecting 'spontaneous' food herbs: a historical foodscape disappeared because its food productions have no longer been recognized as important, although these herbs enter, as we have seen, in the recipe of preparations

that are still present (or rediscovered) in Genoese (and Ligurian) cuisine. Only very few fragments of these ancient grasslands have survived, which today we generally find impoverished, or shrubbed or afforested<sup>29</sup>. The monospecific and aged populations of *Brachipodium pinnatum* have replaced the previous species-rich herbaceous layer – a sort of biodiversification process in negative – and, in the event of abundant rainfall, behave like ‘thatched roofs’ towards the runoff waters, drastically increasing their speed and the hydro geological vulnerability at the slope scale<sup>30</sup>.

These considerations – that arise from the ecological study of an ancient grassland parcel in the Mediterranean side of Liguria – are particularly valid for various European regions which, like Liguria, are in a post-industrial economic situation. The environmental conditions in which the abandoned or marginalized slopes of the Apennine and Alpine mountains are today, between the collapse of biodiversity and of soil fertility and the increase in wild fires, erosions and hydro-geological instability, find their origin in the unsustainable ‘renaturalization’ policies of the past decades, with effects evidently exacerbated by the consequences of climate changes: policies that have often also erased the memory of their previous condition of intensely practiced foodscapes<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> D. Moreno, G.F. Croce, M.A. Guido, C. Montanari, *Pine plantations on ancient grassland: ecological changes in the Mediterranean mountains of Liguria, Italy, during the 19th and 20th centuries*, in C. Watkins (ed.), *Ecological effects of afforestation*, CAB International, Melksham 1993, pp. 93-110.

<sup>30</sup> M. Quaini, D. Moreno, R. Cevasco, *Fra utopie ed eterotopie: quale spazio per una ‘storia territorialista’ della montagna?*, in «Scienze del Territorio», n. 4 (2016) ‘Riabitare la Montagna’, Firenze University Press, Firenze, pp. 34-43.

<sup>31</sup> On this topic see, for example, P. Piana, C. Watkins, I. Tekić, *Topographical art and the rediscovery of lost landscapes: understanding Ligurian rewilding 1850–2020*, in «Landscapes», 19(2), (2018), pp. 111-34; R. Cevasco, *La fine della “naturalizzazione”: approccio storico e geografico ai problemi dell’abbandono dei sistemi culturali locali*, in G. Scaramellini, E. Mastropiero (eds.), *Atti XXXI*

To study these processes at the level of individual foodscape, it is necessary to descend to the observation scale of the single site (the different grassland plots) as we have seen in the study on Arbora (Poggi in this volume).

Sources of the history of botanical sciences of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (herbalization reports, floral and botanical iconography, herbarium specimen, etc.) can help us in the local exploration of the ancient grassland’s ecology<sup>32</sup>. This documentation becomes evidence both of the historical dynamics affecting the biodiversity of the individual plots (at the species or habitat level) and broadens the social framework in which local knowledge on food herbs developed. The Appendix offers an example of the interest of this documentation in situating local foodways topographically and socially.

### 3. ‘Back to the future’

In this chapter the theme of wild food plants – species of food interest that appear in the composition of the herbaceous cover in ecosystems considered ‘natural’ or ‘semi-natural’ – is developed in a complementary way with respect to ethnobotanical studies. The historical and contextual approach to ecology aims at reconnecting the foods plants, and their plant associations, to the topographical history of their habitat (the harvesting site). The processes that define the history of these relationships («biodiversification» processes<sup>33</sup>) can be documented today

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Congresso Geografico Italiano (2010), vol. 2, Mimesis Edizioni, Milano 2014, pp. 363-374.

<sup>32</sup> R. Bruzzone, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretto, C. Montanari, *Botanical Relics of a Lost Landscape: herborising ‘upon the Cliffs about the Pharos’ in Genoa, March 1664*, in «Landscape Research», 43(1) (2018), pp. 20-36.

<sup>33</sup> D. Moreno, *Storia applicata dell’ambiente. L’archeologia delle risorse ambientali e l’ecologia storica dei siti*, in «Quaderni Storici» 164/a, LV, n. 2

at very fine scales thanks to the development of environmental archaeology. Paleobotanical evidences (anthracological, palynological, etc.) are inquired as sources for the history of environmental resources in the context of research projects of cross-production of multiple sources<sup>34</sup>. It is a fundamental perspective from a methodological point of view because it allows to trace fresh and precise documentation in the study of biodiversification processes that incessantly affect the vegetation cover of any rural areas. Together with the fine analysis of habitats and ecologies – considered not as natural but as a product of activation practices – a high historiographical resolution must be sought to reach the network of social relations, revealing complex intertwining of solidarities and conflicts on a micro scale<sup>35</sup>.

The adoption of the historical approach to the site ecology makes it possible to connect the ethno-anthropological and socio-economic aspect of local *foodways* to the historical processes of biodiversification at the level of ‘individual’ landscapes<sup>36</sup>. This path makes it possible to

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(August 2020); R. Cevasco, D. Moreno, R. Hearn, *Biodiversification as an historical process: an appeal for the application of historical ecology to bio-cultural diversity research*, in «Biodiversity and Conservation», 24 (2015), pp. 3167-83, Springer; T. Ingold, *The perception of the environment: essays on livelihood, dwelling, and skill*, Routledge, London 2000.

<sup>34</sup> See, as an example, V. Pescini and D. Moreno in this volume.

<sup>35</sup> On the continuous processes of ‘production’ of locality by interpersonal (political) relationships and actions in the modern and contemporary age see A. Torre, *Luoghi. La produzione di località in età moderna e contemporanea*, Donzelli, Pomezia (Roma) 2011; a recent contribution focused on collective resources in A. Torre (ed.), *Ethnography of the Commons*, in «Quaderni Storici» 168(3) (2021) with the chapter by G. Beltrametti, R. Cevasco, A.M. Stagno, V. Tigrino, *The ambiguity of the commons: shifting meanings between archives and field evidence (Upper Trebbia Valley, Liguria (19th-21st c.))*, in «Quaderni Storici» 168(3) (2021), pp. 732-770.

<sup>36</sup> M.F. Fontefrancesco, D.M. Zocchi, R. Cevasco, R. Dossche, S. Abidullah, A. Pieroni, *Crumbotti and rose petals in a ghost mountain valley: Foraging,*

characterize the materiality of foodscapes in a geographical sense and to consolidate their present relations to gastronomic heritage.<sup>37</sup> Relationships between foodways and foodscapes scarcely investigated by other disciplines can thereafter be rediscovered, peculiarly concerning those products of vegetal origin considered marginal or not agricultural as they derive from practices of foraging, hunting, and fishing. In the mountains of Liguria – where multiple management systems (such as the wooded pastures) have been or are still active – the historical approach revealed several local food products that have for long time considered spontaneous, as well as the studied case of *prebugiun*<sup>38</sup>.

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*landscape, and their transformations in the upper Borbera Valley, NW Italy*, in «Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine», 18(1) (2022); R. Hearn, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretto, *The cultural and land use implications of the reappearance of the wild boar in North West Italy: a case study of the Val di Vara*, in «Journal of Rural Studies», 36 (2014), pp. 52-63.

<sup>37</sup>R. Cevasco, N. Gabellieri N., *Biografie di paesaggi alpini: produzioni di quota e pascoli alberati di larice in Val di Fiemme e Valle Argentina*, in Spadaro C., Toldo A., Dansero E. (eds), *Geografia e cibo: ricerche, riflessioni e discipline a confronto*, in «Società di Studi Geografici, Memorie geografiche», 20 (2022), pp. 575- 582.

<sup>38</sup>A rich bibliography is available on the historical ecology and environmental archaeology of multiple management systems of grazing resources in the mountains of Liguria between the Alps and the Ligurian Tuscan-Emilian Apennines (among more recent contributions, see for example, on the wood-pasture systems: D. Moreno, R. Cevasco, V. Pescini, N. Gabellieri, *The Archeology of Woodland Ecology: Reconstructing Past Woodmanship Practices of Wooded Pasture Systems in Italy*, in F. Allende Álvarez, G. Gomez-Mediavilla and N. López-Estébanez (eds.), *Silvicultures - Management and Conservation*, IntechOpen 2019; on the white alder farming system: M. Bürgi, R. Cevasco, L. Demeter, A. Fescenko, N. Gabellieri, J. Marull Lopez, L. Östlund, M. Šantrůčková, T. Wohlgemuth, *Where do we come from? Cultural heritage in forests and forest management*, in F. Krumm, A. Schuck, A. Rigling (eds.), *How to balance forestry and biodiversity conservation – A view across Europe*, European Forest Institute and Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, 2020, pp. 46-61).

The sites that preserve the memory of these practices or relationships should be taken into consideration not only in their enhancement as sites of interest for environmental history and archaeology or gastronomic heritage but above all in planning actions. These sites and practices testify other models of environmental resource management whose sustainability can be historically assessed.

‘Wild’ food plants are not, in hindsight, wild (as it results from a simplified view of the harvesting economies and their environmental systems) but rather a by-product of continuous and non-linear (interactive) ‘activation’ practices. As we have seen, the conservation or disappearance of *prebugiun* plants is closely linked to precise knowledge and practices at the level of family farm. Even if the social, economic, cultural and environmental contexts have changed and are continuously changing, the legacies of past socio-ecological production systems endure over time (in vegetation, in soils, in local practices, etc.). These food systems involve potential resources that could be refreshed by finding a new role if inserted in experimental projects searching for socio-environmental sustainability and circularity. Recently natural scientists, after the disastrous fires of the summer 2021, are discovering the interest of historical ecology proposing a paradigm shift in Mediterranean landscape management<sup>39</sup>. The gastronomic sciences and cultures, choosing to historically re-situate the complexity of local food systems and practices of collection, production, and consumption, can offer a qualifying point of view and new documentation for innovative pathways of action.

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<sup>39</sup> The aim is to promote the oak wood pasture and multiple-use coppice woodlands systems as a strategy for fire prevention (E. Bergmeier, J. Capelo, R. Di Pietro, R. Guarino, A. Kavgacı, J. Loidi, I. Tsiripidis, F. Xystrakis, *‘Back to the Future’- Oak wood-pasture for wildfire prevention in the Mediterranean*, in «Plant Sociology», 58(2) (2021), pp. 41-48).



#### 4. Appendix. The *prebugiun* herbs in historical Floras

*The Botanotheca Ligure* by Giuseppe Lertora (1784-1841), a Genoese chemist and curator of Clelia Durazzo's herbal and botanical collections – is a valuable contribution to study the historical ecology of ancient grassland in Genoa's surrounding valleys. This is an illustrated herbal manuscript concerning the flora from the areas around Genoa assembled in the years 1820-1835. The work consists of three volumes with high quality botanical drawings executed with mixed media (pencil and watercolour) and every plant is painted on the *recto* (front) of every sheet. In the majority of the cases, on the *verso* (back) there is information about the plant itself: the scientific name, a short description, the vulgar name (and often even the dialectal one), but most importantly the place of herborisation (habitat and toponym).

Lertora was one of the collaborators of the botanist and noblewoman Clelia Durazzo (Genoa 1760-Pegli 1830), founder in 1794 of the botanical garden in Villa Durazzo-Pallavicini in Pegli, not far from Genoa. She was also Ippolito's niece (founder of another big botanical garden in Genoa at the Villa dello Zerbino) and daughter of Giacomo Filippo III (1729-1812), collector and naturalist, who gave origin to exchanges and relationships with important names from the history of botany such as James Edward Smith (1759-1828) founder of the Linnaean Society in 1788<sup>40</sup>. This network of scientific knowledge is still alive at Clelia's time, who constantly remained in contact with botanists like Domenico Viviani (1772-1840) and Antonio Bertoloni (1775-1868), the latter of whom wrote her eulogy, as well as that of Lertora. These foundations went onto inform the scientific Genoese entourage with naturalists like

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<sup>40</sup> O. Raggio, *Storia di una passione. Cultura aristocratica e collezionismo alla fine dell'ancien régime*, Marsilio, Venezia 2000; O. Raggio, *Collecting Nature in Genoa 1780-1870. From Aristocratic Patronage to Civic Patrimony*, in «Journal of the History of Collections», 10 (1), 1998, pp. 41-59.

Giacomo Doria (1840-1913), Giuseppe De Notaris (1805-1877), Otto Penzig (1856-1929) and other ‘minors’ pupils like Vincenzo Basteri (1835-?), a chemist in Genoa but originally from Varese Ligure (Eastern Ligurian Apennines) and author of a *Flora Ligustica* (Genoa, 1888)<sup>41</sup>, one of the many Penzig’s collaborators for his *Flora Popolare Ligustica* (Genoa, 1897) and the *Flora Popolare Italiana* (Genoa, 1924)<sup>42</sup>.

In the *Botanotheca Ligure* we can find the documentation of plants from the Genovesato (Genoa’s outskirts today), in places such as Lagaccio, Sperone, San Pantaleo, Marassi, in general the mountains around Genoa. This kind of (iconographical) source is an interesting research instrument for historical ecology studies and environmental history because it gives dated and detailed localised information on micro-habitats in the years 1830s just a century before this herbaceous habitats (or ancient grassland) became the so-called «nudi» (literally naked areas) of Genoa: in fact, we find terms such as «*pascuis*», «*arvis*», «*agrorum marginibus*», «*prato*», «*locis gramineis*», «*rivulis*», «*locis herbidis collinis*», often linked to precise placenames. Through crossing this with other sources, it is possible to record historical variations of plant populations at the topographical scale.

In this work there are at least two *praebugium* herbs documented and two kinds of orchids among those species founded by Giuseppina Poggi in the Arbora site<sup>43</sup>: *Campanula rapunculus* L. (FIG. 3), reported by Lertora everywhere around Genoese hills («[...] *In collibus ubique*

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<sup>41</sup> V. Basteri, *Flora Ligustica. Le Composite. Parte prima Corimbifere*, Genova 1888.

<sup>42</sup> O. Penzig, *Flora Popolare Ligure. Primo contributo allo studio dei nomi volgari delle piante in Liguria*, in Atti della Società Ligustica di Scienze Naturali e Geografiche, Anno 8, Fasc. 3-4, Genova 1897; O. Penzig, *Flora Popolare Italiana*, vol. I e II, Tipo-Litografia del R.° Istituto Sordomuti, Genova 1924.

<sup>43</sup> The botanical iconographies in question have been published in Gabellieri *et al.*, *Sulle tracce dei pastori* cit. (R. Bruzzone, R. Cevasco, Schede di Catalogo n. 46 e 47: Giuseppe Lertora. Botanotheca Ligure).

[...]»); *Hyoseris radiata* L. (FIG. 4), reported around Genoa on walls and abundant in grassy areas («[...] *Genua in muris, et locis herbidis vulgatissima* [...]»); and the orchids *Ophris apifera* L. reported in Genoese hills («[...] *Genua in colli bus vulgatissim.*»); *Serapias cordigera* L. and *Serapias lingua* L. (FIG. 5) «*simili individui si trovano communi a Montobbio e a Terralba, verso la metà di Maggio*» (trad. «similar plants are common in Montoggio and Terralba, around mid May»).

In 1883, D. Mazzini published *I Terrapieni di Genova. Note di un passeggiatore, novembre 1882* which included an alphabetical index of phanerogam plants «raccolte nei dintorni delle mura di Genova e zone dipendenti» (trad. «collected around the walls of Genoa and dependent areas») signed by him and V. Basteri<sup>44</sup>.

These are very different botanical sources. Indeed, Lertora's illustrated herbal manuscript provides highly localised floristic data for the Genoese area, accompanied by notes on the habitats (years 1820-1835). Mazzini and Basteri – pupils and correspondents of Penzig – produced a flora (a floristic list) dated to November 1882 following a series of herborisations carried out in the so-called Genoese *Terrapieni* (embankments), the same sites explored by Clelia Durazzo and Lertora in the years 1830, in which a very specific area winding around the 17<sup>th</sup> century walls of Genoa is described: «i clivi esterni dei colli orientali e occidentali, sul dosso dei quali, partendo dall'altura detta dello Sperone, si biforca e discende la cinta murata della città» (trad. «the external slopes of the Eastern and Western hills, on the back of which, starting from the top called Sperone, the walled city wall forks and descends» Mazzini and Basteri 1883, p. 23).

From the construction of the walls in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century until their management by the *Genio militare* (military engineers) in the 1950s, the grassy stations were maintained both with transhumant graz-

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<sup>44</sup> D. Mazzini, *I terrapieni di Genova, note di un passeggiatore*, in «Annuario Sez. ligure C.A.I.», 1, Genova 1882, pp. 18-38.

ing and with the mowing systematically contracted by the military administration to companies that still practiced bovine livestock. Here too, the detail of the observations collected are of particular interest because they refer to habitats that from those years onwards would have completely changed their physiognomy and/or ecology: such as «*i poggi di Montaldo*» («the hills of Montaldo») famous for the richness of orchids, «specie nel tratto da Porta Montaldo fino alla alture dello Sperone ed oltre» (trad. «especially in the parts from Porta Montaldo to the heights of the Sperone and beyond» p. 34) which were incorporated into the urbanisation of Genoa in the years 1950 or, where they survived, would no longer have been grazed by transhumant flocks. Furthermore, it shows us that during the 1880s, *prebugiun* species could be collected in the grassy stations around the city walls in sites that are now colonised by secondary wood formations, within which St. John's lily (*Lilium bulbiferum*) can be found well below normal altitudinal limits.



Fig. 3 *Campanula rapunculus*, c. 192, from Giuseppe Lertora, *Botanotheca Ligure*, XIX century, Genova, Biblioteca Civica Berio, BCRAR m.r.V.3.25-27



Fig. 4 *Hyoseris radiata*, c. 332, from Giuseppe Lertora, *Botanotheca Ligurica*, XIX century, Genova, Biblioteca Civica Berio, BCRAR m.r.V.3.25-27



Fig. 5 *Serapias cordigera* and *Serapias Lingua*, c. 470, from Giuseppe Lertora, *Botanotheca Ligure*, XIX century, Genova, Biblioteca Civica Berio, BCRAR m.r.V.3.25-27





**Activation practices: effects of the traditional  
collection of wild herbs and historical ecology of  
the site (Arbora – T. Recco Valley – Eastern Liguria)  
19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries**

*Giuseppina Poggi\**

The usage, control and reproduction practices of environmental resources at specific sites are studied together with the short, medium, and long-term effects they have had on the ecology of the resources<sup>1</sup>. When defined as such, activation practices are therefore fully ‘social practices’ derived from an extension of the agronomic concept of ‘cultivation practices’. However, said cultivation practices implies a separation between cultivated and uncultivated spaces in that they introduce into the historical discourse a series of classificatory oppositions (*e.g.* between cultivated/uncultivated; domestic/wild; natural/man-made vegetation) or theoretical assumptions (*e.g.* models of equilibrium/disturbance adopted for the interpretation of the resource activation processes) that do cannot interpret the technical (and also biological) complexities of manipulations in the vegetation cover. The same complexity is instead revealed by ecological-historical surveys conducted at the local scale of a given territory when traces inscribed into the current

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\* Translation of the Italian text by Raffaella Bruzzone. Giuseppina Poggi (1963-2004) botanist and historical geographer worked *c/o* the Department of Modern History at the University of Genoa.

<sup>1</sup> D. Moreno, *Ecologia storica*, in L. De Rosa (a cura di), *La storiografia italiana negli ultimi vent'anni*, vol.1, Laterza, Bari 1989, pp. 394-398.

vegetation cover of a single site are recognised. Problems arise when seeking to identify activation practices from these traces. Until the Civil and Forestry codification of the Napoleonic era, systems of multiple and intensive use of vegetation cover were widespread. These systems organised a vast range of productions originating from ‘uncultivated’ spaces in different and highly complex ways with an internal logic geared towards the control and renewal of the resources themselves and clearly supported by local naturalistic knowledge. Explorations at the intersection of ethnobotanical and historical research makes a specific contribution to the identification of activation practices and of these connected ‘naturalistic knowledge’<sup>2</sup>.

This paper presents a case-study related to the environmental effects of a particular activation practice of the vegetation: the ‘traditional collection’ of wild herbs. To ‘*fare il praebuggiun*’ (or, literally ‘to make the *praebuggiun*’) was a practice performed in many family farms around Genoa during the 1980/90s to obtain a type of salad that is still sold at the markets and continues to bear the vernacular, dialectal name. These notes are derived from a wider investigation – still going on – on ethnologic, historical and environmental characterisation of resources and local products of animal and vegetal origin in southern Europe (Poggi 1994)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> L. Volta, *Prelevi e rigenerazione. Una valle piemontese dal Settecento ai nostri giorni*, in A. Caracciolo, G. Bonacchi (eds.), *Il declino degli elementi. Ambiente naturale e rigenerazione delle risorse nell'Europa moderna*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1990, pp. 239-264.

<sup>3</sup> G. Poggi, *Tra coltivo e incolto: etnobotanica delle pratiche di raccolta e dinamiche vegetazionali (torrente Recco- Liguria orientale)*, in «Giornale Botanico Italiano», 128,1, 1994, p. 265.

