

The Political, Cultural, and Dynastic History of the Farnese Family:

Between the End of the Western Schism and the
Outbreak of the Italian Wars, 1417-1494



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Short Abstract

This thesis investigates the strategies for the extension and perpetuation of power employed by the Farnese in Quattrocento Italy. It argues the preconditions of their success lay in their internal organisation, active government of their patrimony, and in the adoption of solutions to overcome the perils of partible inheritance. It addresses the decisions that governed the creation of dynastic and pseudo-dynastic ties and, above all, how the Farnese strengthened and maintained their kinship network. This network provided the basis for interactions in the political sphere on a peninsular level and within the Papal States. The argument is forwarded that the Farnese were at the heart of developments which saw an increase in political connections established across state boundaries, forcing historians to rethink the current consensus on state formation in Italy. Of particular relevance were the Farnese's ties to the Medici in Florence, ties that grew in importance as the century progressed. Within the Papal States, the Farnese followed a policy of support for pontifical power, a policy as much perceived as a political tradition inherited from their ancestors as a practical approach to finding a working relation with the newly-established papacy in Rome after the end of the Western Schism, suggesting that traditional notions of papal-noble antagonism need to be replaced by a model that stresses collaboration. Moreover, the Farnese were among the first to profit from the growth in number of curial offices as they increasingly focused their ambitions on placing sons in the Church, ultimately leading to Alessandro Farnese's nomination as cardinal. Finally, the Farnese's patronage on Isola Bisentina and the creation of a family mausoleum, Franciscan friary, and sacred landscape are revealing of mid-century developments in devotional practices and illuminate the Farnese's self-perception as a dynasty rooted in space and time, and their fabrication of dynastic memory.

Long Abstract

This thesis addresses the Farnese's fifteenth-century history when the basis was laid for their rise to power with the election of Alessandro Farnese as Pope Paul III in 1534. It argues that the Farnese's success cannot simply be ascribed to Giulia Farnese's role as papal mistress, but that the Farnese had been part of the Papal States' baronial elite at the start of the century and managed to perpetuate and extend their power throughout the Quattrocento. This may come as a surprise considering that the end of the Western Schism and the election of Pope Martin V in 1417 marked the start of a, albeit protracted, development in which pontifical authority was re-established across the papacy's temporal dominions. Indeed, it is generally held that fifteenth-century Italy, and the Papal States in particular, witnessed several processes of state formation that decreased the scope for noble influence and power. It is argued that central authorities, whether in Italy's princely states or republics, managed to extend their power in the periphery at the expense of the nobility through innovations in governmental bureaucracy and increased financial and military expenditure. Further innovations in diplomacy were supposed to have reduced the scope of baronial families to participate in the ongoing conversations and negotiations over the future of Italy, a development that was enshrined in the treaties collectively known as the Peace of Lodi (1454) and exacerbated by the increasingly frequent use of permanent ambassadors between the major powers.

This thesis proposes instead that the Farnese were able to profit from the return of the papacy to Rome, and shows that their case provides a powerful example of the extensive patterns of papal-noble collaboration that characterised the century. Noble dynasties were invaluable allies to the papacy, and in areas where pontifical authority was near-absent, noble mediation remained important for the functioning of papal government, and also in the papacy's relations with neighbouring states baronial families like the Farnese played a key role. Moreover, the Farnese were able to exploit their vast dynastic network that spanned most of Italy as, parallel to internal processes of state formation, the interconnections between political actors across the various Italian states became a dominant factor in Quattrocento Italian political history. These arguments are unfolded over the course of five

chapters. The first four chapters work outwards from the Farnese's internal organisation and their patrimony's government, through the establishment and fostering of dynastic ties, to their external politics. The final chapter addresses the Farnese's patronage.

As public power was intimately connected to the possession of land and lordly jurisdictions in fifteenth-century Europe, Chapter 1 argues that the organisation of their patrimony's government and the regulation of their inheritance was one of the primary concerns for the Farnese as a dynasty. This chapter at first provides a rough overview of the Farnese's patrimony and the lordships in their dominions. Subsequently, it addresses partible inheritance as a viable succession strategy, but also a movement towards the gradual exclusion of eligible heirs, mainly female and illegitimate offspring. Moreover, this chapter analyses the moral framework and practical solutions adopted by the Farnese to avoid internal family strife and ensure that collective ownership of the patrimony remained a unifying rather than divisive force. The chapter also stresses the importance of negotiations with successive pontiffs to reconfirm investitures and thus remove any concerns for future inheritance and secure the horizontal transfer of lordships between different branches of the family. It analyses the Farnese's economic relations with nearby cities and the role of citizenship that ensured ready access to Italian markets for the livestock and agricultural produce of the Farnese patrimony. Central to such relations with nearby communes were the Farnese's dynastic and patronage ties with the patrician families who dominated the communal councils, governmental institutions, and informal decision-making processes. This was especially true for cities near the Farnese patrimony such as Viterbo and Orvieto, although the Farnese's methods differed little when they established ties in Siena and Florence. On the whole, the assessment of the Farnese's wealth and sources of financial income provides insight into the solid economic foundations that underpinned their social, political and military influence.