«Pôle ethnobotanique et histoire» linked to the research *Les “produits de terroir” en Europe du sud. Caractérisation ethnologique, sensorielle et socio-économique de leur typicité. Stratégies de valorisation* (Contract CEE n AIR3-CT 93-1123) has been based in the Department of Modern and Contemporary History

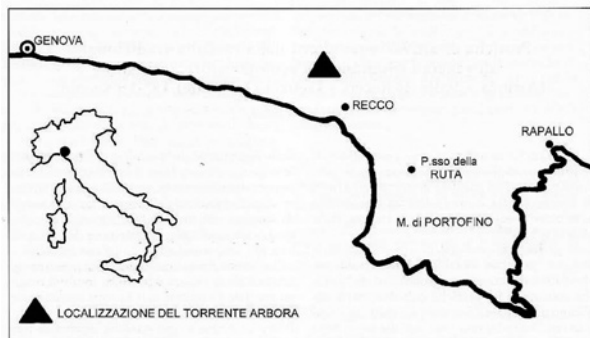


Fig. 1 Location map

The analysed site is a grassland area in a secondary valley of the Arbora stream – a tributary of the Recco stream – in Eastern Liguria. The study was extended to the whole side of the secondary ridge that separates the valley of the Sori stream from that of the Recco stream, starting from the primary ridge running parallel to the coastline to east of Genoa (Fig. 1). In this case, the use of the historical topographical cartography published at a scale of 1: 50.000 (*Carta degli Stati Sardi di Terraferma*, 1852) for the area of the Montagna di Fascia<sup>4</sup> enabled the initial identification of ‘ancient grassland’ within the current distribution of grassland.

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of the University of Genoa since 1993. The protected areas in question are: Val Vobbia-Antola Regional Park (GE); Alta Val Secchia-Upper Reggiano Apennines Regional Park (RE). The observations concerning the plots of land in the hamlet of Chiappetta in the valley of the Arbora-Recco stream (GE) were made possible thanks to the kindness of the owners (Fam. Pozzo-Benvenuto) to whom we wish to extend our gratitude.

<sup>4</sup>D. Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1990; D. Moreno, *Une source pour l'histoire et l'archéologie des ressources végétales. Les cartes topographiques de la montagne ligure (Italie)*, in Bousquet-Bressolier, *L'œil du cartographe et la représentation géographique du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, CTHS, Paris 1995, pp. 175-198.

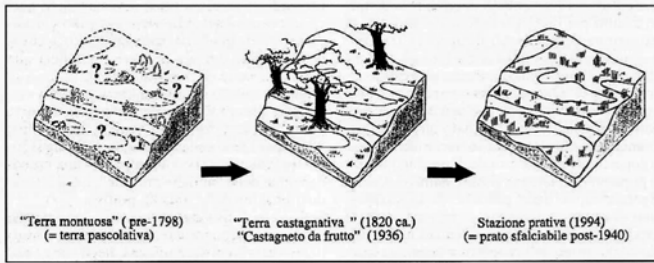


Fig. 2 The Chiappetta slope. Reconstruction of the use of the soil (1798-1994)

Based on cartographic filtering of smaller-scale topographic material employed in field surveys during the 1820s (handwritten *tavolette di campagna* of Topographical Service of Sardinian Army at a scale 1: 10.000 ca.); Recco IGM map scale: 1: 25.000, surveyed in 1878, updates in 1907; updated aerial photogrammetric surveys in 1936; crossed with available archival documentation (Caratata 1640, Catasto descrittivo 1798, Catasto storico 1880), it was possible to establish the land use dynamics and grassland surface variations (as well as – in this instance – situate examples of ancient Apennine grassland) during the last 200 years or so, at the scale of the slope in question (Fig. 2).

On the primary and secondary ridges that close the valley of the Arbora stream, since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century common lands (*comunaglie*) belonging to the inhabitants of the surrounding parishes could be found which were subjected to multiple agro-silvo-pastoral usage. The vegetation cover of this area is described in the 1852 map as 'meadows' and '*gerbidi*' (rough pasture/wooded pasture), with intensive ovine and bovine grazing associated with seasonal mowing documented for the same period.

The textual documentation records notable examples of the land usurpation by individual members of parishes starting from the Caratata (a descriptive cadaster) dated 1640, in which '*terre campive*' (field lands) and '*terre castaneative*' (chestnut groves lands) were included within common lands, terraced (*macere*), and defended by common grazing, char-

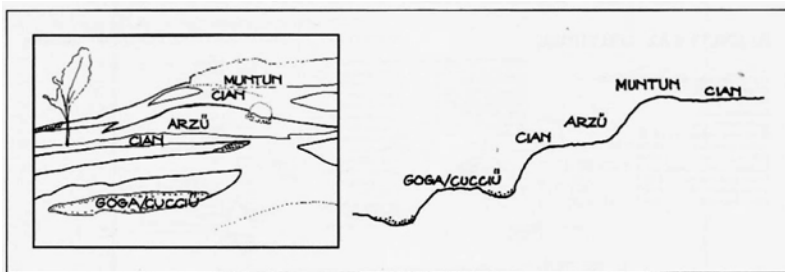


Fig. 3 Local geographical names

acterised by special constructions called ‘*mezarette*’ (drystone dykes) or, in the current Genoese dialect ‘*creste*’, that were often equipped with a ‘*casetta da fieno*’ (hay barns) for the collection of hay and leaves<sup>5</sup>.

This expansion of the ‘*terre domesticatè*’ (domesticated lands) – the key produce of which were chestnuts and fodder – reveals an initial contraction of the open grasslands, a trend that was, however, reversed between 1870 and 1930 when several private plots that were already chestnut groves were converted into hay meadows. This last one is the case of the grassland studied in the locality of Chiappetta (a slope in the small valley of the Arbora stream), the plot hitherto retaining the dialect microtoponym ‘*boscù*’ (chestnut wood). The slope is still characterised by grassy verges of the previously grazed sweet chestnut grove most likely planted between 1798 and 1850, thereafter converted into a meadow during the 1940s.

Flora and vegetation investigations of the surface in this case highlights the presence of early flowering nemoral herbaceous species (*Anemone trifolia*, *Hepatica nobilis* ...) and acidophilic species (*Pteridium aquilium*, *Erica arborea* ...) which still today – more than fifty years after the felling of the sweet chestnut grove – continue to constitute the

<sup>5</sup> D. Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno* cit.; O. Raggio, *Forme e pratiche di appropriazione delle risorse. Casi di usurpazione delle comunaglie in Liguria*, in «Quaderni storici», 79, 1992, pp. 135-170.

floristic cortege of the residual dead chestnut stumps. These species can therefore be considered indicators (probable relics) of the previous tree cover at the site (a sweet chestnut grove between 1820-1940).

The site is located at an altitude between 70-100 m a.s.l, NE facing with an average inclination of 30 degrees on a decalcified limestone substrate (pH 5-6, 2). In terms of the sites' vegetation the area can be classified (following the phytosociological terminology) as *mesobrometi*<sup>6</sup>, rich meadows with high biological diversity (maximum number of species present approx. 40), characterized by the presence of Mid European and purely Mediterranean elements.

However, analysis of the field data collected, it can be noted that the floristic composition of hay reaches a number of species (approx. 70) higher than the maximum values normally associated with *mesobrometi* grassland, and the dominance of good fodder grasses (*Graminaceae*) and *Leguminosae* with a high protein content (List 1, el. 6 B3). Such characteristics are not attributable to bioclimatic factors alone, nor to the general attribution of the site to secondary origin meadows that resulted, in this case, from the clearance of the chestnut grove.

The reasons for this floristic richness and biological diversity are found in the site's history and in the practices of resource activation, specifically regarding the continuous performance of particular practice documented over time and space: namely the seasonal collection of grass edible species (Tab. 3, el. 6 A1). The '*fare il praebuggiun*' is included in an annual cycle of eleven practices of current vegetation use that played central role in the systems of control of the plot herbaceous and shrub cover (Fig. 4).

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<sup>6</sup> D. Moreno, G.F. Croce, C. Montanari, *Antiche praterie appenniniche*, in R. Maggi (ed.), *Archeologia preventiva lungo il percorso di un metanodotto*, in «Quaderni della Soprintendenza Archeologica della Liguria», 4, 1992, pp. 159-176; B. Nowak, *Untersuchungen zur Vegetation Ostliguriens* (Italien), Diss. Bot. Band III. J. Cramer, Berlin, Stuttgart 1987.

Once again, site investigations concerning an annual observation cycle highlighted how the practices (Tab. 2, el. 6 D1) of harvesting, mowing, clearing for the production of ‘*sendeggia*’ (the suffrutex and low shrubs species intended for lighting the domestic fire), etc. are directly responsible for the site’s high biological diversity of the herbaceous component.

Variations in the trend and in the number of herbaceous species within the seasonal cycle are observable (Fig. 5).

Furthermore, numerous species of orchids belonging to different genera have been found in the studied plot for which specific harvesting activities were documented by means of a practice for the ripping of the flower stems (Tab. 1, el. 6 A2).

It is therefore possible to hypothesize that the site at Chiappetta functioned as a station of refuge with respect to the historical dynamics of the orchid population on this slope. The shrinking of the grassy areas progressively documented on the slope by way of cartographic filtering between 1936 and 1976 have now reached extreme phases, with the expansion of the uncultivated and woodland neoformations, the current confinement of orchids on the rare ‘naturally’ open situations (rocks and top watersheds) and their abundant presence in ‘domesticated’ areas, still traditionally managed.

A fact that finds confirmation in the notions of collectors’ local naturalistic knowledge.

ELENCO 6 A2 ORCHIDEE

<i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>	(Hudson) Fritsch	<i>gigliu sarvaegu</i>
<i>Serapias cordigera</i>		<i>gigliu sarvaegu</i>
<i>Serapias lingua</i>		<i>gigliu sarvaegu</i>
<i>Serapias neglecta</i>		<i>gigliu sarvaegu</i>
<i>Orchis morio</i>	L.	<i>pe de san Pe</i>
<i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>	(L.) R. Br.	
<i>Ophrys holosericea</i>	(Burm. fil.) W. Greuter	
<i>Ophrys sphecodes</i>	Miller	
<i>Orchis maculata</i>	L. subs. <i>fuchsii</i> (Druce) Hylander	
<i>Orchis papilionacea</i>	L.	
<i>Orchis provincialis</i>	Balb.	
<i>Orchis tridentata</i>	Scop.	

Tab. 1 Species composition of orchids

ELENCO 6 D1 COMBUSTIBILE FUOCO DOMESTICO (Sendeggia)

<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Armum	<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	Murta Sarvaega
<i>Erica arborea</i>	Brugu	<i>Pinus halepensis</i>	Pin
<i>Ostrya carpinifolia</i>	Carpe	<i>Quercus pubescens</i>	Rue
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Erxu	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Sanguinin
<i>Fraxinus ornus</i>	Fraxu	<i>Cistus spp.</i>	Sciattu
<i>Coronilla emerus</i>	Leca	<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	Scona
<i>Lonicera implexa</i>	Ligabosco	<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Tummu
<i>Myrtus communis</i>	Murta	<i>Spartium junceum</i>	Zenestra

Tab. 2 Domestic fire ignition species

ELENCO 6 A1 INSALATA SELVATICA (PRAEBUGGIUM)

<i>Urospermum dalechampii</i>	Bell'ommu	?	Radiciun sarvaegu
?	Denti de cuniggiu	<i>Campanula rapunculus</i>	Rampunzi
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Papavau	<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	Scipuelli
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	Pimpinella	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Scixerbua
<i>Taraxacum officinalis</i>	Piscialettu, Dente de can	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	Spaisina
<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	Pren	<i>Reichardia picroides</i>	Talaegua, Rattalaegua

Tab. 3 *Praebuggiun*



ELENCO 6 B3 FIENI PRIMO SFALCIO

<i>Agrostis tenuis</i>	<i>Daucus carota</i>	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	<i>Luzula campestris</i>	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	<i>Euphrasia rostkoviana</i>	<i>Lychmis flos-cuculi</i>	<i>Reichardia picroides</i>
<i>Avena barbata</i>	<i>Festuca pratensis</i>	<i>Onobrychis viciifolia</i>	<i>Rhinanthus alectorolophus</i>
<i>Avenella flexuosa</i>	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	<i>Ononis minutissima</i>	<i>Salvia pratensis</i>
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	<i>Galium verum</i>	<i>Ononis spinosa</i>	<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>
<i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i>	<i>Geranium colombinum</i>	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	<i>Silene vulgaris</i>
<i>Brachypodium pinnatum</i>	<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	<i>Ornithogalum pyrenaicum</i>	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
<i>Briza maxima</i>	<i>Helianthemum nummularium subsp. obscurum</i>	<i>Orobanche sp.</i>	<i>Stachys officinalis</i>
<i>Briza media</i>	<i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>	<i>Pallenis spinosa</i>	<i>Stachys recta</i>
<i>Bromus erectus</i>	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	<i>Peucedanum cervaria</i>	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
<i>Campanula rapunculus</i>	<i>lnula salicina</i>	<i>Peucedanum officinalis</i>	<i>Teucrium chamaedrys</i>
<i>Campanula trachelium</i>	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	<i>Phyteuma scorzonrifolium</i>	<i>Thymus pulegioides</i>
<i>Carex flacca</i>	<i>Lathyrus latifolius</i>	<i>Picris hieracioides</i>	<i>Trifolium medium</i>
<i>Centaurea bracteata</i>	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	<i>Trifolium incarnatum ssp. molinerii</i>
<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Trifolium ochroleucum</i>
<i>Cruciata glabra</i>	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	<i>Polygala nicaensis</i>	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	<i>Linum bienne</i>	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	<i>Linum catharticum</i>	<i>Potentilla hirta</i>	<i>Urospermum dalechampii</i>
<i>Danthonia decumbens</i>	<i>Linum viscosum</i>	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	<i>Vicia cracca</i>

List 1 First hay makings herbs

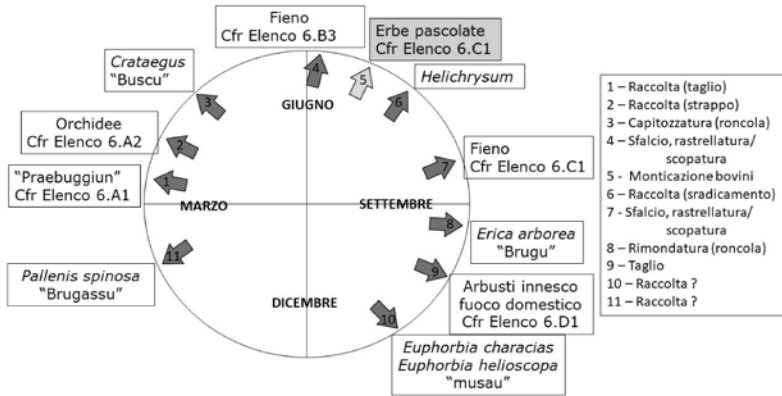


Fig. 4 Annual cycle of activation practices and herbaceous and shrubby productions of the plot in the Chiappetta slope (Arbora-Recco sub valley). Legend (on the right): 1. collection (cut) 2. collection (ripping) 3. pollarding (hook) 4. first hay making (scythe, sickle), raking/sweeping (brush off) 5. daily cattle pasture (until 1960s) 6. collection (hand up-rooting) 7. second hay making (scythe, sickle), raking/sweeping (brush off) 8. shredding (hook) 9. cutting (heavy sickle) 10. undocumented collection 11. undocumented collection

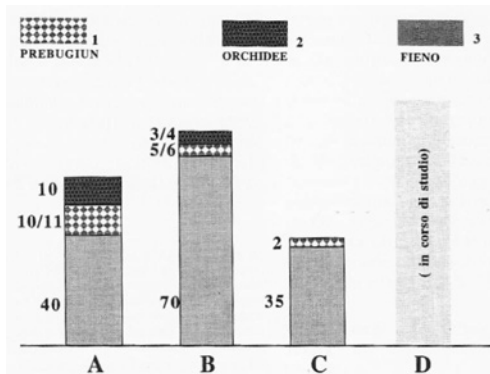


Fig. 5 Variation in the number of herbaceous species detected during the annual production cycle (1. Praebuggiun, 2. Orchids, 3. Hay; A = praebuggiun collecting period B = first mowing period, C = second mowing period, D = winter resting)

# Ligurian peasant cooking in English travel books c. 1840 to c. 1914

Ross Balzaretti\*

## 1. Dickens and Genoese food

*Pictures from Italy*, a short book which includes a famous account of Genoa, was published by Charles Dickens in May 1846<sup>1</sup>. It provides an interesting starting point for an investigation of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ligurian food cultures because, like so many travel writers, his eye was drawn to edibles and eaters. The status of his text as reportage is quite complex. Parts of the book originally appeared as «Travelling Letters» in the *Daily News* between 21 January and 11 March 1846, edited by Dickens from the first issues until 9 February<sup>2</sup>. These in turn were

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<sup>1</sup> C. Dickens, *Pictures from Italy*, K. Flint (ed.), Penguin, London 1998, pp. 29-61. For detailed analysis M. Hollington, F. Orestano (eds.), *Dickens and Italy. Little Dorrit and Pictures from Italy*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge 2009. I would like to thank Dr Robert A. Hearn for suggesting this topic to me. It proved a pleasure to research.

<sup>2</sup> No. III 'Avignon to Genoa' appeared in the *Daily News*, Saturday January 31; no. 4 'A retreat at Albaro', Monday February 9; no. 5 'First Sketch of Genoa, the Streets, Shops and Houses', Monday February 16; no. 6 'In Genoa', Thursday February 26; no. 7 'In Genoa and out of it', Monday March 2.

based on real letters sent home, mostly to his friend and future biographer John Forster<sup>3</sup>. It has been argued, in part because *Pictures* can be compared with these other sources, that it is «as much a travel book as a work of creative writing»<sup>4</sup>. However, the distinction between ‘travel’ and ‘creative’ writing is not as clear cut as this implies<sup>5</sup>. Dickens himself later sent up the typical British traveller in *Little Dorrit* (1855-57) perhaps because as has been surmised «Dickens enjoyed speaking with Italian common people and observing their customs» more than the average traveller<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, if the success of Dickens as a travel writer was due in part to his vivid abilities and interests as a novelist this does not of itself invalidate his ‘picture’ of Genoa, as his detailed local on-the-ground knowledge is clearly displayed in his letters and journalism.

This local knowledge was acquired when Dickens, his family and their British servants, including an unnamed cook, lived at the Villa di Bagnarello in the Genoese suburb of Albaro for two months from 16 July 1844 until 23 September when they moved into the grand Palazzo Peschiere on San

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For Dickens as editor of the *Daily News* see D. Roberts, *Charles Dickens and the “Daily News”: Editorials and Editorial Writers*, in «Victorian Periodicals Review», 22 (1989), pp. 51-63.

<sup>3</sup> M. Slater, *Dickens, Charles John Huffam (1812–1870)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Sept 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7599> accessed 09 March 2022. M. House, G. Storey (eds.), *Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4., Oxford University Press, Oxford 1974, which covers 1844-1846.

<sup>4</sup> A. Vescovi, *Themes and Styles in Pictures from Italy*, in L. Conti Camaiora (ed.), *English Travellers and Travelling*, ISU dell’ Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan 2002, pp. 95-106 at p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> T. Hannigan, *The Travel Writing Tribe. Journeys in Search of a Genre*, Hurst, London 2021, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Vescovi, *Themes and Styles* cit. p. 97.

Bartolomeo hill<sup>7</sup>. While in Genoa the author mixed socially with people like himself, the educated middle class. He dined both with prominent local families notably the Marchese Giovanni Carlo di Negro and other English people, including the merchant Thomas C. Curry and the British Consul. However, he rarely commented on the food eaten on these occasions. There are occasional snippets. On 9 August 1844 Dickens asked Thomas Curry to supply three pounds of black tea and a Ham<sup>8</sup>. The following day his English cook managed to communicate with the locals having

primed herself with the names of all sorts of vegetables, meats, soups, fruits, and kitchen necessities, that she was able to order whatever was needful of the peasantry that were trotting in and out all day, basketed and barefooted<sup>9</sup>.

In contrast, he shows a keen interest throughout *Pictures* in the customs of the 'poorer classes', including their eating habits<sup>10</sup>. Down at the port he complained about the uninviting stalls where «the sellers of *maccaroni* and polenta» plied their trade and the chaotic fish and vegetable markets so unlike the ordered ones back home and staffed by «lazy» locals, a typically northern European jibe at southerners<sup>11</sup>. 'Dickens in Genoa' was like any other contemporary tourist drawn to the picturesque. A good example is his casual observation that pig

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<sup>7</sup> *Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4, pp. xxi-xxii. He went back to London in November returning to travel around Italy until April 1845. Back after that in Genoa, he finally left the city in June that year.

<sup>8</sup> *Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4, p. 172.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4, p. 175.

<sup>10</sup> A. Warde, *The Practice of Eating*, Polity, Cambridge 2016, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* cit. pp. 42-43. First voiced in the *Daily News*, Monday February 16, 1846.



Fig. 1 Animal skin wine carriers, Museo Contadino di Cassego (SP). Photograph by R. Balzaretti

skins were used to store wine<sup>12</sup>, which can be corroborated with other evidence. Mary Wilson, arriving in Genoa on 14 June 1847, noted the practice with distaste<sup>13</sup>, and examples of such wine containers have survived in local museums as those shown in Fig. 1 now preserved in Cassego (SP).

Another extended passage from *Pictures* is more revealing because it marks out Dickens as a more knowledgeable traveller than the norm. He recorded his visit to:

[...] a real Genoese tavern, where the visitor may derive good entertainment from real Genoese dishes, such as Tagliarini; Ravioli; German sausages, strong of garlic, sliced and eaten with fresh green figs;

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<sup>12</sup> Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* cit. p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> J. Simpson (ed.), *A European Journal. Two sisters abroad in 1847*, Bloomsbury, London 1987, p. 110.

cocks' combs and sheep-kidneys, chopped up with mutton chops and liver; small pieces of some unknown part of a calf, twisted into small shreds, fried, and served up in a great dish like whitebait and other curiosities of that kind. They often get wine at these suburban Trattorie, from France and Spain and Portugal, which is brought over by small captains in little trading-vessels<sup>14</sup>.

Dickens visited this trattoria on a trip to «Monte Faccio» (Monte Fasce) a famous viewpoint several kilometres north-east of the city. The food he described certainly *seems* local rather than the bland hotel food which travellers by this time were beginning to rely on, although the wine interestingly was not, reflecting the city's deep history as a trading place. At first sight we might not take this account at face value because, as Dickens had brought his own (English) cook with him, who ended up marrying a Genoese man and staying in the city to set up a restaurant<sup>15</sup>, we might question both how much Genoese food he and his family actually ate and whether Dickens would have wanted to eat it given what he observed around him. However, once this description of a trattoria meal is compared with *local* evidence, it begins to look more reliable. Emmanuele Rossi's *La vera cuciniera genovese facile ed economica* (1865) – one of the earliest Genoese cookery books – contains recipes for most of what Dickens described: *tagliarini*<sup>16</sup>, *ravioli* (*i*

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<sup>14</sup> Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* cit. pp. 38-39. Mentioned as «genuine native cookery» by Forster in his biography (*Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4, p. 208). Forster reported that T.C. Curry, the local merchant friend of the Dickens family was at this dinner.

<sup>15</sup> J. Bowen, *Dickens and the Figures of Pictures from Italy*, in C. Hornsby (ed.), *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond*, British School at Rome, London 2000, p. 199. Reported in a letter to Daniel Maclise, 9 May 1845 (*Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4, p. 306).

<sup>16</sup> E. Rossi, *La vera cuciniera genovese facile ed economica*, Genoa 1865 (reprinted with a preface by Paola Moroni Salvatori, 1992, Arnoldo Forni

*ravièu* in dialect)<sup>17</sup>, *offal*<sup>18</sup>, and *schienali*, strips of spinal cord dipped in egg and flour and deep fried<sup>19</sup>.

This «account of a real Genoese tavern» was singled out for comment by Dudley Costello in his *Piedmont and Italy from the Alps to the Tiber*, published in 1861<sup>20</sup>. Costello noted

As far as eating goes, we, for our own parts, have seen the *facchini*<sup>21</sup>, and most of the nondescript race that fill the lower part of the city, devouring *maccheroni* in the sun in as great quantities, and with quite as much relish, as their idler brethren, the *lazzaroni*, on the Chiaja, at Naples<sup>22</sup>.

His dismissive, even racist, attitude to the local poor was in some contrast to that adopted by Dickens even though Costello, a journalist, knew and worked with Dickens in the 1840s and 50s, having been in 1846 foreign correspondent of the *Daily News* when Dickens was also writing for that newspaper<sup>23</sup>.

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Editorie, Sala Bolognese, pp. 69-70). This book was an expansion of G.B. and G. Ratto, *La cuciniera genovese*, Pagano, Genoa 1863.

<sup>17</sup> Rossi, *La vera cuciniera* cit. pp. 43-48 quoting dialect verses on the subject. *Ravioli* were noted, alongside *polenta* and *polpetta*, as «the three favourite dishes of Genoa» by Lady Blessington, *The Idler in Italy*, London 1839, vol. 2, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Rossi, *La vera cuciniera* cit. pp. 164-165.

<sup>19</sup> Ivi, p. 127. P. Lingua, *La cucina dei genovesi. Storia e ricette*, Lit Edizioni, Rome 2013 is a good guide to modern Genoese cooking (pp. 146-151 for *ravioli*).

<sup>20</sup> D. Costello, *Piedmont and Italy from the Alps to the Tiber: illustrated in a series of views taken on the spot, with a description and historical narrative*, 2 vols, James S. Virtue, London 1861, vol. 1, pp. 85-88.

<sup>21</sup> E. Grendi, *Un mestiere di città alle soglie dell'età industriale. Il facchinaggio Genovese tra il 1815 e il 1850*, in «ASLi», n.s. 4(2) (1964), pp. 325-416.

<sup>22</sup> Costello, *Piedmont and Italy* cit. p. 87.

<sup>23</sup> G.C. Boase, *Costello, Dudley (1803–1865)*, rev. M. Clare Loughlin-Chow, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford



Dickens' actual experience of eating authentic Genoese food at a local trattoria was no doubt mediated by his previous consumption both of the 'typical' British foods (roast meats, chops, pies, puddings) he was used to back home, what he ate *en route* via France, and the fare in his Genoese temporary home. At the time he was writing 'Italian' food had little public profile in London, although that soon changed<sup>24</sup>. 'Food nationalism' is now a well-established topic in British historical writing, which has extended to the meaning of food for travellers<sup>25</sup>, and 'national' foods can be seen as part of the nation building which was so characteristic of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain (and Italy) in which Dickens' own work very much participated<sup>26</sup>. Travellers' encounters with 'foreign' food often resulted in what could be termed performative nationalism in their writing which resulted in a greater under-

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2004; online edn, April 2016 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6379> accessed 09 March 2022.

<sup>24</sup> There was an Italian community in central London in the 1870s with its own food shops as detailed in C. Carter Brown, *Italian Produce*, in «The Food Journal», Jan. 1(1874), pp. 447-449. L. Sponza, *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Realities and Images*, Leicester University Press, Leicester 1988, pp. 94-108 documents ice cream sellers and commercial food vendors at the end of the century.

<sup>25</sup> B. Rogers, *Beef and liberty: roast beef, John Bull and the English nation*, Chatto & Windus, London 2004, pp. 167-183 and R. Mullen, J. Munson, *The Smell of the Continent. The British Discover Europe*, Pan Books, London 2009, pp. 256-273.

<sup>26</sup> R. Grew, *Culture and society, 1796-1896*, in J.A. Davis (ed.), *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, pp. 227-228; C. Helstosky, *Recipe for the Nation: Reading Italian History through La Scienza in cucina and La cucina futurista*, in «Food and Foodways», 11(2010), pp. 13-140; F. Parasecoli, *Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy*, Reaktion Books, London 2014, pp. 158-159; M. Montanari, *Italian Identity in the Kitchen, or Food and the Nation*, Columbia University Press, New York 2013, pp. 47-51.

standing of the food of ‘home’ by authors and readers<sup>27</sup>. As a traveller, the expectations of Dickens were also conditioned by his reading of the numerous earlier books, articles and images of Genoa which he certainly consumed, and his various personal contacts with other travellers, including Lady Blessington, author of *The Idler in Italy* (1839) a book he certainly knew<sup>28</sup>. *The Idler* contained many references to food, including a group «devouring macaroni in a similar manner to that in which an Indian juggler swallows steel» (at an inn in Noli) and «half a dozen persons partaking the contents of a large earthen bowl, the savoury steams of which proclaimed that garlic was one of its principal ingredients», anecdotes written up in what has since become ‘Dickensian’ language. Like most of his contemporaries, Dickens’ work reveals strong anti-Catholic sentiment, and he was no doubt imbued with the attitudes of superiority towards foreigners typically displayed by his class and by British people in general, although he was also rather more sympathetic than most to the Italians he got to know personally in the months he lived in Genoa.

Besides his personal attitudes, the travel writing of the ‘outsider’ Dickens also raises questions about the history of food in Genoa itself in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (a city of around 200,000 residents – London was ten times as large) as seen from inside. For example, in the case of the trattoria at Monte Fasce, we might wonder where and from whom did that establishment, and others like it, get fresh ingredients? At a time well before significant industrialisation of food production a like-

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<sup>27</sup> G. Ecker, *Zuppa Inglese and Eating Up Italy: Intercultural Feasts and Fantasies*, in M. Pfister, R. Hertel (eds.), *Performing National Identity. Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 307-322.

<sup>28</sup> Blessington *The Idler*, vol. 1, p. 387. Blessington also noted the delicious vegetables and green peas, especially at Nervi, which she attributed to their growing near the sea (*The Idler*, vol. 2, p. 70).

ly answer is from local producers<sup>29</sup>, including peasants, who sold the products of their toil at local markets<sup>30</sup>, as Dickens himself noticed portside in Genoa. If in terms of production it can be presumed that most food in Genoa at this period was peasant food, we need to go outside of the metropolis into the countryside to find the local food peasants themselves ate. Other travel books which describe sites in central and eastern Liguria from the 1840s until the onset of the First World War, allow comparison with the evidence of Dickens and help to develop the case already made for the value of travel writing as a source for food history.

## 2. Italian peasants as ethnographic subjects

In the last fifty years there has been a considerable amount of study of the lives of Italian peasants, including those from Liguria. Historical ecologists have intensively researched historic land management and that has often included the daily practices of peasants, sometimes recovered through oral testimony<sup>31</sup>. Specific ‘activation practices’ resulted

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<sup>29</sup> E. Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1861 to the Present*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2016, pp. 27-51 (peasants), 53-79 (industrialisation dated to 1901-1914).

<sup>30</sup> The supply of meat was very complex well before the 19<sup>th</sup> century as demonstrated by E. Grendi, *Meat provisioning in Ancien Régime Genoa*, in R. Balzaretto, M. Pearce, C. Watkins (eds.), *Ligurian Landscapes. Studies in Archaeology, Geography and History*, Accordia Research Institute, London 2004, pp. 105-112.

<sup>31</sup> D. Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno. Storia e archeologia dei sistemi agro-silvo-pastorali*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1990 (II edition 2019 Genova University Press, Genoa); M. Quaini (ed.), *Paesaggi agrari. Irrrinunciabile eredità scientifica di Emilio Sereni*, Milan 2011; M. Agnoletti (ed.), *Italian Historical Rural Landscapes. Cultural Values for the Environment and Rural Development*, Springer, Dordrecht 2013.

in distinctive local food cultures, most notably the famous ‘chestnut culture’ based on the tree which provided villagers with their staple food for centuries. Activation practices can be uncovered by considering the «local and social contextualization (*i.e.* topography) of the practices and forms of knowledge underlying the activation of environmental resources»<sup>32</sup>, or put another way locally distinctive practices can be revealed by observation of the ways in which people have exploited (‘activated’) their environment at specific points in time. Museums of ‘peasant life’ were founded across Italy in the 1960s and these often contain many artefacts relating to food production and cooking, often of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. An excellent example is the Museo Contadino di Cassego, a village near Varese Ligure in the Upper Vara Valley, which has hundreds of objects once owned and used by local families including implements used to prepare meals<sup>33</sup>. These collections make clear the intimate connection between cultivation, management and sustenance. This work and these objects therefore provide an essential context for understanding travel writing on this topic.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century itself there was, alongside literary work to which we will return shortly, some central government investigation of Italian peasant cultures, although ‘peasants’ were not romanticised by Italians politicians as they were elsewhere in nineteenth-century Europe<sup>34</sup>. The *Inchiesta Jacini* (a government report published 1881-1886) surveyed peasant life throughout Italy, including Liguria, largely from an eco-

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<sup>32</sup> D. Moreno, *Activation practices, history of environmental resources, and conservation*, in G. Sanga, G. Ortalli (eds.), *Nature Knowledge. Ethnoscience, Cognition, and Utility*, Berghahn Books, New York 2004, pp. 386-390 at p. 387.

<sup>33</sup> The collection was founded by Don Sandro Lagomarsini in the 1960s and is still directed by him. S. Lagomarsini, *Vita quotidiana nelle campagne*, in L. Borzani, G. Pistarino, F. Ragazzi (eds), *Storia illustrata di Genova*, Elio Sellino Editore, Genoa 1994, vol. 4, pp. 881-896 gives a full account of rural life.

<sup>34</sup> Grew, *Culture and society* cit. p. 224 and M. Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1995*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Longman, London and New York 1996, pp. 12-21.

conomic perspective<sup>35</sup>. Jacini's inquiry discovered that many peasants including those from Liguria had desperate lives which explained their mass emigration worldwide, although it was often the wealthier Ligurian farmers who left to improve their fortunes in Argentina<sup>36</sup>. Perhaps this poverty came as no surprise to the politicians as food historians have suggested that prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian authors routinely equated peasants with 'coarse' food<sup>37</sup>, whereas the bourgeois cuisine of the time was much richer. Given very low levels of literacy, it is not surprising that direct testimony from peasants themselves about the food they ate is hard to come by<sup>38</sup>. We need therefore to find other sources of information.

Much as Dickens did, some Italian writers of fiction expressed clear sympathies with peasants. Giovanni Ruffini, an enthusiastic reader of Dickens<sup>39</sup>, was the prime example and his novel *Doctor Antonio*, written in English and published in 1855, was very popular with British

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<sup>35</sup> G. Paoloni, S. Ricci, *L'archivio della Giunta per l'inchiesta agraria e sulle condizioni della classe agricola in Italia (Inchiesta Jacini)-1877-1885. Inventario*, Ministero Beni Att. Culturali, Rome 1998, pp. 3-10. The work for Circonscrizione VIII resulted in monographs about agriculture around Albenga and Sanremo. A. Campanini, *De l'hymne au territoire à l'apologie des terroirs. Une brève histoire des inventaires culinaires italiens depuis l'Unification (1861)*, in «Food & History», 9 (2011), 155-156 sets the Jacini inquiry in the context of other 'culinary inventories' (cookbooks, guidebooks).

<sup>36</sup> In 1870, 23000 Italians had arrived in Argentina: D.R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, UCL Press, London 2000, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup> A. Capatti, M. Montanari, *Italian cuisine: a cultural history*, Columbia University Press, New York 2003, pp. 282-284; Scarpellini, *Food and Foodways* cit. pp. 31-37.

<sup>38</sup> A rare, published example is C. Vaccarezza (ed.), *Il diario di Andrea Gagliardo tra la Merica e la Fontanabuona (1888-1899)*, Oltre edizioni, La Spezia 2020.

<sup>39</sup> A.C. Christensen, *Giovanni Ruffini and Doctor Antonio: Italian and English Contributions to a Myth of Exile*, Browning Institute Studies, 12 (1984), p. 139.

travellers<sup>40</sup>. Set on the Italian Riviera especially around Bordighera and Sanremo, Ruffini tapped into a long-standing British curiosity about rural life. In the opening scene when the daughter of Sir John Davenne is hurt in a carriage accident while travelling near Bordighera the Italian Doctor Antonio who treats her is assisted by four local peasant women «olive-skinned passionate children of Italy». The same evening at the *osteria* which has taken them in Sir John ate a hearty local meal «not to be despised by even the palate of the most fastidious connoisseur», no doubt cooked by one of the peasant women. However, when travellers reported actual encounters, they were far from romantic and mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century commentators were negative to say the least. Quite typical is Mary Wilson who wrote on June 13 1847 that

We passed very few villages but all so wretched & dirty, & the people such nasty looking wretches, one old woman I was amused with, a dirty old pig without any stockings but carrying her fan in her hand, fans being very much more used in Milan & the neighbourhood than parasols<sup>41</sup>.

A couple of decades later peasants became a fashionable theme in English language accounts of Italy<sup>42</sup>, still in romanticised form but now treated positively, and Italian painters began to paint scenes of peasant life with some regularity<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> T. Pagano, *The Making and Unmaking of Mediterranean Landscape in Italian Literature. The Case of Liguria*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Madison 2015, pp. 25-42; P. Piana, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretti, *Rediscovering Lost Landscapes. Topographical Art in North-West Italy, 1800-1920*, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge 2021, pp. 239-241.

<sup>41</sup> J. Simpson, 1984 – *A European Journal*, p. 109.

<sup>42</sup> C.B. Brettell, *Nineteenth-century travellers' accounts of the Mediterranean peasant*, in «Ethnohistory», 33 (1986), pp. 159-173.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Giovanni Fattori (1825-1908) who painted many rural scenes around his hometown of Livorno: E. Tonelli, K. Hart (eds.), *The Macchiaioli. Painters of Italian Life 1850-1900*, University of California, Los Angeles

Tuscan peasants came in for special journalistic consideration in Britain<sup>44</sup>, as sharecropping in that region was a subject of serious public debate both in Italy and Britain after Italian Unification and the Jacini inquiry<sup>45</sup>. During the 1870s and 80s and roughly contemporary with this political interest in peasant livelihoods<sup>46</sup>, several well-to-do British women living in the Tuscan countryside wrote about peasants from a cultural perspective for largely female audiences back home. They were part of a sizable ex-patriot community of upper middle-class «Anglo-Florentines»<sup>47</sup>, some of whom had considerable contemporary reputations in Britain as serious writers of fiction such as Ouida (pseudonym of Marie Louise Ramé) and Vernon Lee (Violet Paget). Janet Ross and Leader Scott (Lucy Baxter) were another two figures of literary note who popularised the art and architecture of Florence for an educated English-speaking readership. They also

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1986, pp. 116-120, notably n. 59 (at pp. 87 and 116) *Contadina nel Bosco* of 1861 (private collection).

<sup>44</sup> H. Zimmern, *Italy of the Italians*, Pitman & Sons, London 1929, pp. 231-259 (orig. 1906), «Agricultural Italy», gives a typical assessment of the period. Zimmern was an influential journalist who kept Italian themes very much in the public eye in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Britain: C.A. Creffield, 1984 – Zimmern, Helen (1846–1934), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/55284>

<sup>45</sup> D. Gill, *Tuscan sharecropping in United Italy: The myth of class collaboration destroyed*, in «Journal of Peasant Studies», 10 (1983), pp. 146-169. The *Atti della giunta per la inchiesta agraria e sulle condizioni della classe agricola*, vol. III, Fasc. 1, *La toscana Agricola*, published in Rome in 1881, set the tone.

<sup>46</sup> C. Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil. Food and Politics in Italy*, Berg, Oxford and New York 2004, pp. 22-23.

<sup>47</sup> G. Artom Treves, *The Golden Ring. The Anglo-Florentines 1847-1862*, Longmans, Green & Co., London 1956, superseded by D. Webb, T. Webb, *The Anglo-Florentines. The British in Tuscany 1814-1860*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2019.

wrote about local customs, which included peasants and their food<sup>48</sup>. In 1887 Janet stated that

Some will think my pictures of the Tuscan peasants flattered and highly coloured. I can only say that I have lived among them for eighteen years, and that nowhere does the golden rule “Do as you would be done by,” hold good so much as in Italy<sup>49</sup>.

Virginia Woolf, writing in 1909, took a different view: Ross was «an Englishwoman who dictates to peasants» and «apt to become domineering»<sup>50</sup>. Later Mrs Ross produced a cookery book *Leaves from Our Tuscan Kitchen*, published in 1899<sup>51</sup>, which became popular in Britain, reaching its eleventh edition in 1936<sup>52</sup>. It was one of the first in English to specialise in ‘Italian’ foods<sup>53</sup>. The book centres on vegetable cookery,

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<sup>48</sup> J. Ross, *Italian Sketches*, J.M. Dent & Co., London 1887, J. Ross, *Old Florence and Modern Tuscany*, J.M. Dent & Co., London 1904, which reprinted journal essays on wine and oil making first published in 1875, and L. Scott, *A Nook in the Apennines: Or a Summer beneath the Chestnuts*, C. Kegan, Paul & Co., London 1879, and especially L. Scott, *Tuscan Studies and Sketches*, T. Fisher Unwin, London 1888, with chapters on wine, mushrooms and a Florentine market.

<sup>49</sup> Ross, *Italian Sketches*, Preface. There are two biographies: S. Benjamin, *A Castle in Tuscany. The remarkable life of Janet Ross*, Murdoch Books, Miller’s Point NSW 2006, and B. Dowling, *Queen Bee of Tuscany. The Redoubtable Janet Ross*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc., New York 2013.

<sup>50</sup> J. Morris (ed.), *Travels with Virginia Woolf*, The Hogarth Press, London 1993, p. 180.

<sup>51</sup> One of 21 new cookery books published in Britain that year: E. Driver, *A Bibliography of Cookery Books*, Prospect Books, London & New York 1989, p. 718.

<sup>52</sup> Driver, *A Bibliography of Cookery Books* cit. pp. 525-527 and Benjamin, *A Castle in Tuscany* cit. pp. 132-145.

<sup>53</sup> Maria Gironci, from Corfu of Italian descent and living in Surrey, published *Recipes of Italian Cookery* in 1900 and *Italian Recipes for Food Reformers* in



something Italians could be said to specialise in, in marked contrast to contemporary British customs, focused firmly on meat, cheese and puddings, although vegetarianism did not take off in Italy until the end of the century, a little later than in Britain<sup>54</sup>. Ross relied on her Italian cook Giuseppe Volpi for recipes which are authentic enough if not particularly local or regional, as the title perhaps promised<sup>55</sup>.

Janet's niece Lina Duff Gordon who lived in a castle above Brunella, not far from Pontremoli in the far north of Tuscany, also wrote travel books a couple of decades later, including *Home Life in Italy*<sup>56</sup>, and like her aunt, in that book Lina included recipes<sup>57</sup>. Her chapter explicitly compares the cooking of her cook Mariannina with the way things are done in England. She notes the difficulty of obtaining quality Italian

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1905. Antonia Isola (pseudonym of Mabel Earl McGinnis), *Simple Italian Cookery* (London, 1912), proved popular in the USA.

<sup>54</sup> A. Capatti, *La nascita delle associazioni vegetariane in Italia*, «Food & History», 2 (2004), pp. 167-190.

<sup>55</sup> A drawing of Volpi in his kitchen made by A.H. Hallam Murray in 1895 is reproduced as the frontispiece in M. Waterfield (ed.), *Leaves from our Tuscan Kitchen*, Atheneum, London 1974. It shows him cooking at what appears to be a substantial range which has been inserted into a large fireplace still with an open fire, surrounded by an array of pots (earthenware) and pans (perhaps copper?). An undated photograph of this kitchen with a later cook (Agostino) shows it largely unchanged and to have been on a considerable scale (Benjamin, *A Castle in Tuscany*, opposite p. 137).

<sup>56</sup> Published by Methuen in 1908. The archives of both women are to be found in the Waterfield collection held at the British Institute in Florence: A. Price, *Florence in the Nineteenth Century. A Guide to Original Sources in Florentine Archives and Libraries for Researchers into the English-Speaking Community*, British Institute in Florence, Florence 2011, p. 53.

<sup>57</sup> L. Duff Gordon, *Home Life in Italy. Letters from the Apennines*, Methuen, London 1908, pp. 65-88. See also K. Beevor, *A Tuscan Childhood*, Penguin, London 1993, written by Lina's daughter, with reflections on both her mother's and her great aunt's lives in Italy.

produce in England, and it is fascinating to observe how Lina becomes a source of information for Mariannina about English culinary practices. The latter was not impressed by those. *Home Life in Italy* proves to be an excellent example of the conceptualisation of ‘national’ cuisines manifest through direct personal encounters at the local level. The evidence about peasant food culture contained within these ostensibly lightweight travel books is worth more serious attention by food historians given that peasants are often regarded by them and others as repositories of ‘local’, ‘traditional’ and ‘slow’ food<sup>58</sup>. As there is more to food history than the «issue of regional versus national», it is important to understand local practices even at the level of a single kitchen<sup>59</sup>.

### 3. Peasant food around Savignone in 1878

Liguria was not really within the purview of the Anglo-Florentine ‘set’ despite being an adjoining region. That region had its own British communities, based in Genoa and especially at selected locations on the coast, notably Sanremo<sup>60</sup>. A literature about the region developed in

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<sup>58</sup> The ‘Slow Food’ movement was described by its founder as concerned with tradition, simplicity, friendliness, moderate prices and territory (*terroir*): C. Petrini, *Slow Food. The Case for Taste*, Columbia University Press, New York 2001, p. 7. ‘Slow’ refers to the opposite of ‘fast’, mass-produced food, and, although peasant cultures could also be said to produce and consume food slowly, ‘Slow Food’ is not a peasant movement. It emerged in the 1970s from the Italian middle-class political left, specifically in the Piedmontese town of Bra: <https://www.slowfood.it/chi-siamo/storia/> (accessed 25 January 2022).

<sup>59</sup> Ecker, ‘Zuppa Inglese’, p. 312. A.K. Smith, *National cuisines*, in J.M. Pilcher (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 444-460.

<sup>60</sup> A. Zanini, *Un secolo di turismo in Liguria. Dinamiche, percorsi, attori*, FrancoAngeli, Milan 2021, pp. 87-97.

English in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>61</sup>, and it was directed at travellers, especially those in search of health although, curiously to our eyes, little was said about healthy food in any of these books<sup>62</sup>. Specialist guidebooks appeared alongside more established series such as Murray's, Cook's and Baedeker's guides<sup>63</sup>. Popular ones included Hare's *The Rivieras* (1897), Black's *The Riviera* (1898), and Beeby and Reynolds-Ball's *The Levantine Riviera* (1908). Augustus Hare did not deal with food but the other two did. Black was typically brief and focussed exclusively on dinner in what were essentially international tourist hotels by this period<sup>64</sup>. Beeby was more sympathetic to the local and dealt with both food and peasants in a chapter devoted to 'folklore'<sup>65</sup>.

Much more interesting than these and the other short mass market guides which proliferated at this time is *North Italian Folk. Sketches of Town and Country Life* published by Alice Comyns Carr in 1878, for it is particularly insightful on Ligurian local food. Born Alice Vanssitar Strettell (1850-1927) in Genoa, she spent much of her early life there, with some time

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<sup>61</sup> R. Balzaretti, *Victorian Travellers, Apennine Landscapes and the Development of Cultural Heritage in Eastern Liguria, c. 1875-1914*, in «History», 96 (2011), pp. 436-458.

<sup>62</sup> Notably, J.H. Bennet, *Winter and Spring on the Shores of the Mediterranean*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, John Murray, London 1875, pp. 8-233 for the Rivieras. His focus is on climate, geology, and plants. There is little on food. See Piana, Watkins and Balzaretti, *Rediscovering Lost Landscapes* cit. pp. 238-242.

<sup>63</sup> K. Baedeker, *Italy. Handbook for Travellers. Northern Italy*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Karl Baedeker, Leipzig 1879, is typical (pp. 77-114 on Liguria). Generic remarks on restaurants, cafés and *osterie* can be found at pp. xix-xx.

<sup>64</sup> C.B. Black, *The Riviera*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, A. & C. Black, London 1898, e.g. p. 118 on Genoa.

<sup>65</sup> W.T. Beeby, E. Reynolds-Ball, *Levantine Riviera. A Practical Guide to all the Winter Resorts from Genoa to Pisa*, Reynolds Balls Guides, London 1908, pp. 202-203.



Fig. 2 Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century villa at Savignone (GE). Photograph by R. Balzaretti

away in England at a school near Brighton. Alice straddled both cultures with apparent ease. She took summer holidays with her family – her father Alfred was consular chaplain of the English church in Genoa – in the inland valleys not far from the city<sup>66</sup>, notably in Savignone (Scrivia valley), at that point just becoming a popular site for *villeggiatura* among the Genoese middle classes<sup>67</sup>. Bourgeois Genoese families started to mimic aristocrats by holidaying inland at select summer sites at this time and in some places substantial summer villas were constructed as holiday homes, many of

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<sup>66</sup> Alfred Strettell held «primitive picnics» above Portofino, as recalled by the well-known artist Lady Elizabeth Butler in later life: E. Butler, *Autobiography*, London 1922, p.6. Lady Butler also remembered tea at home in Nervi when the Italian maid put a whole pound of green tea in the pot, rendering it undrinkable: E. Butler, *From Sketch Book and Diary*, A. & C. Black, London 1909, p. 129.

<sup>67</sup> She wrote about this in A. Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk. Sketches in Town and Country Life*, Spottiswoode & Co., London 1878, pp. 263-272. Many fine holiday villas of this period still survive in Savignone: Piana, Watkins and Balzaretti, *Rediscovering Lost Landscapes*, pp. 185-188.

which still stand to this day, including at Savignone without a direct rail link but in fact reachable by train from Genoa to Busalla, a short carriage ride away (a typical example in Fig. 2).

Alfred Strettell was no doubt used to entertaining visitors in Genoa. For example, on 9 February 1873 he gave dinner to honeymooners Emily and Dearman Birchall and the Bishop of Ohio who also happened to be passing through the city<sup>68</sup>. The food on that occasion was not described in Emily's lively diary but the following day the couple had lunch at Sestri Levante, at the railway station:

Our hearts soon died within us, however, on the apparition of *du rosbif* (as some nasty grey little bits of dog were by courtesy termed) and some very greasy potatoes, with sour wine, bread of the consistency of leather, and of a very singular flavour, and butter made of lard, garlic, and oil, I should think<sup>69</sup>.

«Luscious *viands*», as she ironically commented, but also typical tourist food the product of a rapidly commercialising travel experience.

In December that year Alfred Strettell conducted the marriage of Alice to Joseph Comyns Carr in Dresden and they honeymooned sometime after in Liguria<sup>70</sup>. Five years later Alice published *North Italian Folk* a series of essays gathered into two sections («On the Riviera» and «In the Apennines») which clearly drew heavily on her own personal encounters as a young woman in this region<sup>71</sup>. Unlike many travel writers of this period

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<sup>68</sup> D. Verey (ed.), *Wedding Tour: January-June 1873 and Visit to the Vienna Exhibition*, Sutton, Gloucester 1985, p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Verey, *Wedding Tour* cit. p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> A. Comyns Carr, *J. Comyns Carr. Stray Memories*, Macmillan & Co., London 1920, p. 20.

<sup>71</sup> Covered also in *Stray Memories* and her A. Comyns Carr, *Reminiscences*, Hutchinson & Co., London 1926.

Mrs Comyns Carr was precise in the location of her tales, set in actual villages and hamlets which included Busalla, Savignone, Ponte di Savignone, Valle Calda and Casella all in the middle of the Scrivia valley, and others in the neighbouring Polcevera valley. She also wrote about Genoa itself and many villages along the coast including Nervi, Portofino and Sestri Levante. She, like all of the British authors mentioned so far, shared the prejudices many Victorian travellers had towards Italians, notably the latter's «rustic simplicity», grace and «quaint enthusiasms» which contrasted with the «worldly wise prudence» presumed of her British readers<sup>72</sup>.

Food figured a lot among the 'light' things she wrote about, to such an extent that the volume gives a clear and consistent impression of this region's food cultures at this period from the perspective of an insider who experienced this food first-hand. It is also a rose-tinted view, given the well-documented poverty of the contemporary Italian peasantry at this time<sup>73</sup>. Comyns Carr constructed her persona as a respectable British woman by being attentive to class differences in her writing, meaning that in literary terms the people she wrote about had to eat what she felt was appropriate to their status<sup>74</sup>. Nevertheless, her enthusiasm for the local peasants, while condescending in overall tone, comes through strongly in her writing which means that historians can gain some insight into what is likely to have been the traditional food of these places in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Comyns Carr records details of the local cultivation which provided the basic produce for peasant meals. She describes peasant plots in Valle

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<sup>72</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit. p. vi.

<sup>73</sup> Clark, *Modern Italy* cit. p. 19. In fairness to Comyns Carr, Ligurian peasants do seem to have been better off than those of Lombardy or the far South.

<sup>74</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit. p. 187, «Both the women are plain and ill-favoured specimens of their class» (i.e., peasants).



Fig. 3 Alfred Sells, *In the Garden of Villa Santa Catarina, Levanto, 1900*. In author's possession

Calda in June with gourds, tomatoes<sup>75</sup>, fruit (of many kinds)<sup>76</sup>, walnuts<sup>77</sup>, as well as the collection of wild bitter cherries (*amarene*)<sup>78</sup>. In the Polcevera valley (at San Matteo), also in June were plots «where each man grows his own corn and beans and potato-crops, gathers his own maize, and trains his own vines»<sup>79</sup>. In Valle Calda the priest had his own

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. D. Gentilcore, *Pomodoro! A History of the Tomato in Italy*, Columbia University Press, New York 2010, pp. 82-88.

<sup>76</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit. p. 252, in August, large purple plums, larger yellow plums, little blue plums, peaches, apricots, figs and large pears.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi, p. 166.

<sup>78</sup> By August these were «drying in flat baskets» (p. 258).

<sup>79</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit. p. 176. Compare W. Scott, *Rock Villages of the Riviera*, A. & C. Black, London 1898, p. 24.



plot where he blew sulphur on his wines «to save them from the fell disease»<sup>80</sup>, surely a sign of the commercialisation of some peasant farming practices at this time. Interesting comparisons can be made with amateur pictorial representations of Ligurian country landscapes made in a similar period, for example those of the Rev. Alfred Sells, painting in Levanto in 1900<sup>81</sup>, and also with local professional artists such as Ernesto Rayper (1840-1873) and Giuseppe Sacheri (1863-1950), both of whom painted fields with identifiable crops in<sup>82</sup>. In Fig. 3 grape vines trained high on pergolas are clearly represented by Sells alongside the giant reed and another less identifiable crop in the foreground.

These same people ate simple food. Soup (*minestra*), *polenta* (sometimes eaten cold in the fields), chestnuts (roasted fresh at the harvest in November; dried the rest of the year), mushrooms<sup>83</sup>, beans and cabbage, beans and oil, washed down sometimes with ‘sour Monferrato’ wine<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit. p. 182. A «mysterious vine disease» was also noted in the vineyards around Aosta by S.W. King, *The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps*, John Murray, London 1858, p. 109. From these generalised descriptions it is not entirely clear what these diseases were.

<sup>81</sup> Landscapes made by Sells have been used to study Case Lovara (SP): N. Gabellieri, V. Ruzzin, *Fonti testuali, cartografiche e iconografiche*, in N. Gabellieri, V. Pescini (eds.), *Biografia di un paesaggio rurale. Storia, geografia e Archeologia per la riqualificazione di Case Lovara (promontorio del Mesco – La Spezia)*, Oltre edizioni, Genoa 2015, pp. 49-95 at pp. 61-65, Figs. 9 and 10.

<sup>82</sup> For example, Rayper’s *Contadina fra il granoturco*, painted 1870-1872 (Genoa, private collection), probably in western Liguria reproduced in P. Rum (ed.), *Alberto Issel. Il paesaggio nell’Ottocento tra Liguria e Piemonte*, Skira, Milan 2006, p. 74 and Sacheri’s *Orti a San Fruttuoso*, Genova (1895), reproduced in A. Enrico, S. Seitun (eds.), *Natura, realtà e modernità. Pittura in Liguria tra ’800 e ’900*, Antiga edizioni, Milan 2015, Fig. 36, p. 95.

<sup>83</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit., p. 179.

<sup>84</sup> Ivi, p. 183. The wine of Monferrato is mentioned several times: as «good wine» (p. 207) but more commonly as «sour» (pp. 53, 238). It is also noted by F. Power Cobbe, *Italics. Brief notes on politics, people and places in Italy*,



Rosemary and marjoram were used as flavourings<sup>85</sup>. There is very little reference to eating meat<sup>86</sup>, and some reference to eggs<sup>87</sup>. Alice was also attentive to the dishes themselves. She must have watched *minestra* being made on many occasions, with beans, potatoes, sliced gourd, mushrooms, tomatoes, sweet herbs, and «the unfailing garlic», with the result that «the kitchen is filled with a fragrant odour»<sup>88</sup>. This had pasta added to it, freshly made rather than dried. Polenta was often served with fresh beans<sup>89</sup>. Pan-fried mushrooms were served as a separate dish<sup>90</sup>. She also saw *how* the peasants ate their food: «off wooden platters, while they lounge in the cool upon steps and balconies made of stone»<sup>91</sup>. When visitors came, for example the Archbishop of Genoa who carried out confirmations locally, different food was eaten and at tables indoors: mush-

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*in 1864*, Trübner & Co., London 1864, p. 494 who had it for breakfast while staying at Nervi. S. Mitchell, *Frances Power Cobbe. Victorian Feminist, Journalist, Reformer*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville and London 2004, pp. 136-137.

<sup>85</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit. p. 166.

<sup>86</sup> Ivi, p. 192, «Neither he (the priest) nor old Ninetta (his housekeeper) taste meat more than once a week»; p. 215 priest criticised for eating soup made with meat broth on Saturdays. Lingua, *Cucina dei genovesi*, p. 181 «La dieta carnea non è certamente preminente nella tradizionale gastronomia genovese».

<sup>87</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk*, p. 264.

<sup>88</sup> Ivi, pp. 185, 197. See Duff Gordon. Genoese minestrone is made by adding all the ingredients to boiling water at the same time rather than sautéing each first as in other parts of Italy: Lingua, *Cucina dei genovesi* cit., pp. 158-159.

<sup>89</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit., p. 225. Lingua, *Cucina dei genovesi*, p. 120 states that in Liguria polenta has always been a 'curiosity'. never been really part of the cuisine. This may be true of Genoa but not of the mountainous interior.

<sup>90</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit., pp. 179, 243.

<sup>91</sup> Ivi, p. 228.

rooms, risotto, *polpette* and «real holiday ravioli»<sup>92</sup>. In July holidaying middle-class Genoese, who came here to economise and escape the city heat, replaced their normal ravioli with bean soup<sup>93</sup>. They found peas, beans, gourds and lettuce growing in their gardens, although who was growing these crops is not explained. Interestingly these peasant cooks used potatoes and tomatoes<sup>94</sup>, both relatively recent additions to their repertoire. In general, peasants grew what they ate, certainly in summer, and in the winter months they survived principally on chestnuts, preserved by drying<sup>95</sup>.

Turning to the cuisine of the city and coast, there are similarities with that just discussed but also notable differences. Clearly the social classes described are more Comyns Carr's own, and their food is richer than that of the peasants in the country villages. In Genoa produce was not home-produced but rather bought in markets, notably at Piazza San Domenico near the Opera (now Piazza De Ferrari), with fish purchased near the port, even on Easter Day<sup>96</sup>. The meal for that celebra-

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<sup>92</sup> Ivi, p. 261. Lingua, *Cucina dei genovesi* cit., pp. 171-172 points out that meat *polpettone* is very similar throughout Italy but that a vegetable version is much more typical of Genoa.

<sup>93</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit., p. 272.

<sup>94</sup> Ivi, p. 201, on 24 June, «the potato harvest is at hand», and the priest was involved in it. The Swiss ethnographer Frederic Lillin de Chateaufieux travelling in the Apennines above the Magra valley in 1812 commented that potatoes should be grown here: «The curate has, indeed, heard them mentioned, and I exhorted him to make trial of them» (*Travels in Italy, Descriptive of the Rural Manners and Economy of that Country* [London, 1820], p. 20. By the 1870s they seem normalised. Lingua, *Cucina dei genovesi* cit., p. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Balzaretti, *Victorian travellers* cit. p. 453.

<sup>96</sup> A sizable vegetable and fruit market was also held daily in Piazza dell'Annunziata as documented by a late nineteenth-century photograph in L. Frassati, *Genova come era 1870-1915*, privately printed, Genoa 1960, p. 163.

tory day had many ingredients: peas, marjoram, bay, fresh fish, «lean, solid» beef, brains and sweetbreads<sup>97</sup>. It could include ravioli, stewed beef and truffles, Monferrato wine and hard sugar-plums, even for the extended family of a ladies' maid<sup>98</sup>. A birthday lunch for her employer comprised capons, beans, rice, lettuce, pasta, *minestra*, with *tagliarini* as a second course<sup>99</sup>.

Outside town there were market gardens at Albaro, where Dickens first resided. Nervi had many fishermen who caught tuna, anchovies, sardines and *bianchette* («a kind of whitebait»)<sup>100</sup>. The fish were sold at Bogliasco and then taken to Genoa to be sold on there. One fisherman had cold polenta, brown bread and chestnuts for his lunch after a fishing trip. Ruta was known as the «valley of fruit»<sup>101</sup>. There Alice wrote about a local peasant tenant farmer (a *manente*) who grew on his own plot maize, peas, fine asparagus, cherries, pears, plums, peaches and almonds, olives, wheat, figs (green ones), grapes, tender-leaved lettuce, red tomatoes, melons. He did not have many chestnuts<sup>102</sup>. When he was on his way to sell green herbs and melons at Rapallo he met an old women with eggs to sell, a good example of local exchange at local markets. An elderly marquis in Portofino was given sardines for dinner, and a fine herb omelette for breakfast with a flask of white wine<sup>103</sup>. The following day he had mushrooms and «an unfinished tumbler of Monferrato». Another meal was sardines, half a boiled fowl, two potatoes

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<sup>97</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit., p. 43.

<sup>98</sup> Ivi, p. 53.

<sup>99</sup> Ivi, p. 55.

<sup>100</sup> Ivi, pp. 81-84. Lingua, *Cucina dei genovesi* cit., pp. 157 (*bianchetti*), 173-175 (anchovies/sardines).

<sup>101</sup> Comyns Carr, *North Italian Folk* cit., p. 107.

<sup>102</sup> Ivi, pp. 108-109.

<sup>103</sup> Ivi, p. 122.

and a filled tomato «with a fry to finish»<sup>104</sup>.

If Comyns Carr's volume is the most detailed English account of local food in this area, it is certainly not the only one. Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury, recalled lunch in late August 1868 at an *osteria* at Noli: «cold whiting, and refreshing native wine, and delicious country bread, with its hard smooth crust and purest white beneath – and the never-failing Parmesan, accompanying a no less picturesque than welcome group of pears, and figs, and grapes»<sup>105</sup>. He watched the cooking on this occasion and the meal took two hours altogether. S. Reynolds Hole (famous rose-grower and another cleric) observed at Bordighera «a *marchand de viandes* [who] has cooked a savoury dish over a brazier, and is just putting the finishing touch by pouring two or three drops of oil upon his snails» before serving it to a small boy<sup>106</sup>.

In complete contrast a group of three well-to-do foreign men lunched outdoors at the Concordia restaurant in Genoa in March 1893 «a charming Arcadia» where «our gastronomist had full play» and his friends were «ever admirers of his researches into the mysteries of the culinary art». At dinner they ate «Ariosto» (presumably *arrosto*), which they only discovered was «Irish Stew» (not in fact *arrosto*) when it appeared on the table<sup>107</sup>. The *Concordia*, in the Strada Nuova, was well-known to travellers. As early as 1861 Costello commented that it had «a large raised garden, planted with orange trees» and sold ices of fruit and «jasmine, geranium, thyme, and other sweet-smelling flowers and herbs»<sup>108</sup>. On 23 April 1870

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<sup>104</sup> Ivi, p. 123.

<sup>105</sup> H. Alford, *The Riviera: Pen and Pencil Sketches from Cannes to Genoa*, Bell & Daldy, London 1870, p. 108. Parmesan was not a local product of course.

<sup>106</sup> S. Reynolds Hole, *Nice and her Neighbours*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, London 1881, p. 180.

<sup>107</sup> J.K. [John Kendall], *Fugitive Impressions of Italy*, W. Burrows, Nottingham 1893, pp. 20-21.

<sup>108</sup> Costello, *Piedmont and Italy* cit. p. 93.

M. Elizabeth Sandbach and her parents «dined at Caffé Concordia» but on what she did not say. In 1897 Augustus Hare noted it was «the really beautiful and thoroughly Italian café», good for lunch or for ices<sup>109</sup>. Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, an American visitor, regarded the Concordia as «that most delightful garden café» and recalled eating saffron risotto, spaghetti, «and other Italian dishes» with «bread in small sticks, crisp and brown»<sup>110</sup>. These travellers were wholly reliant on the hotel trade for their meals presumably cooked by professional cooks. Contemporary guidebooks reinforce this impression of standardised international hotel cuisine in Genoa as elsewhere from the 1860s.

However, some turn-of-the-century authors were interested in food beyond the hotel dining room. W. T. Beeby and Eustace Reynolds-Ball in their guide to *The Levantine Riviera* (1908), while recommending the usual lists of hotels, included a short section on local peasant customs. The foods ascribed to them match closely with Alice Comyns Carr's observations: polenta, fresh vegetables (peas, beans, cabbage, broccoli, spinach, lettuce, asparagus and potatoes), *minestra*, eggs and a little meat. The local wine, «red and white, fairly harmless and inexpensive» was produced by the «more well-to-do peasants» who proudly offered it to visitors<sup>111</sup>. A near-contemporary traveller, Frederic Lees,

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<sup>109</sup> M/D/SAND/8/13596, Llandrindod Wells Record Office; A. Hare, *The Riviera*, London 1897, p. 142. In this guide Hare occasionally mentioned other worthy restaurants, but never comments on the food in any detail. A much more complete guide to this region is C.B. Black, *The Riviera*. This provided guidance on restaurant food in France («Carte du Jour», pp. viii-ix, with more detail at p. 3). At Ventimiglia «The wine of this neighbourhood is drunk in the first year, when it is dark coloured but palatable» (p. 103). Readers were clearly expected to dine in their hotels, and there is no mention at any point of local foods.

<sup>110</sup> A. Hollingsworth, *Italian Days and Ways*, J.P. Lippincott, Philadelphia 1906, p. 25.

<sup>111</sup> Beeby & Reynolds-Ball, *Levantine Riviera* cit. p. 202.

also occasionally noted the local food culture as he walked the entirety of the Rivas in 1910-11<sup>112</sup>. Beginning in the west, he noticed at Dolceacqua that some of the bed of the River Nervia «has been reclaimed by industrious peasant proprietors, who have planted there some of the vineyards from which the noted red wine of Dolceacqua, *il rossese*, is made»<sup>113</sup>. In the old town

A red-sealed diploma on the walls of a *trattoria*, declaring that its holder, the proprietor, had been granted a gold medal for ten years' faithful service in the household of a German baron, held forth promise of good fare.

Their lunch was a «Spartan meal, if you like (it consisted of olives, a tomato omelette, fresh figs and peaches), but perfect in every detail». On arriving at San Remo, Lees spurned the life of the «foreign colony» of English, Germans and Russians with its sports, gaming-tables, cafes and restaurants, in favour of «the old town and the life of its people»<sup>114</sup>. He was impressed by «small provision shops overflowing with vividly-coloured fruits and vegetables». In Taggia, plates heaped with fruit and tomatoes were placed outside houses for people to take after paying a negligible sum<sup>115</sup>. In contrast at Genoa, where he lived for four months,

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<sup>112</sup> F. Lees, *Wanderings on the Italian Riviera*, Pitman & Sons, London 1912. Discussed further by Balzaretto, 'Victorian travellers', pp. 450, 455-457 and R. Balzaretto, *Frederic Lees in Varese Ligure, 1911*, in G. Foster, D. Robinson, (eds.), *Travel Writing in an Age of Global Quarantine*, Anthem, New York 2021, pp. 21-37.

<sup>113</sup> Lees, *Wanderings*, p. 16. G. Home, *Along the Rivas of France and Italy*, J. M. Dent & Co., London 1908, p. 137, noted that the wine was «considered wonderfully good» and that a good meal («very savoury» macaroni, an excellent omelette and good coffee, and sometimes cutlets and a clear soup) can be found «in the most unpretentious and often hopeless-looking village inns».

<sup>114</sup> Lees, *Wanderings*, p. 55.

<sup>115</sup> Ivi, p. 81.

he noticed Cappuchin friars begging «from restaurant to restaurant» but recorded nothing about anything he ate during that time<sup>116</sup>.

#### 4. Memories of local foods in Varese Ligure

Lees also paid a brief visit to Varese Ligure, in the far east of the region, and recorded a few thoughts in his book. These make a useful comparison with Alice Comyns Carr's understandings of peasant food in the villages around Savignone, although they are understandably much less full than her's. In Varese, Lees was much taken with the dried mushrooms (*porcini*) and almond sweetmeats (*sciulette*, the local name not noted by Lees) produced by the town's nuns<sup>117</sup>, who also sold the produce of their «beautiful and extensive garden»<sup>118</sup>. These *sciulette* are no longer made but some examples have survived in the Albergo Amici in Varese and the Museo Contadino in Cassego (Fig. 4).

Shaped into fruits (and flowers and *porcini*) of various types, one can see how they might have appealed to Lees, whose father was a botanist<sup>119</sup>. These sweets were far from being a product of peasant culture, which literally had little time for such luxuries. About dried mushrooms there is more contemporary information<sup>120</sup>, and the gathering and consump-

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<sup>116</sup> Ivi, p. 239. Anne Hollingsworth Wharton bought fresh dates 'worth whatever price we paid' and the 'most delicious looking candied fruits' in Genoa (*Italian Days and Ways*, pp. 14, 16).

<sup>117</sup> Lees, *Wanderings* cit. p. 296.

<sup>118</sup> The Augustinian nuns left Varese in 2012. Prior to that the monastery garden flourished. I visited it in March 1998 with colleagues from the University of Nottingham when the ground had already been dug for the new season, and fruit trees and vines were coming into bloom.

<sup>119</sup> Lees, *Wanderings* cit. p. 319.

<sup>120</sup> L. Scott, *The Mushroom Merchants in the Appennines*, in *Tuscan Studies and Sketches*, London, pp. 235-243. The money which peasants could make by selling their mushrooms was (and remains) considerable.



Fig. 4 *Sciuette* at the Museo Contadino di Cassego

tion of mushrooms certainly was and still is an important part of peasant life<sup>121</sup>. Lees is unlikely to have known that Clemente Rossi, a pharmacist in Varese, had published a detailed guide to edible fungi in 1888, with cooking and preserving advice<sup>122</sup>. Rossi included a whole section on the dried mushrooms of Varese<sup>123</sup>. He explained that the women of the town dried the mushrooms, even higher-class women, and that this fact was not understood by foreigners (evidently including Lees) and ill-informed historians who regarded them as a speciality of the Augustinian nuns (who sold but did not dry them themselves)<sup>124</sup>. Rossi was friendly with Don Vincenzo Giannone, priest at Comuneglia a parish within Varese comune,

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<sup>121</sup> See e.g. the Buto Online website: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/55284> (accessed 02.11.21). Buto is a *frazione* in Varese comune.

<sup>122</sup> C. Rossi, *Gastromicologia ossia nozioni popolari sopra una gran parte delle migliori specie di funghi mangerecci sul modo di cucinarli e conservarli*, Società agraria di Lombardia, Milan 1888, pp. 78-79 (*porcini*). I am very grateful to Don Sandro Lagomarsini for drawing this to my attention and for much other information about Clemente Rossi.

<sup>123</sup> Ivi, pp. 85-90.

<sup>124</sup> Ivi, p. 87.



who was by necessity in close contact with and fascinated by local peasant life<sup>125</sup>. Giannone wrote about «popular errors» among his parishioners, including mistaken beliefs about mushrooms<sup>126</sup>. Some peasants, according to Giannone, believed that the presence of vipers caused mushrooms to become poisonous<sup>127</sup>. Here we have nearly direct access to peasant knowledge about food (for that is why they gathered mushrooms) from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>128</sup>. How these peasants may have cooked their fungi is not recorded by Giannone but surviving recipes in the locality give a good idea: mostly stewed or fried (when fresh)<sup>129</sup>.

Varese's cuisine was codified in a cookery book published in 1975 more than a century after Rossi's Genoese equivalent<sup>130</sup>. Rinaldo

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<sup>125</sup> S. Lagomarsini, *Don Vincenzo Giannone, prete e maestro. Lettere scelte (1856-1871)*, Museo contadino di Cassego, Commungelia 1987, and M. Porcella, *Clero e società rurale*, in A. Gibelli, P. Rugafiore (eds), *La Liguria*, Einaudi, Turin 1994, pp. 572-574.

<sup>126</sup> V. Giannone, *Errori popolari di Comuneglia*, unpublished manuscript (129 pages) in the possession of Don Sandro Lagomarsini. It was dedicated to Clemente Rossi and probably written in the 1870s. Other manuscripts of Giannone's are held by Don Sandro in the collection of the Museo Contadino di Cassego.

<sup>127</sup> Giannone, *Errori popolari di Comuneglia*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>128</sup> This can be compared with fieldwork interviews with local mushroom pickers conducted by University of Nottingham students in 2010.

<sup>129</sup> C. De Vincenzi, *Le antiche ricette del Monte Gottero*, ButoCultur@, Buto 2011, pp. 100-104. The more bourgeois cuisine to be found in Rossi, *La vera cuciniera Genovese* contained a wider range of rather richer recipes for fungi, e.g. pp. 34 (sauce), 97 (fresh stewed), 113 (with herbs), 142 (fried), 200 (stuffed), 227 (in salad), 240 (*frittata*).

<sup>130</sup> R. Gramondo, *Brevi cenni di gastronomia riservati a piatti tipici di Varese Ligure*, Editrice Zappa, Sarzana 1975. More recently, V. Delucchi, *Varese Ligure. La cucina tradizionale e divagazioni sul tema*, Associazione Culturale A. Cesena, Varese Ligure 2019. For eastern Liguria as a whole, S. Marchese, *La cucina ligure di Levante*, Tarka, Mulazzo (MS) 2017.

Gramondo listed his informants as Enrico Marcone (proprietor of the Albergo Amici)<sup>131</sup>, Vanna De Lucchi, Maria Cattaneo, Elena Figone (presumably local domestic cooks) and Renzo Campanacci (secretary of the local trade association, Pro Loco Varesina). There are some distinctive dishes. Pastas include *croxetti* (discs of fresh pasta made by hand with a special implement which stamps a pattern into the paste)<sup>132</sup>; *tagliatelle alla ruta*, with a sauce of rue (*Ruta graveolens*) and also with leeks; *tomaselle*, a stuffed meat roll (rather like the English beef olive)<sup>133</sup>; *pane Martino* (bread made from wheat and chestnut flour with walnuts); eel soup and baked eels; mushrooms, baked, with potatoes or cooked under a *testo*; *baciocca* (a sort of potato pie)<sup>134</sup>; «a fainà», a sort of chestnut polenta; «i testadò» (both local dialect terms), pasta cooked in small *testi*<sup>135</sup>; *tagliatelle* made with chestnut flour; chestnut bread cooked under the *testo*; *puccia*, a dish of savoy cabbage mixed with polenta. Two desserts were included, *sciuette* and *la fecola*, but no recipes given as these would be purchased from the nuns or professional bakers. This is a certainly a list of local foods, some refined, some less so. Some can still be eaten in Varese today but others – the eels and the pasta with rue – seem (perhaps mercifully) to have disappeared. Most of these dishes, especially those based on chestnuts, clearly come into the category

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<sup>131</sup> A much-decorated cook whom I knew in the mid-1990s when he still ran the kitchen at the Amici, a hotel which the Marcone family has owned and run since 1760. His son Marco is now in charge and traditional dishes are still on the menu alongside some more recent additions.

<sup>132</sup> Known as *corzetti* in Genoa: Lingua, *Cucina dei genovesi*, p. 146 who points out that they are recorded before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>133</sup> Ivi, p. 185.

<sup>134</sup> De Vincenzi, *Le antiche ricette* cit. p. 136. There are significant variations locally in how *baciocca* is prepared.

<sup>135</sup> Gramondo, *Brevi cenni* cit. pp. 35-36.

of peasant food, if by that we mean hearty, filling food, made using locally grown ingredients; classic *cucina povera*. Local archives reveal even more clearly the food stuffs grown and consumed locally in the period covered by this chapter. For example, the archive of the De Paoli family based in Porciorasco includes many books and papers relating to their agricultural activities. Account books record production from several of the family's estates throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, including specific books devoted to the annual amounts of cheese and grapes produced<sup>136</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

The aim in this chapter has been to show how travel writing is a useful source for culinary history in Liguria (and more generally). Eyewitness ethnographic accounts can reveal cultures of local food which are now lost despite the problems posed by the genre, and the local detail which can be extracted from them adds something new to food history which goes beyond the overly simplistic national/regional dichotomy often presented in the literature. Travellers' tales can, with care, speak clearly alongside other types of evidence and approach to help us better understand the meanings of food within human culture<sup>137</sup>. I would argue

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<sup>136</sup> Archivio De Paoli Porciorasco (Varese Ligure). Inventario provvisorio materiale recuperato il 17-7-'82, nos. 9 (*1829 Libro del formaggio*) and 13 (*Libro delle Uve dall'1798*). The original material is held by the Museo Contadino (Casasego) and I am very grateful to its director Don Sandro Lagomarsini and Prof. Diego Moreno for access to the originals. See further R. Bruzzone, *Dalla foglia al folio. Un erbario figurato del XVI secolo e il suo contesto*, Sagep, Genoa 2015, pp. 13-14, 22-23.

<sup>137</sup> For example, the historical-ecological approach taken by R. Cevasco, *Memoria verde. Nuovi spazi per la Geografia*, Diabasis, Reggio Emilia 2007, pp. 54-57 to cheese making in Val d'Aveto. Similar – but probably not identical – practices lie behind Comyns Carr's simple references to 'cheese'.

that the observations and opinions of the writers examined here are of most value when they can be precisely localised, as in the case of Dickens and his Genoese tavern, Mrs Comyns Carr and her beloved villages which she evidently knew well or Lees and Gramondo who respectively noted and codified the culinary traditions of Varese Ligure (for which there are parallels in similar size settlements elsewhere in the region).

Can wider questions be addressed by these apparently anecdotal records? The genre 'travel writing' in some respects gets in the way of the 'realistic' readings of the material presented here because writers, who were anyway prone to hyperbole and inaccuracy, were also readers and certainly copied material from others often without acknowledgement. Nevertheless, some broader trends are evidenced by this genre. First, although not all British travellers were critical of 'foreign food' they all recognised when food was 'foreign'<sup>138</sup>. Dickens enthused over a 'real' Genoese tavern, and Comyns Carr smelt 'unfailing garlic' everywhere. Such visceral encounters with local food allowed regional and national identities to be played out for both visitors and visited. Second, because the local and the traditional in food were deemed important by some travellers even though they did not express it in quite that way, a 'slow' and 'traditional' past food culture mostly vegetable and fruit based and in some aspects self-sufficient can indeed be observed especially in the inland valleys. Chestnuts were the staple in these places alongside polenta and potatoes, which seem to have gained in popularity since their introduction in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. These developments were associated with peasant cultivators and cooks. The cuisine of Genoa and the coast was markedly different with, unsurprisingly, more fish, but a greater difference still was Genoa's relative greater access to imports, especially wine from France and the Monferrato, and wheat from Sicily, and a market which had also long facilitated exports of local produce beyond the region. By the latter decades of the century the burgeoning number of

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<sup>138</sup> Warde, *The Practice of Eating* cit. pp. 138-142.

coastal hotels had further differentiated local food culture by meeting the demands of an international clientele with dishes familiar to them. The 'international' cooking still found in such places today had come into being and, by and large, the mid-century charm of 'slow' peasant cooking could not be expected to survive such rapid touristic development. Travellers, who mostly had a superficial grasp of local food culture, by their demands for recognisable food encouraged traditional food cultures to interact with outside influences. This meant that while food in this period may well have been 'slow' in contrast with our own 'modern', 'fast' food cultures it was not static in the countryside, and peasant cooks adopted potatoes and tomatoes, once suspect alien foods, as routine ingredients. We may conclude that 19<sup>th</sup>-century travel writing can, in the absence of direct testimony from 19<sup>th</sup>-century peasants themselves about their food cultures and when read in the context of other types of evidence and modes of research, provide valuable insights into some of their local practices.



# A Moveable [f/b]east: «*apros vel porcos silvestres*» in the Alta Val di Vara, NW Italy

Robert Hearn\*

## 1. Introduction

Italy teems with wild boar; from the Calabrian and Pugliese southern tips of the peninsula to the mountainous regions bordering neighbouring European countries skirting the lengthy northern border, with equally numerous populations on Sardinia and Sicily. In the most recent pan-national assessment of the Italian wild boar population, the species' range was estimated to extend over 190,000 km<sup>2</sup>, 64% of the country's total territory, present in 95 of the 107 provinces, classified as 'widespread' in two thirds of these areas<sup>1</sup>. In the intervening decade since this most extensive survey, the number of wild boar in Italy is thought to have ballooned from around 600,000 to 2.3 million, leading the producers of this report – the agricultural organisation *Coldiretti* – to assert that «è un'emergenza, dobbiamo controllarli» – implicating the increasingly burdensome impact of the animals on market-orientated and subsistence cultivation and production.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Carnevali *et al.*, *Banca Dati Ungulati. Status, distribuzione, consistenza, gestione e prelievo venatorio delle popolazioni di Ungulati in Italia*, ISPRA, 2009.

However, research into the Italian wild boar (*Sus scrofa*, L. 1758) has shown that despite the current, seemingly unabated profusion of this 'native' species – the autochthonous nature of the population is open to debate, the animals historically absent from large tracts of the country for often significant periods of time, spanning centuries in many regions<sup>2</sup>. For example, Ghigi's research on the diverse mammals in Italy conducted in the years preceding the First World War depicts an Italian landscape largely without wild boar<sup>3</sup> painting a radically different depiction of the faunal assemblage before a spectacular numerical and spatial explosion, an expansion intrinsically intertwined complex changes in the composition of the landscape and associated demographic trends<sup>4</sup>.

Eurasian wild boars are historically endemic in the north-west Italian region of Liguria, their presence attested to in diverse sources with which a strong iconography associated with the symbolism of the 'hunt' was attached<sup>5</sup>. It is widely cited that the 'last' wild boar of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was hunted at Bardineto near Savona in 1814<sup>6</sup>, local historical sources attributing the decline and eventual disappearance of the once profuse species to the extension of cultivation, the increase in population, and of the number of hunters<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Apollonio, E. Randi, S. Toso, *The systematics of wild boar in Italy*, in «Bollettino di Zoologia», 55 (1-4) (1988), pp. 213-221.

<sup>3</sup> A. Ghigi, *Ricerche Faunistiche e Sistematiche sui Mammiferi d'Italia che formano oggetto di Caccia*, in «Natura», 2 (1911), pp. 289-337.

<sup>4</sup> R. Hearn, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretto, *The cultural and land use implications of the reappearance of the wild boar in North West Italy: A case study of the Val di Vara*, in «Journal of Rural Studies», 36 (2014), pp. 52-63.

<sup>5</sup> R. Hearn, *Grey wolves and wild boar: comparative species in Liguria, c. 1515-2012*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> O. De Beaux, E. Festa, *La ricomparsa del cinghiale nell'Italia settentrionale-occidentale*, in «Memorie della Società Italiana di Scienze Naturali e del Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Milano», 9 (3) (1927), pp. 265-342.

<sup>7</sup> E. Balletto, *Attività antropica e storia recente del popolazione faunistico in*



The disappearance of wild boar from the region coincided with a period of rapid population growth and an associated intensification of agro-silvo-pastoral practices in the rural Ligurian hinterlands<sup>8</sup>, the populace inhabiting the ‘mountainous’ and ‘hilly’ areas of the region increasing from 584,940 to 1,086,433 between 1805 and 1901<sup>9</sup>. As such, the Ligurian landscape become conspicuously ‘dewilded’, with various other ‘wild’ species similarly disappearing during this period<sup>10</sup>.

The return of the wild boar to Liguria – a «native alien» returning as a ‘stranger in familiar land’<sup>11</sup> – was first detected in the years following World War One, the species generally is thought to have first naturally recolonised western Liguria from south-east France where wartime military activities forced wild boar populations over the Maritime Alps<sup>12</sup>

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*Liguria*, in «Indice» 1 (1976), pp. 20-23; E. Balletto, *Analisi faunistico-venatoria ed ecologica della regione Liguria*, Grafica Don Bosco, Genoa 1987; A. Marsan, S. Spano, L. Schenone, *Il cinghiale in Liguria*, Genoa 1985 and 2000; A. Marsan, *Gli ungulate selvatici in Liguria*, Il Piviere, Gavi 2009.

<sup>8</sup>D. Moreno, *Escaping from 'landscape': the historical and environmental identification of local land-management practices in the post-medieval Ligurian mountains*, in R. Balzaretto, M. Pearce, C. Watkins (eds.), *Ligurian Landscapes: Studies in Archaeology, Geography and History*. Accordia, London 2004, pp. 129-140.

<sup>9</sup>G. Felloni, *Popolazione e sviluppo economico della Liguria del secolo XIX*, ILTE - Industria Libreria Tipografica Editrice, Turin 1961.

<sup>10</sup>R. Hearn, *Il richiamo del selvatico: l'applicazione delle storie di specie e della ricerca della dimensione umana nelle gestione del lupo in Liguria*, in V. Moneta, C. Parola (eds.) *Oltre la rinaturalizzazione: studi di ecologia storica per la riqualificazione dei paesaggi rurali*, Oltre Edizione, Sestri Levante 2014, pp. 183-193.

<sup>11</sup>R. Lambert, *Strangers in a familiar Land: the return of the native aliens and the (re) wilding of Britain's skies, 1850 and 2010*, in I. Rotherham, R. Lambert (eds.), *Invasive and Introduced Plants and Animals: Human Perceptions, Attitudes and Approaches to Management*, Earthscan, London 2011, pp. 169-183.

<sup>12</sup>O. De Beaux, E. Festa, *La ricomparsa del cinghiale nell'Italia settentrionale-occidentale*, in «Memorie della Società Italiana di Scienze Naturali e del Museo

and into the regions of north-west Italy. These early foothold populations were thereafter augmented by translocations and reintroductions throughout Liguria by hunting communities – spontaneously orchestrated both by local fraternities and the national *Federazione Italiana della Caccia* – during the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>.

However, whilst the return of the species to Liguria resulted from the combination of natural recolonisation of former territories and translocation reintroductions, 20<sup>th</sup> century wild boar were advancing into largely empty territory, particularly from the 1950s when processes of profound rural depopulation and abandonment occurred throughout the Ligurian interior. Ultimately representing a reversal of the ‘dewilding’ that led to the disappearance of the species in 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid depopulation and abandonment converted formerly intensive agro-silvo-pastoral landscapes into dense secondary woodland as the hinterlands became spontaneously ‘rewilded’<sup>14</sup>, creating the spaces and resources for the recolonisation by wild boar and other key species, including wolves.

Having situated the species history and historical animal geography of wild boar in the case study area of the Alta Val di Vara by way of a microhistorical analysis of a 16<sup>th</sup> century manuscript, this chapter thereafter makes a case for the use of oral histories and qualitative

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Civico di Storia Naturale di Milano», 9 (3) (1927), pp. 265-342.

<sup>13</sup> A. Toschi, *Osservazione sulla presenza del cinghiale (Sus scrofa, L.) nell'Italia occidentale. Ricerche di Zoologia Applicata alla Caccia*, Coop. Tip. Edit. P. Galeati, Imola 1936; E. Balletto, *Analisi faunistico-venatoria ed ecologica della regione Liguria*, Grafica Don Bosco, Genoa 1977.

<sup>14</sup> D. Moreno, O. Raggio, *The making and fall of an intensive pastoral landuse system. Eastern Liguria, 16e19th centuries*, in «Riv. Studi Liguri», 56 (1990), pp. 193-217; C. Watkins, *Trees, Woods and Forests: a social and cultural history*, Reaktion, London 2014; P. Piana, C. Watkins, I. Tekic, *Topographical art and the rediscovery of lost landscapes: understanding Ligurian rewilding 180-2020*, in «Landscapes», 19(2) (2018), pp. 111-134.

fieldwork interviews as appropriate and insightful methodological approaches to the study of the wild boar – and their associated foodways – in this northwest Italian valley<sup>15</sup>. Returning to oral histories conducted over a decade ago, – reconsidering them as ‘historical oral histories’ – this chapter makes three key arguments that were overlooked in the original study. Firstly, the wild boar is a conceptually, physically, and biological mobile species<sup>16</sup>. Secondly, that despite a now lengthy presence in the study area, whilst undoubtedly ‘physically’ local and abundant throughout the locality, the meat of the wild boar has yet into ‘traditional’ foodways<sup>17</sup>. Thirdly, this chapter argues more generally that the flesh of ‘wild’ animals – their meat – must be considered an ‘environmental resource that ‘activated’ by and contingent on the patterns and practices of human communities over time, the associated and resultant gastro-alimentary cultures temporally specific and precisely spatially situated<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, from a methodological perspective, this chapter seeks to illustrate and emphasise the validity and vibrancy of oral sources and the interview processes in exploring local traditional foods and, by extension, their inherent complexities positioned at the porous interface between tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

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<sup>15</sup> Hearn, *Grey wolves and wild boar* cit.

<sup>16</sup> T. Cresswell, *Towards a politics of mobility*, in «Environment and Planning D: Society and Space», 28 (2010), pp. 17-31; T. Hodgetts, J. Lorimer, *Animals mobilites*, in «Progress in Human Geography», 44 (1) (2020), pp. 4-26.

<sup>17</sup> R. Hearn, C. Watkins, R. Balzaretto, *The cultural and land use implications of the reappearance of the wild boar in North West Italy: A case study of the Val di Vara*, in «Journal of Rural Studies», 36 (2014), pp. 52-63.

<sup>18</sup> L. Gibbs, *Animal geographies II: killing and caring (in times of crisis)*, in «Progress in Human Geography», 45 (2) (2021), pp. 371-381.

## 2. Bridging food studies, oral history and the 'question of the animal'

The study of 'food' and 'foodways' in all their kaleidoscopic, myriad forms and abundant manifestations is an area of research actually and potentially engaged with by academics from across the scholarly spectrum, from the deep recesses of the arts and humanities to the furthestmost outcrops of the social and natural sciences. Whenever and wherever there is the study of humans there is the opportunity to think about these 'through' and 'with' food as both the 'object' and 'subject' of research. There is always a food-influenced 'way of looking', and whether these perspectives are approached as windows, mirrors, telescopes or microscopes, the numerous and diverse 'ways of seeing' in examining food – and their 'ways' – act as an interpretive foil by which it is possible to (re-)consider both 'us' and 'it' and the multivariant relational compositions and configurations bridging between. Food is – of course – historically and contemporaneously omnipresent, emanating in and from highly specific temporal and spatial contexts that are unavoidably and intrinsically entangled with the multiple and coalesced lifeworlds of a panoply of floral and faunal protagonists, a vibrant and vital chorus assembled of and contingent on an endlessly enmeshed network of often seemingly wildly incommensurate nonhuman actors and agents; they are fundamentally more-than-human compositions.

Levi-Strauss famously reflected that «food is not [only] good to eat, it is also good to think with», in many ways existentially elucidating on Brillat-Savarin's exhaustively parroted aphorism «tell me what you eat, and I tell you who you are». However, alongside the food 'way of thinking', Levi-Strauss also surmised that non-human animals were similarly good to think with and – moreover – through, as well as to eat. The extent to which his philosophical reflections extended to direct mediation on the issues of animal agency and subjectivities is open to dispute, the 'animal' enduringly employed as a convenient lens through which to regard and explore questions of the human rather than the

non-human per se. Nevertheless, Jacque Derrida's 'question of the animal' has become one considered by a wide range of scholars from a broad scope of disciplines, the French deconstructionist philosopher deliberately remoulding Descartes' «I think, therefore I am' into 'The Animal therefore I am...more to follow», overtly inverting the innate anthropocentrism woven into the foundations of this component of Cartesian philosophy. Indeed, it was Derrida's conviction that the very act of naming the nonhuman as 'the animal' reflected and served to entrench and exacerbates human exceptionalism and subsequent speciesism. To describe the nonhuman as such is to perpetuate their construction as the 'other', thereafter centring one and marginalising other co-occupants of the inter and intraspecies milieus. Furthermore, such separatism propagates binaried thinking, positing nature and culture as contrary entities, contemporary research in many disciplines – conspicuously in human geography – promoting 'nature cultures' as interpretive lens most apt for viewing the contemporary world, specifically in the throes of the so-called 'Anthropocene'<sup>19</sup>.

Whilst once the case that «to read most geographical texts, one might never know that nature was populated by sentient creatures»<sup>20</sup> an increasing number and range of geographers are repopulating geographical (and historical) research with a veritable (Noah's) ark of nonhuman species. Whilst the spirit and essence of the subdiscipline has changed during its various disciplinary incarnations since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> S. Hinchliffe, *Geographies of nature: societies, environments, ecologies*, Sage, London 2007; S. Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: nature, cultures, spaces*, Sage, London 2022; J. Latimer, M. Miele, *Naturecultures? Science, affect and the non-human*, in «Theory, Culture and Society», 30 (7-8) (2013), pp. 5-31.

<sup>20</sup> J. Wolch, J. Emel, *Bringing the Animals Back*, in «Environment and Planning D: Society and Space», 13 (1995), pp. XV-XVI.

<sup>21</sup> J. Urbanik, *Placing Animals: an introduction to the geography of human-animal relations*, Rowman & little, Plymouth, 2012.

the animal geography that has most recently emerged seeks to explore the complex entanglings of human-animal relations with space, place, location, environment, and landscape<sup>22</sup>, «complexifying, deconstructing, and recoding previously-anthropocentric understandings of space, sociality, and culture»<sup>23</sup>.

Owing to the innate ontological and epistemological slipperiness of arts, humanities, and social science led investigations into non-human animals and the more-than-human, researchers in these increasingly amorphous disciplines have expended significant energies in (re-)considering how to navigate explorations at the interface of theory and methodology<sup>24</sup>. Research approaches to non-human animals diverge greatly and all provide insightful perspectives on animals and their lifeworlds with fluctuating degrees of mutual interaction; from practitioners embracing the ‘stuff of traditional histories’ – written and visual documentary sources of myriad form and function – to increasingly experimental and creative approaches that reflect more fundamental shifts in the spirit and nature of contemporary cultural geography. Indeed, it could be said that there is something of a methodological volt-face emerging in certain corners of this sub-discipline concerned with the animal and more-than-hu-

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<sup>22</sup> H. Buller, *Animal geographies I*, in «Progress in Human Geography», 38 (2) (2014), pp. 308-318; L.M. Gibbs, *Animal geographies I: Hearing the cry and extending beyond*, in «Progress in Human Geography», 44 (4) (2020), pp. 769-777; K. Gillespie, R.-C. Collard, *Critical animal geographies: politics, intersections, and hierarchies in a multispecies world*, Routledge, London 2015.

<sup>23</sup> E. Van Patter, *Individual animal geographies for the more-than-human city storying synanthropy and cynanthropy with urban coyotes*, in «Environment and Planning E: nature and space», 5 (4) (2021) pp. 2216-2239.

<sup>24</sup> H. Buller, *Animal geographies II: methods*, in «Progress in Human Geography», 39 (3) (2015), pp. 374-384; M. Rubio-Raman, K. Srinivasan, *Methodologies for animal geographies: approaches within and beyond the human*, in S.A. Lovell, S.E. Coen, M.W. Rosenbery (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Methodologies in Human Geography*, Routledge, London 2022, pp. 257-269.

man, with emphasis being placed on techniques perhaps more intuitively associated with those embedded in the natural sciences, such as genetic and genomic analysis and spatial tracking<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, it could be said that in many ways, some of these approaches to animal geographies – and later more-than-human geography – could be regarded as elaborations on some of the foundational methods and techniques deployed during the field's 'first-wave', pre-cultural turn zoographical research before their drift towards ecology and zoology<sup>26</sup>.

There is, therefore, great diversity in the way in which the 'question of the animal' is posed and investigated. However, this is not to suggest that they are uniformly united on the relative merits and potential 'validity' of divergent constituent methodologies. The use of oral sources, inevitably and inescapably divulged by and elicited from human people is one such contested and deliberated methodology. The innate 'human-ness' and anthropocentric subjectivities unavoidably embedded within and articulated through oral histories and qualitative fieldwork remains a bone of contention in some academic circles and there is some – not unfounded – hesitancy concerning the legitimacy of the process and products of these approaches; the 'question of the animal' ultimately one answered by the human. Founded on human memory and its alluring yet objectively problematic capriciousness, oral sources and spoken testimonies «are not static recollections of the past but memories reworked in the context of the respondent's own experience», reworked recollections co-created through communion with those seeking their illumination, «the historian [is] obliged to think hard about how and why those memories are produced – about the cultural environments of memory (when things happen) and of remembering

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<sup>25</sup> T. Hodges, J. Lorimer, *Methodologies for animals' geographies: geographies, communication and genomics*, in «Cultural Geographies», 22 (2) (2015), pp. 285-295.

<sup>26</sup> Urbanik, *Placing Animals* cit.

(as they are recalled)»<sup>27</sup>. Oral history is therefore «not just *what* is said, but also *how* it is said, *why* it is said and *what* it means»<sup>28</sup>, in short, «oral history tells us less about events than about their meanings»<sup>29</sup>, meanings that whilst including the animal, are perhaps less about them than they are the human.

Oral history – the «act of recording the speech of people with something interesting to say and then analysing their memories of the past»<sup>30</sup> – is a «permeable and borderless, ‘composite genre’ that requires that we think flexibly, across and between disciplinary boundaries»; «an octopus with tentacles reaching into a wide range of disciplines»<sup>31</sup>. The broad church that is ‘animal studies’ is entangled in the antenna range of this cephalopodan methodology, work looking to «bring oral history into conversation with animal studies [...] demonstrating that oral history can contribute valuable evidence about animal lives and human-animal relations»<sup>32</sup>. However, oral histories have not been conspicuously enlisted within the various investigative tools utilised by those engaged with the ‘animal question’ without deliberation and critique, in both methodological and theoretical terms. Indeed, the most ardent of critics would state that those using oral histories in animal studies are simply propagating further anthropocentric perspectives on human-animal relations, the former speaking through the medium of

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<sup>27</sup> L. Passerini, *Work, Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism*, in «History Workshop Journal», 8 (1979), p. 91.

<sup>28</sup> L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, London 2010, p. 1252.

<sup>29</sup> A. Portelli, *The Peculiarities of Oral History*, in «History Workshop Journal», 12 (1) (1981), pp. 96-107. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/12.1.96>

<sup>30</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory* cit. p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ivi, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> C. Hamilton, *Animal Stories and Oral History: Witnessing and Mourning across the Species Divide*, in «The Oral History Review», 45 (2) (2019), pp. 193-210.



the latter; intra-species dialogues speaking ‘for’ rather than ‘with’ the non-human, and as a result meaningful inter-species communication and consideration is inescapably sacrificed. Such shortcomings mean that the representations of and about non-humans constructed and articulated by humans can only ever provide caveated perspectives of the myriad and multiple lifeworlds of animals, many of which exist beyond the realm of human observation and comprehension. In the context of animal geographies’, for example, people talking about animals can provide some illumination on ‘animal spaces’ or, those contact zones between the human and non-human, but cannot shed light on ‘bestly places’, or those geographies created and inhabited by animal agency and action alone, beyond anthropogenic boundaries, both physical and conceptual<sup>33</sup>.

However, rebutting and resisting the use of oral histories and qualitative fieldwork interviews specifically in the context of animal studies would be to ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater’, as the placed knowledge(s) ascertained and understood from such methodologies «clearly demonstrate unique insights into the history of places [...] indeed, what these narratives provide is recollection about self, about relationships with others and a place»<sup>34</sup>, the ‘others’ inclusionary of the nonhuman ‘animal’. This was certainly the case when this research was first conducted between 2008 and 2012 with multi-generational inhabitants of the Alta Val di Vara (Liguria, north-west Italy) exploring their contextual landscapes and complex dynamics, and the historical and contemporary places and spaces of wild boar as active co-protagonists therein. Returning to these oral histories over a decade later – (re) examining and (re)considering these histories as now as ‘histories of

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<sup>33</sup> C. Philo, C. Wilbert (eds.), *Animal spaces, bestly places: new geographies of human-animal relations*, Routledge, London, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> G.J. Andrews *et al.*, ‘*Their finest hour*’: older people, oral histories and the historical geography of social life, in «Social and Cultural Geography», 7 (2006), p. 170.

histories' – has shown that whilst these sources enabled the creation of a certain narrative and particular analysis situated somewhere in the shifting intellectual terrain between species/animal history and (historical) animal geography, certain crucial considerations writ large in the testimonies went – if not entirely unexplored – certainly under-scrutinised. It is therefore the intention of this chapter to (re)explore and (re-)excavate the historical roots of contemporary local knowledge(s), delving back into the centuries-worn pages of a 500 years old manuscript produced by an expert witness in the Val di Vara, approached microhistorically, before returning to the early-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3. «*Apros vel porcos silvestres*»: sorting the feral from the wild**

Varese Ligure is located in the Alta Val di Vara, a high valley in the province of La Spezia, the most easterly of the four provinces comprising the region of Liguria that arches around the Gulf of Genoa in north-west Italy. Whilst an enduringly attractive, charming town nestled in the «beautiful and often dramatic [...] demanding and unstable»<sup>35</sup> hills and mountains characteristic of the Ligurian hinterlands, and the ongoing administrative centre of the *comune*, Varese Ligure was perhaps of greater significance historically, located on an important trade route linking Genoa and coastal villages of the east-Ligurian riviera with larger urban centre in the Italian interior, particularly Parma.

Historical documentation from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards concerning the life and times of Varese Ligure is well-represented in archival repositories both within Liguria, Italy more generally, and, indeed, beyond. However, a vernacular manuscript, the *Relazione dell'origine*

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<sup>35</sup> C. Delano Smith, *Preface: a perspective on Mediterranean landscape history*, in R. Balzaretto, M. Pearce and C. Watkins (eds) *Ligurian Landscapes: studies in archaeology, geography and history*, London, 2004, pp. vii-ix.

*et successi della terra di Varese*<sup>36</sup> produced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (c.1558) by local priest Antonio Cesena (1507-c.1559)<sup>37</sup> permits the histories and geographies of town and valley to be examined microanalytically<sup>38</sup>, an historiographical approach that seeks «to construct coherent social structures, to split the historical time of society into a series of systems – which is the real periodization – and then interpret the social mechanisms of change»<sup>39</sup>, that whilst considerate of questions of scale<sup>40</sup> is «linked more to the basic features of the elements taken into consideration than to the dimension of the social area»<sup>41</sup>. In short, and exemplified by the works of academics of the Genoa school Edoardo Grendi (1932-1999) and Osvaldo Raggio (1951-2022), microhistorical analysis «expresses a strong interest in relations among people and groups with a strong emphasis on the spatial dimensions of social structure»<sup>42</sup>. Chiming with the *Relatio* tradition common in the late Middle Ages – primarily as a documentary form concerning a specific locale within the ‘grand narrative’ overarching the work concerning the

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<sup>36</sup> S. Lagomarsini, *Relatione dell'origine et successi della terra di Varese descritta dal r.p. Antonio Cesena l'anno 1558*, La Spezia 1993.

<sup>37</sup> R. Balzaretti, *The history of the countryside in sixteenth-century Varese Ligure*, in R. Balzaretti, M. Pearce and C. Watkins (eds.), *Ligurian Landscapes: studies in archaeology, geography and history*, University of London, London 2004, pp. 113-128.

<sup>38</sup> O. Raggio, *Microhistorical approaches to the history of Liguria: from microanalysis to local history. Edoardo Grendi's achievement*, in R. Balzaretti, M. Pearce and C. Watkins (eds.), *Ligurian Landscapes: studies in archaeology, geography and history*, Accordia Specialist Studies on Italy, London 2004, pp. 97-104.

<sup>39</sup> E. Grendi, *L'antropologia economica*, Einaudi, Turin, 1972, p. vi.

<sup>40</sup> C. Ginzburg, *Microstoria: due o tre cose che so di lei*, in «Quaderni Storici», 86 (1994), pp. 511-39.

<sup>41</sup> E. Grendi, *Micro-analisi e storia sociale*, in «Quaderni Storici», 35 (1977), pp. 506-20.

<sup>42</sup> Raggio, *Microhistorical approaches to the history of Liguria* cit.

Fieschi conspiracy, Cesena's *Relatio* is moreover «the earliest detailed description of the topography and wider environment of Varese and its area»<sup>43</sup>. As such a close analysis of the adjectives, tropes and rhetorical devices employed therein provides a detailed insightful into the nuanced construction, interpretation and perceptions of place and space of this priest and possibly, by extension, those of 'flock' in this rural town and valley in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Amidst the chronicling of various events and issues experienced by the inhabitants of the valley – based, from the 1520s on direct observation – Cesena regales extensive details concerning the surrounding environment and landscape, consistently attentive in drawing a clear distinction between different types of landscapes; describing them as «known and domestic» on one hand and «wild and uncultivated» on the other, within which the latter are often attached to negative adjectives to describe «*selvaggio*», «*inculto*», «*disabitato*» and «*deserto*» in contrast to his descriptions of farmed, managed land; a stark contrast in the existential (real) and metaphorical connotations variously associated with these supposed binary states. The 'known and domestic' areas of the valley were moreover the cultural, or human, places, whereas the 'wild and uncultivated' were those natural, namely non-human, spaces: animal spaces and beastly places. Indeed, the characterisation of these states were further emphasised when they came into direct contact, such as – for example – during the so-called «*invasione dei lupi*» in the Borgo Rotondo of Varese Ligure in 1516; a potent symbol of the encroachment of the 'natural' on the 'cultural'<sup>44</sup>.

According to Cesena, «the country, outside of the parts which had been wooded and then felled with fire and axe, was full of bears, wolves, and wild boar which roamed about without any fear at all»<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Balzaretti, *The history of the countryside* cit., p. 115.

<sup>44</sup> Hearn, Balzaretti, Watkins, *The Wolf in the Landscape* cit.

<sup>45</sup> Lagomarsini, *Relazione dell'origine et successi della terra di Varese* cit., p. 5.

The association of these three «*salvaghi*» species was a common feature in medieval and early modern documentation, such as in the 1592 statutes for the town of Triora in west Liguria in which hunting of the «*apros vel porcos silvestres*»<sup>46</sup> are discussed along with that of «*lupum et ursos*» (CXV). The description of the boar as «*apros vel porcos silvestres*» in these statutes is of significance in exploring the ‘nature’ of the animals in the medieval and early-modern Ligurian landscapes, describing them as ‘wild boar or wild pigs’, the crucial adjective being ‘wild’, rather than any form of the ‘domestic’ form.

Natural histories contemporaneous to Cesena’s *Relatio*, include information on the etymological roots of the wild boar, Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605), for example, relaying in his *Quadrupedum omnium bisulcorum historia* (1621) that the Latin for wild boar – *Aper* – was derived from *feritas* meaning ‘wild’, the ‘f’ gradually having been substituted for a ‘p’<sup>47</sup>. The aforementioned hazy, uncertain and inconsistent use of ‘wild boar *or* wild pig’ is common in many medieval and early modern statutes wherein there does not appear to be a consistent etymology, the instances in which «*apros*» or «*aprum*» are explicitly used relatively few. For example, elsewhere in the statute documentary record, ‘wild’ porcines are variously described as «*porcos silvestres*», «*vulnerabit porchum*», and ‘*quolibet porco*’ highlighting some potential ambiguity in the perceived biological identity of the species in Liguria – and beyond – in this period<sup>48</sup>.

This would appear to have also been the case in Varese Ligure during the mid-sixteenth century, Cesena recording that:

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<sup>46</sup> Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Citta del Vaticano, *Statutorum Triorie 1592*, pers.coms. R. Savelli.

<sup>47</sup> U. Aldrovandi, *Quadrupedum omnium bisulcorum historia*, Bologna, 1621, p. 1015.

<sup>48</sup> Hearn, *Grey Wolves and Wild Boar* cit.

I will not keep silent about a well-known fact: namely that these boars excited by their vile desires came to the barns in search of the female pigs, with which they frequently mated with the result that a new type of pig was created. In my own time a man from the Val di Taro gave me two small pigs born from a domestic pig and a wild boar, although it is actually difficult to tell the difference<sup>49</sup>.

Cesena considered these ‘new’ pigs to be ‘vel illius generis’, or ‘of those in origin or descent’, the result of the interbreeding of domestic and wild cousins; ‘*apros vel porcos silvestres*’ bridging the culture/nature dichotomies that permeates Cesena’s manuscript.

#### **4. «*Gli animali parlanti*»: talking animals in the Alta Val di Vara**

In a certain point in his *Relatio*, Cesena recorded on the spirit and nature belying the information and description relayed in the manuscript;

Up to this point I have, by my own great effort and research, spoken of things very obscure because of their great age, that is those things which die to the great interval of time one cannot clearly see [...] now in the progress of our argument shall tell you things which are more clear and certain, narrating for you more faithfully the sequence of events of my own time, or of times of those who told things to me<sup>50</sup>.

As such, Cesena was in effect – up to point – an oral historian, collecting, curating, and communicating inter-generational testimonies considered to have constituted the ‘collective memory’ of the inhabitants of the valley, thereafter augmenting these accounts with those that he

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<sup>49</sup> Lagomarsini, *Relatione dell’origine et successi della terra di Varese* cit., p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Lagomarsini, *Relatione dell’origine et successi della terra di Varese* cit., pp. 44-45.

witnessed personally, his observation and interpretation gilded by his own idiosyncratic subjectivities and crafted to the intended purpose of the *Relatio*.

Cesena's approach therefore bears certain resemblance to the endeavours of another priest in the valley, albeit one that inhabited the Alta Val di Vara a number of centuries later; Don Vincenzo Giannone (1827-1915). Alongside the many works Giannone formally published, he also produced a hitherto unpublished manuscript the *Errori popolari di Comuneglia* that whilst undated is thought to have been written around 1870. This manuscript is comprised of various beliefs widely held amongst his 'flock' the valley, the purpose of their collection resonating with his more well-known published works lamenting levels of formal education in rural parishes, improvement essential to the creation of informed, civically responsible citizens of the newly-established nation of Italy. Comprised of separate sections concerning the 'spenti', 'semi-spenti' and 'vivi' quasi-superstitious beliefs in the valley, the testimonies collected and recorded by Giannone concerning myriad elements of rural life, from those associated with earthly practices to the more spiritual and supernatural observations relating to floral and faunal species. A number of species are present, from bees, snakes, various bird species, small game, and of course the conspicuous presence of the absent wolf. However, there is no mention in any form of the wild boar, past or present, this lack supported by other forms of archival evidence concerning the wild boar in the valley for over a century from the late-18<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-to-late-20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, whilst the sources are resoundingly silent concerning the disappearance or absence of the wild boar, the results of oral history and qualitative fieldwork interviews (2008-2012) were of enormous utility in tracking and explaining the return of the wild boar to this valley in north-west Italy, specifically the Alta Val di Vara in the province of La Spezia abutting the neighbouring regions of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, particularly in the area immediately surrounding «*I tre confini*» where the provinces of La Spezia (Liguria), Massa-Carrara

(Tuscany), Parma (Emilia Romagna) meet on the slopes of Monte Gottero (1639 m a.s.l) in the east-Ligurian Apennines.

Oral historical research in the study area, primarily based in and around the mountain comune of Varese Ligure, revealed a general consensus that wild boar first reappeared on the slopes of Monte Gottero during the early 1960s, this date recalled in an apparently well-known phrase in the area; namely «1864 the last wolf, 1964 the first wild boar» (Valter Boccoli, Colli di Valletti). This date would seemingly supported by an article published in the *Cronaca della Spezia* on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1963, this article recording that;

Driven by the heavy snowfall, the wild boar dispersed and escaped from the reserve on Monte Gottero, reappearing in places in which their presence is entirely unusual. We have mentioned phenomenon similar to this on other occasions, however the other morning we spoke to people in Cassego who had noticed the presence of wild boar in the area, locations which are distant from the boundaries of the three provinces more than 20 km away.

The identities and motivations of the individual or groups responsible for the release were contested in the oral record of the valley, from a mysterious doctor from Parma to officials from the Corpo Forestale, from hunting fraternities to the ominously omnipresent ‘*verdi*’, or ‘greens’, forever meddling with the environment, this group consistently implicated and blamed following reported sighting and reappearance of any ‘unusual’ flora and fauna. Indeed, it was the case the actual reason(s) for the novel presence arguably of lesser importance and interest than the diversity of explanations proffered. Whatever the reason, responses to the fledgling (re)new(ed) wild boar population in Alta Val di Vara were – certainly initially – predominately positive, bolstering quarry stocks that were long since flailing in the area and were important to hunting fraternities and were, of course, something new and novel to eat, crucially collectively; the killing and consumption of the animals’ meat of more socio-cultural than gastronomic value.



The complete lack of any relict «*apros vel porcos silvestres*» gastro-alimentary tradition was immediately revealed, the wife of the individual widely accredited with killing the first boar in the early 1960s reflecting at length at her unfamiliarity with the meat of this ‘native alien’, culinary experimentation trial and moreover error characteristic during these early puzzled grappling’s with this new cuisine; «no-one really had a good idea of how to cook it, but they ate it nonetheless, half raw, half cooked!» (Valter Boccoli, Colli di Valletti, 2011). During this period of becoming (re-)acquainted with this new ‘alien’ meat, it was seemingly necessary to enact certain gastronomic ‘rites of passage’ in the preparation of the wild boar flesh, experimentations that sought to normalise the meats’ strangeness, thereby rendering it more familiar and therefore more appealing and appetising to the popular pallet. This ‘normalising’ of the meat through different preparatory methods sought to mitigate the ‘alienness’ of the taste in a material sense, but also symbolically to indoctrinate wild boar into long established and embedded gastro-culinary traditions. The arrival of the animal and its meat was not, therefore, embraced and incorporated without interventions and modifications enacted by those engaged in its early preparation. The simple presence of a huntable and thereafter consumable animal is not singularly sufficient for its emplacement in local-traditional food cultures and foodways. This emplacement is arbitrated and negotiated by taste.

## **5. Of (M)Eat and (Wo)Men: the wild boar in ‘local’ gastro-alimentation**

The confusion of the first hunter’s wife as to how to cook the wild boar shot and butchered in 1967 highlighted the extent of the meats’ disappearance from the collective diet in the Val di Vara, the initial lack of culinary techniques suggesting that the meat of the animal had long since disappeared from La Spezia tables. Similar ideas were articulated by a local professional chef in Varese Ligure when discussing the difference between ‘traditional’ and ‘popular’ cuisine:

They might become 'traditional' as there will continue to be many of the animals around here. But at the moment, we cannot really call them 'traditional' as the wild boar are relatively new to the area, they were introduced in the late 1950s and had been absent for a long time before. Also at the beginning there were not many wild boar in the area and so they were part of the communal diet. Now it is a meat that is often requested by our clients, many like it, particularly tourists.

(Matteo, Varese Figure, 2010)

These words highlight the fascinating idea that a prolonged absence of a key ingredient can lead to its disappearance from the repertoire of communal culinary techniques, its re-entry, as epitomized by the other communicated approaches, being based on a process of trial and error, the results neither immediately nor consistently successful, or to the general liking of everyone:

How did I learn to cook wild boar? I will have heard somebody from something from somebody, then you try, you try, but many times it would not be very good. In fact he (Bartolomeo) never ate it again! Today I have cooked some because my son Stefano is coming up to eat. Stefano likes it, but Bartolomeo does not. (Elsa, San Carlo, 2010)

Whilst of course no type of food is unanimously liked by all, it would appear that in the early years following the reappearance of the wild boar in the Val di Vara, many were curious and excited about the prospect of sampling the meat, despite some initial apprehensions:

We had a restaurant up there where we were always cooking game, and I remember the first night when we offered wild boar, a wild boar that weighed between 70 and 80 kgs and was shot above Sesta Godana. This night 85 or 90 people came to eat, half of which said that they did not like wild boar, those saying that they did not like it having already tried it. But by the end of the night they had eaten

all of it! I didn't understand because I said that they do not have to eat it if they don't like it, but all tried it and finished the lot. (Marco, Sesta Godana, 2010)

Techniques for cooking the meat developed in tandem with the increasing number of wild boar being hunted in the Val di Vara, the understanding of how to best prepare the meat correlating with its availability:

Yes, I like it very much! Before there was not a 'wild boar culture' and therefore it was not well known how to cook it, but by now they have been here for about 50 years and so a new way of cooking and using the meat of the wild boar are developing, as well as the making of sausages and salami. In Maremma and in Sardinia for example, there has always been a 'wild boar culture' and so they treat it in all manner of different ways. (Rina, Varese Ligure, 2010)

Whilst the first attempts at cooking wild boar were by widely admitted to have been somewhat 'hit and miss', given the undoubtedly enormous amount of the meat brought to her by hunters, preparations and recipes were developed;

I would roast it, then I would boil it as a stew. I would also roast the leg. Now you don't get a whole leg as the hunters cut the meat into small pieces so that they can all take a bit of everything. It was good, I would mix all the flavours, rosemary, bay leaf, a bit of garlic, a bit of spice, with the pancetta and a bit of lard, and then spread it well over the meat that I make lots of little holes in. (Elsa, S. Carlo, 2010)

Interestingly, it would appear that the way in which wild boar is prepared is very much shaped by the way the meat is divided amongst those who participated in the hunt, the division of the meat into smaller pieces being perhaps best suited to the preparation of stews rather than roasts and the like. In addition, such recipes appear to be representative

of the way in which wild boar is now generally prepared, particularly in terms of the herbs used, and the importance attached to:

You put the wild boar into marinade the night before. Cut the meat in pieces, put it in a bowl covered by wine and add bay leaf, onion, rosemary, garlic cloves and peppercorns. The day after, drain the meat in a colander and place in a pan so as to remove any remaining water. After this, add some oil, bay leaf, rosemary, chopped carrot and onion, and brown and add stock until cooked. It should be well cooked and well browned. You can add olives too. (Simona, Varese Ligure, 2011)

Throughout the interviews conducted concerning the way in which wild boar is now cooked in the Val di Vara, it would appear that preparation methods have changed in relation to the perceived change in the taste of the meat, as well as the peculiar smell and the smell it used to have:

They do not smell like wild boar anymore, also when they are cooked, they have changed, when you boiled it, before they had a very strong smell, like urine, stronger, now it smells like a broth, it doesn't smell like before. (Elsa, San Carlo, 2010)

In addition to this change in the smell of the wild boar meat during its cooking, the taste is also said to have changed, becoming less 'gamey' overtime, something that interviewees generally attributed to the animals having become mixed with domestic pigs over time:

There are those that say that the wild boar of today are different to those that were originally introduced because they have become mixed with pigs, and that they get bigger as a result, some saying that the meat is also better to eat. The taste of the meat is definitely less strong, but the recipes have not changed. (Giacomo, Varese Ligure, 2010)

As well as the suggestion that the changing taste of the wild boar meat has changed over time because of the species having become mixed with domestic pigs, interviewees also considered that these changes could have been the result of the changes in their habitat and therefore diet:

Wild boar meat was very wild, but not so much now because they say they have become quite domesticated, they are mixing with other animals and so eat more domestic things like fruit, chestnuts, maize and corn, and so we say that the taste of the meat is different to before. It is now sweeter, less wild, and closer to that of pork. But that recipes are more or less the same, for example we make a boiled stew and roast it with potatoes. (Andreina, Scurtabò, 2011)

However, alongside these explanations concerning the changing taste of the wild boar meat, there are some slightly more cynical interpretations: «I don't believe that the taste of the meat is changing, perhaps they have finally learned how to cook it!» (Giuseppe, Genova, 2011).

Furthermore, in addition to the changing taste of the wild boar over time, changes variously attributed to the changing diet of the animals (inevitably tied to landscape changes), developing knowledge and abilities in the butchering and culinary preparation of the meat, and the potential origins of the animals themselves, it is commonly asserted that the change in the taste of the meat is the result of the interbreeding of the 'wild' and 'domestic' pigs.

Similar to the way in which the taste of the meat is thought by many to have changed as the wild boar have become mixed with domestic pigs, many interviewees attributed the increase in the scale of damage to the changing genetic identity of the animals, as well as for changes in what they eat. For example,

Grapes and plums are now their absolute favourites. Also, they didn't eat potatoes before, they just ruined your ground looking for something else, but left the tubers. They only started eating them when

they mixed with pigs, more or less since around the mid 1970s.  
(Renato, Valletti, 2010)

Furthermore, related to the suggestion that the mixing of wild boar with domestic pigs has resulted in changes in their diet and therefore the type of damage, many interviewees also considered this hybridization to have led to the animals being less fearful of humans, therefore coming into closer proximity with anthropogenic areas:

[The damage] has got worse because they're not just wild boars anymore, they are a mix of wild boar and pig. Before they would avoid houses, but now they have no fear. They love turned ground, and if they can't find any in away from villages, they are not afraid to get closer to the houses and feed there. These are not wild boar, they are pigs! They breed like pigs, eat like pigs, they behave like pigs. (Aldo, Tavarone, 2010)

## 6. Conclusion

Bringing together these previously overlooked areas of discussion in oral historical and qualitative fieldwork interviews makes it possible to (re-)explore certain ideas distinctly pertinent to the species history-historical animal geography of the wild boar in the valley, specifically in terms of the place and prominence of the animals' meat in local, traditional food cultures and associated foodways.

In doing so, this chapter makes three key arguments. Firstly, that the wild boar is a conceptually, physically and biologically mobile species. Physically, animals move, and wild boar are no exception, this movement into areas in which whilst indigenous 'natives' but historical absent – both within and beyond the parameters of collective memory and oral testimony – their perceived status as autochthonous species is muddled by their prolonged period of absence, such an idea that problematises the consideration of their consumption as a 'traditional'. This physical mobility is closely related to ideas concerning the biolog-

ical mobility of the species, in that perceptions and understandings of the precise genetic identity of the animals found in the valley are the subject of some speculation, the extent to which they are considered to be «*apros vel porcos silvestres*» or domestic pigs revealing a sliding scale in their biological ‘status’ between the fixities of ‘scientifically’ categorised species. Whilst there will no doubt be genetic data revealing the genomic identity of the animals, within the scope of this argument, if not of lesser importance, such ‘proof’ is certainly of lesser ‘human’ interest, given that people respond first to the animals they perceive and co-dwell alongside, their interactions based on direct observations and subsequently tempered responses. Extending from this notion of the biological mobility of the species, finally, the animals in the valley are therefore conceptually mobile, in that the aforementioned mobility clouds consideration of the species as ‘wild’ or ‘domestic’, or, as is more likely the case, a slippery state in between these fixed ‘states’, hybridisation of animals between ‘wild’ and ‘domestic’ cousins problematising distinction between the ‘natural’ and the ‘cultural’.

Secondly, despite a now lengthy presence in the study area, wild boar meat, whilst undoubtedly ‘physically’ local – as in abundant throughout the locality – this fixed presence has yet to transform into perceptions of the meat as a ‘traditional’ foodway. This relates to the aforementioned understanding of the animal as a physical mobile species; wild boar returned following a prolonged period of absence. They moved into the area, and this gap in their inhabiting the area has acted to detach their ‘local-ness’ from their ‘traditional-ness’. This implicates ideas as to how long an absence ruptures a ‘tradition’ – albeit caveated by a not inconsiderable assumption that this existed previously – and by extension how long a presence within a local gastro-alimentary is required to (re-)establish or (re-)invent a tradition. Such ideas are paramount considerations not only in terms of food and foodway research but more broadly in terms of conceptions of diet and culinary phenomena that are of increasingly promoted as examples of intangible cultural heritage.

Thirdly, the wild boar – like all non-human animals – are physically comprised of muscle, fat, sinew, cartilage, and tendon, encasing and stretched over skeletal bone structures; they are ‘red in tooth and claw’. These physical, fleshy assemblages do not become ‘meat’ until they become embroiled into inter-species interactions with humans. Animal meat is a cultural creation despite its earthy grisliness, its consumption negotiated by way of preparations and recipes – as ‘rites of passage’ – intended to render the meat more palatable and closer aligned with other gastro-alimentary traditions. Preparation transforms the flesh into meat and recipes thereafter into food. Animal meat is the product of animal death, death inflicted on them by non-animal humans, human culture thereafter turning animal meat into human food. Human food depends on what potential animal meat there is, animal presence a defining factor in whether the physical animal becomes animal meat becoming human food. As such, animal meat must be considered an ‘environmental resource’ that is activated by human cultural norms and behaviours, gastro-alimentary norms and behaviours that are temporally and spatially situated and specific.



## Per una storia dell'alimentazione nella Terra di Varese Ligure

Sandro Lagomarsini\*

Quelli che seguono sono semplici appunti, utili forse per impostare – in una seria ricerca futura – una storia dell'alimentazione in quella che da qualche anno chiamiamo 'terra di Varese Ligure'<sup>1</sup>. L'espressione è applicata dallo storico Antonio Cesena al quadrilatero che ha come vertici la punta del Monte Zatta, il passo di Centocroci, la sommità del Gottero e la sella di Velva. In questo spazio si collocano osservazioni e notizie di questo testo.

La storiografia più recente ha fatto scoprire l'importanza delle ricerche sui micro-fenomeni. Da questo punto di vista, una lettura più contestualizzata dei documenti disponibili fa emergere una quantità insperata di informazioni<sup>2</sup>.

Disegnando un quadro dai contorni mitici ma di sostanziale verità storica, Cesena parla di una abbondanza alimentare che va collocata in

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\* Museo contadino di Cassego.

<sup>1</sup> A. Cesena, Accademia Lunigianese di Scienze Giovanni Capellini, *Relatione dell'origine et successi della terre di Varese descritta dal r. p. Antonio Cesena l'anno 1558*, Accademia Lunigianese di Scienze Giovanni Capellini, La Spezia 1993.

<sup>2</sup> S. Lagomarsini, *La Relatione di Antonio Cesena: una lettura contestualizzata*, in «Memorie della Accademia Lunigianese di Scienze Giovanni Capellini», Vol. LXIV-LXV (1994-95) Scienze storiche e morali.

un lungo periodo, praticamente dal XIII secolo fino alla fine del XV secolo e anche oltre.

L'ossatura degli scambi economici è costituita dai prodotti dell'allevamento ed è sostanzialmente l'abbondanza di carne e di formaggio che determina un effetto calmierante sui prezzi di tutte le merci. Per un'epoca non precisata, precedente il XVI secolo, egli elenca:

uno paio di buoi, per belli che fussero stati, non sarebbero valuti più di quattro scudi,	
uno castrato grasso	10 in 12 soldi,
una vacca	un ducato,
una pecora	soldi sei,
una capra	soldi otto,
una quarta di grano	soldi 5 <sup>3</sup> .

Anche ai suoi tempi (è nato nel 1507) Cesena ha comprato alcune vacche con vitello per sette lire l'una (lasciandole però in socida)<sup>4</sup>. Ha anche visto comprare la «mezzarola di vino della nostra valle» per dieci soldi (mezza lira), il «rubbo di formaggio per diece soldi» (cioè poco più di un soldo al chilo) e le uova «due al denaro»<sup>5</sup>.

Se questa è la situazione di abituale abbondanza alimentare, non è difficile credere all'arrivo di più ondate migratorie dalla Riviera. Secondo Cesena, la gente era spinta dalla miseria della Riviera e attratta dalla buona fama della valle, poiché 'il volgo' predicava «l'abondanza delli luoghi, la fertilità de' novi paesi, e la pinguedine de' larghi, abondevoli e potenti pascoli»<sup>6</sup>. Cesena aggiunge ancora che

<sup>3</sup> Cesena, *Relatione* cit. p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Ivi, p. 19.

in quelli tempi non si lavoravano terreni se non pochi, bastandogli raccogliere tanto quanto era uso per loro; il che facevano con poco lavoro, rendendo, come di sopra si è detto, venti per uno, e perché le vettuaglie erano a tanto vil prezzo, perciocché non valevano quasi niente, le pareva assai miglior guadagno il tenere gran somma di armenti e gregge<sup>7</sup>.

Del resto, Cesena sa che nei tempi antichi a Caranza abitavano i mezzadri dei «marchesi di Lunegiana»<sup>8</sup>. E noi sappiamo per altre vie che prima del 1143 i figli di Conone di Vezzano possedevano a Caranza due mansi (poderi) concessi dall'arcivescovo di Genova<sup>9</sup>.

I campi di indagine a questo punto diventano numerosi. Per i tempi antichi, Cesena non quantifica quantità e prezzi delle castagne, ma dà un forte rilievo all'arrivo di nuove varietà<sup>10</sup>. Se mettiamo insieme la puntigliosa registrazione del fluttuare del prezzo del grano – mese per mese – negli anni 1540-49 con l'osservazione che chiude la descrizione dell'estate 1540 («il raccolto poi delle castagne fu tanto abbondante quanto fusse mai per altro tempo stato»)<sup>11</sup> non è azzardato considerare questi testi come l'eco di una discussione su quale orientamento dare all'autonomia alimentare per quanto riguarda i farinacei. La scelta, in effetti, ci fu: aumentare al massimo la produzione di farina di castagna.

Che altra spiegazione si potrebbe dare, infatti, allo sviluppo che il castagneto ha da metà '500 in poi in quasi tutte le frazioni di Varese Ligure? È vero che, ancora nel 1628, gli Statuti di Comuneglia consentono di tenere 12 maiali per famiglia, da alimentare con la ghianda e

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<sup>7</sup> Ivi, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Ivi, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> P. Tomaini, *Varese Ligure, insigne Borgo e antica Pieve*, Città di Castello: a.c. grafiche 1978, p. 203.

<sup>10</sup> Cesena, *Relatione* cit. p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi, p. 106.

le frasche del cerro<sup>12</sup>. Per quasi cinquant'anni si discuterà poi sul modo migliore di raccogliere le ghiande (gli articoli sulla raccolta verranno ripetutamente modificati)<sup>13</sup>. Ma ai primi del '900 i toponimi Cerro, Cerreta, Cerreto non hanno quasi più corrispondenza con l'assetto vegetazionale, perché il castagno – in trecento anni – ha soppiantato il cerro quasi dappertutto. Nuovi boschi di castagno vengono impiantati fino alla fine della prima guerra mondiale, seminando ai margini del castagneto le ultime castagne del raccolto, per poi trapiantare e innestare le piantine negli anni successivi.

Nonostante le pressioni degli economisti agrari e la propaganda conseguente, la coltivazione del grano è rifiutata per tutto l'800 dalla montagna varesina, come da tutta la montagna italiana. Le nuove terrazze vengono seminate a segale, che addomestica il terreno e offre anche la paglia utilizzabile per il tetto delle «cascine») e poi destinate alla meliga e alle patate, (che arrivano in zona ai primi dell'800: nel 1799 il parroco di San Pietro Vara si lamenta che i suoi parrocchiani non si decidono a seminare tuberi)<sup>14</sup>. Nel 1915, secondo un aneddoto datato, ci sono famiglie di Cassego in cui non si consuma «pane bianco» (di grano) da molti anni.

È importante l'apporto alimentare della farina di vecchia. Considerata in montagna nei secoli passati come coltivazione di emergenza, la vecchia (*Vicia sativa* e *Vicia narbonense*) è stata trovata 'coltivata' in Italia dal ricercatore russo Vavilov ancora attorno agli anni '20<sup>15</sup>.

Del resto, negli anni '70 del Novecento, si poteva osservare che l'uso della farina bianca per i «testaroli» si riduceva in modo progressivo sa-

<sup>12</sup> Archivio di Stato di Genova (da qui in poi A.S.G.), A. S. 301.

<sup>13</sup> A.S.G., A. S., 301.

<sup>14</sup> *L'Inchiesta del 1799*, Memorie della Accademia Lunigianese di Scienze Giovanni Capellini, La Spezia 2003, p. 162.

<sup>15</sup> N. Vavilov, *L'origine delle piante coltivate*, (1926), Edizione italiana 'pentàgora' 2015, p. 170.

lendo da Varese alla cima dei monti: in alto, i testaroli erano schiacciate di sola farina di castagna. Verifiche fatte dagli storici hanno dato ragione al contadino di montagna e alle sue scelte: un convegno di studio a Parigi ha accertato che il bilancio energetico complessivo è a favore della coltivazione del castagno rispetto a quella del grano, senza contare le ricadute ambientali<sup>16</sup>. Ricordo qui, ma è cosa ben nota, che la farina di castagna si consuma in combinazione con i grassi animali, formando un complesso la cui validità nutrizionale è accertata. Un proverbio dei monti dice: «Vèndite in cianelin, ma càtite in purselin»<sup>17</sup>.

Non va dimenticato l'apporto alimentare della caccia e della pesca. Cadendo sotto la diretta giurisdizione della Repubblica di Genova, i Consolati della Comunità di Varese seppero difendere con successo i diritti di caccia (era il 1553) già accordati dai Fieschi<sup>18</sup>. Si comprende allora come l'alimentazione della valle, pur irrigidendosi per certi versi nella ricerca dell'autonomia produttiva, costituisca una solida base per la resistenza alle ricorrenti epidemie, che fanno meno danni dove le popolazioni sono meglio nutrite. Dalla metà del XVII secolo in poi, le epidemie colpirono pochissimo i monti di Varese Ligure. La peste del 1656-57, che annientò il 70% della popolazione di Genova, non infierì contro le nostre comunità. Abbiamo in zona alcuni dipinti datati 1657 a firma di Giuseppe Catto cognato di Bernardo Strozzi: egli li ha eseguiti con ogni probabilità durante la sua fuga dalla Riviera.

Corrisponde alla abbondanza alimentare l'aumento della popolazione. Lo dicono in primo luogo le testimonianze sull'emigrazione. Alla fine del '600 un gruppo di lavoratori di «San Lorenzo della Torricella» (cioè di Scurtabò) si trova a Roma e invia alla chiesa parrocchiale del

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<sup>16</sup> S. Lagomarsini, *Vita quotidiana nelle campagne*, in *Storia illustrata di Genova*, fascicolo 56, Genova 1994, p. 890.

<sup>17</sup> 'Vendi piuttosto un piccolo campo (una terrazza) e compra un maialino da allevare'.

<sup>18</sup> Tomaini, *Varese Ligure* cit., p. 42.

paese un reliquiario d'argento, opera di Giovanni Giardini, uno dei migliori argentieri romani dell'epoca. Ai primi dell'800, Comuneglia ha colonie di lavoratori sparse in tutta Italia, da Napoli, a Ferrara, a Roma, a Vercelli, a Venezia. Lo dicono, ancora, gli episodi che testimoniano lo scampato pericolo durante le epidemie ottocentesche. Quasi ogni chiesa delle parrocchie montane conserva un argento con didascalia o una processione di ringraziamento per lo scampato pericolo del colera, che ha mietuto molte vittime estive tra il 1839 e il 1853: sembra sia stata chiara nelle popolazioni dell'epoca – al di là della interpretazione devota – la constatazione di una minore incidenza del morbo sulla montagna.

Il quadro precedente, anche se complessivamente positivo, non cancella il pericolo costituito dalle grandi carestie. Quando l'area di carestia è molto estesa, un sistema chiuso non sa difendersi bene. Il Cesena ricorda che nel 1540 arrivò per nave, dalle Fiandre, una partita di segale ammuffita destinata a Varese<sup>19</sup>. Per il 1527, l'anno della grande carestia, egli parla diffusamente di un pane fatto con «radice di felice»: «era amaro e con gran fatica si poteva deglutirlo»<sup>20</sup>. La stessa cosa racconta il parroco di Comuneglia, don Baroni, per il 1817 (egli scrive: «pane di ferecce»)<sup>21</sup>. La tradizione orale dice che in quell'anno si provò a mangiare qualunque tipo di vegetale; non si riuscì a cuocere il «pavé», una graminacea durissima; si trovarono ottimi, invece, i germogli di ciliegio, domestico o selvatico (il ciliegio è ricco di pectina, da sempre usata come legante per le marmellate).

Frequentando i pascoli con i ragazzi di montagna, fino agli anni '60 del secolo scorso si potevano osservare i residui di una scienza alimentare della sopravvivenza, che comprendeva il consumo delle fagiole (i semi del faggio) e gli immancabili cimi di rovo.

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<sup>19</sup> *Relatione* cit., p. 105.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> Cronaca parrocchiale, manoscritto, Archivio parrocchiale di Comuneglia.

Nelle annate più dure tra gli anni '20 e gli anni '30, i bambini pastori succhiavano il latte direttamente dalle capre, 'razziavano' (con accortezza) le prime patate (da cuocere poi in un letto di ginestre secche) e le prime castagne.

Considerata oggi come una 'riviviscenza', la raccolta delle erbe spontanee primaverili – utilizzate con diversi tipi di preparazione e cottura – ha certamente avuto in passato una funzione importante per la assunzione di sali minerali.

Una lettura sistematica dei registri parrocchiali sopravvissuti a incendi e dispersioni potrebbe rivelare la quantità e la composizione delle offerte in natura fatte alle chiese della valle lungo gli ultimi secoli. Si potrà forse capire qualcosa anche dell'andamento delle produzioni come dei prezzi di mercato.

Si potrà anche, forse, risolvere un piccolo mistero. Dalla alimentazione della montagna è scomparsa da molto tempo la «mistura» (miscuglio di diverse specie di semi farinacei interi). Fino ad ora, l'unica documentazione della sua esistenza, negli anni attorno al 1830, si trova in un piccolo registro di spese comunitarie che si è salvato presso una famiglia di Cassego e si trova ora nell'archivio del Museo Contadino di Cassego.





## Afterword

### Local foodways and foodscapes: back to materiality

Diego Moreno\*

In the vast area of food studies originating within the technical-agronomic, biological, and medical disciplines<sup>1</sup>, the ‘Gastronomic Sciences’ have gained increasing visibility, a ‘field’ that pursues – or have finally achieved – their own unity through interdisciplinary research, although the basic links with ecological and environmental disciplines remains undisputed. In the discussion of gastronomic heritage(s), in particular concerning the established links with the bio-geo-physical environment at the local scale, the interpretative models – and consequently the applications and political choices – are largely borrowed from purely naturalistic proposals and approaches matured in the biological-environmental conservation sciences. In this perspective, on the one hand the bio-geo-physical environment is observed as a purely ‘natural’ (a-historical)<sup>2</sup> space and, on the other hand, the link established between the latter and the «everyday practices through which people feed themselves»<sup>3</sup> is read in co-evolutionary terms.

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the current agri-food literature.

<sup>2</sup> And with it its ecological functioning, *i.e.* its ecology.

<sup>3</sup> R.R. Sonnino, P.L. Milbourne, *Food system transformation: a progressive place-*

Here, we discuss these two aspects together with their consequences regarding the historical characterization of foodways and foodscapes.

The natural sciences and biological-environmental conservation lack a critical vision that recognizes the ‘historical condition’ of the present land cover as an artefact. Such an ‘historical condition’ does not mean that it has elapsed and past, but rather that it is conditioned in the cumulative effects of previous changes in land use/land vegetation cover in the present ecology of the site.

When studying the environment at a local scale, the effects of previous social practices of appropriation and activation of environmental resources (land use) are present – at least in archaeological traces<sup>4</sup> – in the ecology of the selected studied sites. Indeed, until proven otherwise, these spaces and their environmental resources have already been occupied – in more or less recent historical ages but traceable back to protohistoric and prehistoric ages – by sequences of different ways of production, and consumption of food; that is the historical sequences of situated foodways. The biophysical component(s) of the sites – the ecological relationships that structure it – cannot today be assumed and compared as if they were in ‘natural’ conditions, that is, not manipulated nor unimpeded.

As acknowledged by historical ecology, the physical environment and its ecological functioning must be intended as a special type of archaeological artifact. Environmental systems imagined ‘untouched’ disappeared from planetary ecology long before the adoption of agriculture – the conventional ‘Neolithic Revolution’ *e.g.* 7-10 Kyears BP in Europe – at least since unconfined fire practices were used more or less systematically as a means of controlling terrestrial ecosystems. Thus,

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*based approach*, in «Local Environment», 27 (7) 2022, pp. 915-926 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2022.2084723>

<sup>4</sup> For example, in determining the stratigraphy of soils, the biodiversity of *e.g.* pedofauna or, in the land cover, of the spatial distribution of plant populations, habitats, etc.

for example, for the entire Australian continent, the transition from a 'natural' to a 'cultural' fire regime has been traced back to 40,000 years BP<sup>5</sup> based on pollen diagrams. However, for at least 300–400 thousand years, the practices of confined fire<sup>6</sup> have allowed human groups to develop increasingly differentiated foodways. Obviously, their traces are today totally elusive or simply still little studied.

In other words, the bio-geo-physical structure of the site under observation presents elements – or traces of ecosystem components – of a number of previous situated foodscape(s): this peculiar environmental heritage contributing to the current ecology of those same spaces and resources (*e.g.* present site biodiversity) preserving valuable evidence for the historical characterization of current local food productions and their links to the place.

Similar simplifications affect the dynamics of the socio-cultural components of the foodscape. Both the environmental and cultural aspects are included in the same abstract (*i.e.* site-less, placeless) and atemporal global evolutionary mechanisms. A forced convergence has been proposed through the idea of co-evolution, perhaps with the intention of updating but without resolving the underpinned Man/Nature dualism. The weight of this structural biology is also recognizable in the definition of the food heritage promoted, for example, by UNESCO conservation policy as a 'bio-cultural' heritage and furthermore applied to rural heritage and landscapes. A first consequence falls on the indeterminacy of the concepts developed to reconnect the material aspects to the intangible ones that are, in both cases, referred to the environmental and food

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<sup>5</sup> More recent research dates the transition to a cultural fire regime in the Indian subcontinent to 50,000 years ago see: D. Kumar, R. Samrat, P. Sanyalin, *The first evidence of controlled use of fire by prehistoric humans during the Middle Paleolithic phase from the Indian subcontinent*, in «Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology», 562 (2021), 110151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.palaeo.2020.110151>

<sup>6</sup> W. Roebroeks, P. Villa, *On the earliest evidence for habitual use of fire in Europe*, in «PNAS», 108(15) (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1018116108>

heritages. The transformations of the notions of «Local Knowledge» into «Traditional Ecological Knowledge» and finally, as adopted in the IP-BES and UNESCO documents, as «Indigenous and Local Knowledge and Practices», must probably refer to this unsolved ambiguity. It is no coincidence that last formula was considered effective because, whilst it subtracts the previous notion of local knowledge from an indefinite temporal condition (the ‘traditional’), it brings local knowledge back, yet not to its own experiential and therefore historical state but rather ‘adaptive’ (to given environmental conditions) *e.g.* ‘adaptive knowledge’<sup>7</sup>.

Similar reductions due to biologism ideology are based – as mentioned above – on the choice of inserting the models of the variations of the components of the local foodscape into general co-evolutionary mechanisms. The cultural and environmental components appear symmetrically arranged and in an abstract dynamic relationship that makes use of metaphorical language. The reference to co-evolution, generally, imprisons all historical changes, discontinuities and variations (here we define historical the discontinuities actually – materially – intervened in the local system and in daily actions and practices and their recognized environmental consequences) – in the rhetoric of «biological symbiosis», «adapted diets», «adapted knowledge», and so forth. These formulas lead to the elimination – as noted for the bio-geo-physical dynamics – of the social historical depth of processes, individual choices, local diversity, and conflicts. The dominant co-evolutionary scheme does not permit the emergence of the options matured in the historical experience: rights that have shaped the local practices of food production and activation of the sites’ resources

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<sup>7</sup> E. Gunilla, A. Olsson, *Shaping of food landscapes from the Neolithic to Industrial period. Changing agro-ecosystems between three agrarian revolutions* in J. Zeunert and T. Waterman (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Landscape and Food*, 2018, p. 35. The political value of the assimilation between indigenous and local is clear. However, when it is applied to the European ethnological domain in historical periods, perhaps a greater finesse in the analysis of the social structure would be needed.

ecology. Studied at the local scale, the traces of practices' materiality can be outlined and reconstructed in the memory, the archives and now as well in the increasingly specialized evidence from environmental archeology. Up to now, data (or historical knowledge) has been relinquished which – in addition to serving the interpretation of the mechanisms and the material correlations of the local (situated) functioning of foodways and foodscapes – could find new applications in the management of these assets.

The proposal is to mature in the 'Gastronomic Sciences' a new historical approach that starts from the local scale attaining new generalizations – as suggested in the interdisciplinary works promoted by historical ecology and environmental archeology on local productions – and to offer an alternative path to the current risks of biologism. It should become increasingly evident that material processes can no longer be examined in a specialized way by the natural sciences, environmental conservation, or agronomic sciences without the awareness of the historical dimension being acquired in their analyses. Correspondingly, the new interest in materiality of processes shaping situated foodscapes should return to orienting the human sciences research developed in a critical interdisciplinary work.

To bring the historical approach back to an appropriate local scale, it seems essential to first reach a shared geographical definition of local foodscape as a topographical space practiced for the production and consumption of food. Adopting an interdisciplinary 'area study' of these local foodscapes, a conception of food production that goes beyond, as will be mentioned, the explicit agricultural practices is mandatory. Obviously, including hunting, fishing and gathering activities, but above all exploring all their multiple combinations (*e.g.* agro-sylvo-pastoral systems, etc.) which have been produced sequentially on the site over time. First of all, one should seriously consider the fact that agriculture is not – and above all has never been in history – the only way, technique or system available to procure food and foodstuffs. Nor, as we are used to think, an agriculture based and centered on the production of wheat. In food studies, looking for a

definition of local foodscapes, we find similar generalizing perspectives that go back to the formulations adopted in the economic-agronomic sciences in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Such a perspective currently applied both to the development of the global agro-industrial system and to the prospection of all local agricultural systems of the past. Such an interpretative grid was not valid even for the consumers in late-18<sup>th</sup> century Italy when John Symonds – one of the founders of neoclassical agronomic thought – noted in 1785 that only 10 people out of 100 ate bread made from wheat flour. Other bread-making genres – of which traces remain in the current local foodways – still had a large prevalence in the daily life of most of the inhabitants of the peninsula<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, mixed food production systems allowed unexpected developments in pre-agricultural societies and are increasingly precisely documented by archaeological research, such as in, for example, Mesolithic settlements. In the end, it appears completely intuitive that the conditions for the development of cereal agriculture have materialized within hunter-gatherer societies.

To conclude, it is not matter of coincidence that the collection of food studies in this book was dedicated by the curators to Osvaldo Raggio, one of the historians who most oriented the multidisciplinary study of social practices (and consequently also their archaeological and geographical study) towards micro-historical analysis. Similarly, it is not matter of coin-

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<sup>8</sup> See p. 130 in M. Ambrosoli, *John Symonds. agricoltura e politica in Corsica ed Italia, 1765-1770*, Fondazione Agnelli Edizioni, Torino 1974. The different economic and environmental logics that opposed, for example, the production of chestnuts as an alternative to the bread-making of cereals (wheat) until the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been explored for the chestnut-growing valleys in eastern Liguria. D. Moreno, *Past multiple use of tree-land in the mediterranean Mountain. Experiments on the sweet chestnut culture*, in «Environmental History Newsletter», 2 (1990), pp. 37-49. Furthermore, minor grains and their mixtures were not consumed through bread-making processes but largely in the form of soups.

cidence the extensive reference in the introduction of this book to historical ecology as an approach to the study of foodways and foodscapes.

Both micro-history and the British historical ecology have emphasized the importance of spatial and temporal resolution in the study of productions inserted in local social contexts and their tangible environments (foodscapes). The dynamics highlighted in the study of the historical ecology of a site no longer allow the simple geometric multiscalarity linking the local, regional, planetary generalization because the effects of the manipulations of a practiced space (which have been defined as ecosystem activation practices) determine precisely the individuality that we strive to recognize in every local foodscape<sup>9</sup>.

Thanks also to the lessons of micro-history, new complementarities have been discovered between the geographical and archaeological approaches precisely in the pragmatic study of local food productions and their individual landscapes. Such methodological change that invested the two disciplinary fields has also found support of the environmental sciences every time that the study of ecosystem conservation maintained relations with geography and local history; this has happened in the tradition of multidisciplinary research on environmental conservation in Great Britain that developed historical ecology.

Restarting from the historical ecology of sites should change our understanding of the internal environmental relations of the ecosystem towards an historical ethnology to resume a formula that was also of Raggio<sup>10</sup>; one of the most interesting prospects of interdisciplinary research on the topographical spaces practiced for food production.

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<sup>9</sup> D. Moreno, 2020, *Storia applicata dell'ambiente. L'archeologia delle risorse ambientali e l'ecologia storica dei siti*, in «Quaderni Storici», 164(2) (2020).

<sup>10</sup> See A. Torre, O. Raggio (eds.), 2004, *In altri termini: etnografia e storia di una società di antico regime/Edoardo Grendi*, Feltrinelli 2004, and more recently and explicitly A. Torre (ed.), *Ethnography of the Commons*, in «Quaderni Storici», 168(3) (2021).





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*Collana Giano Bifronte*

1. Diego Moreno, *Dal documento al terreno. Storia e archeologia dei sistemi agro-silvo-pastorali*, a cura di Carlo Montanari, Maria Angela Guido, 2018; ISBN 978-88-94943-21-4, e-ISBN (pdf) 978-88-94943-22-1.
2. *La memoria del tempo... il tempo della memoria*, a cura di Leo Lecci, Santiago Montero Herrero, Maria Federica Petracchia, 2020; ISBN 978-88-97752-84-4, e-ISBN(pdf) 978-88-3618-035-6.
3. *I fiori di pietra del Cimitero Monumentale di Staglieno*, a cura di Davide Attolini, Chiara Povero, Gaia Righetti, Maria Angela Guido, 2022; ISBN 978-88-3618-144-5, e-ISBN (pdf) 978-88-3618-145-2.
4. *Situating foodways and foodscapes. Dalla tavola al terreno*, a cura di Roberta Cevasco, Valentina Pescini, Robert Hearn, 2023; ISBN 978-88-3618-227-5, e-ISBN (pdf) 978-88-3618-235-0.

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Il volume è il risultato di anni di collaborazioni tra l'Università degli Studi di Genova, l'Università di Nottingham e l'Università di Scienze Gastronomiche di Pollenzo sul terreno comune di un approccio interdisciplinare e critico al problema della localizzazione e caratterizzazione di foodscapes e foodways. I 16 casi di studio, proposti da storici, geografi, etnobotanici e archeologi, esplorano le molteplici relazioni tra produzioni locali e luoghi, intesi nella loro dimensione storica e topografica di spazi praticati, attingendo a una varietà di strumenti analitici e approcci metodologici ispirati alla microanalisi storico-geografica, all'ecologia storica e all'archeologia delle risorse ambientali.

*This volume is the result of years of collaboration between the University of Genoa, the University of Nottingham and the University of Gastronomic Sciences in the 'common ground' between critical interdisciplinary approaches to the problems concerning localization and the characterization of foodscapes and foodways. The 16 case studies - proposed by historians, geographers, ethnobotanists, and archaeologists - explore the multiple relationships between local production(s) and place(s), understood in the precise historical and topographical dimension of practiced spaces, drawing on a variety of different analytical tools and methodological approaches inspired by historical-geographical microanalysis, historical ecology and the archaeology of environmental resources.*

In copertina:

*In the Garden of the Villa Santa Catarina, Levanto, 1900*

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