The second chapter focuses on the means through which (pseudo-)dynastic ties were created, what considerations played a role in the decision to conclude marriages, and how, once concluded, these ties were maintained, strengthened, and represented. It particularly addresses the crucial

position of women in connecting dynasties, their active role in noble sociability, the parallel networks that they maintained among themselves, and the choices that lay behind the decision to place daughters in convents. This chapter therefore draws together strands from social and gender history, as well as art, architecture, and material culture. On the whole it is argued that the Farnese's efforts in these areas were firmly traditional, even conservative. Explanations for their success cannot be attributed to a meticulously planned and ruthlessly pursued marriage strategy, but need to be sought in other areas, particularly the Farnese's political links to other Italian powers and their relationship with the papacy.

Chapter 3 then deals with how the Farnese's dynastic connections came to fruition and shaped their peninsula-wide political action in Quattrocento Italy. Political traditions of affiliation and alliance tied the Farnese particularly to Florence and the Medici, and these connections intensified as the century progressed. This chapter shows how the collaboration between the Farnese and the Medici had its origins in the business relations that connected mercenary-captains to the world of finance in Tuscany, from which developed more personal and intimate ties that were given shape through the nomination of Cosimo de' Medici as godfather to Pier Luigi I Farnese and the personal friendship that existed between Angelo III Farnese and Giovanni de' Medici. Indeed, these ties only gained in importance as the young Ranuccio XVIII Farnese took up military service in Florence and became a trusted condottiere for Lorenzo de' Medici. This chapter therefore also provides insight into how these ties were transferred along hereditary lines. This period of Farnese-Medici collaboration culminated in the negotiations that were started for a betrothal of Giulia Farnese's daughter, Laura, and Giuliano de' Medici, negotiations that were in the end overtaken by the French invasion of Italy in 1494. Nonetheless, the Farnese's connections to the Medici were only one element in a system of alliances that at various points included the Sforza of Milan, factions in the Republic of Siena, the Orsini in Rome, and the Neapolitan royal family, and that came to dominate Italian political affairs until it collapsed during the outbreak of the Italian Wars. The chapter makes a novel argument for the interconnectedness of the Italian peninsula as a political sphere and the prominence of baronial

families like the Farnese within it. These connections often proved of much greater political significance than developments that took place within states, if indeed it is possible at all to distinguish between them.

Chapter 4 turns to the Farnese's connections to the papacy and the papal court. The papacy figured so extensively in the Farnese's political life that it merits separate in-depth analysis. This chapter advances the case that the Farnese played a fundamental role in supporting the papacy after its return to Rome in the wake of the Western Schism. The Farnese did so not only as *condottieri* in the papal armies, but as temporal officers both in the Papal States as well as in the Kingdom of Naples on behalf of Martin V and Eugene IV. In this, they followed a framework of loyalty to the papal cause and devotion to the Church that built on their ancestors' Guelph tradition and for which in turn they expected (and received) rewards. The middle section of this chapter analyses the pontificate of Pius II in detail. It has often been propounded that Pius' pontificate was exemplary of papal efforts to reduce noble influence. Here the case is made that if indeed Pius' pontificate was exemplary, it was because it exhibited all the patterns of papal-noble collaboration that characterised the Quattrocento. The key to this reinterpretation lies in the deconstruction of Pius' *Commentaries* as a text that tried to discredit Pius' opponents, inflate his own role, and play down his reliance of baronial support from the Farnese and Orsini. Nevertheless, once read in the light of other sources, glimpses of Pius' reliance on and appreciation for baronial support are visible behind the veneer of his apologetic and polemic rhetoric. Finally, as the century progressed, the Farnese started investing in curial offices for their offspring, a development that instigated a truly novel phase in the Farnese's history that culminated in the creation of Alessandro Farnese as cardinal in 1493. It is argued that the Farnese's decision to pursue curial offices coincided with key developments in the papal Curia, most notably the growth in number of curial offices and their increasing venality under Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII. Furthermore, baronial families from the Papal States were among the first to invest and profit from these developments, and the Farnese particularly focused their efforts on these newly-created offices. It is also argued that Alessandro Farnese's career, albeit greatly aided by his sister's relationship to Pope Alexander VI, was

not as exceptional as has been hitherto accepted. When seen in the light of his older cousin Paolo's career, which far outshone that of Alessandro until the latter's promotion to the cardinalate, it is possible to conclude that the Farnese's foothold at the papal court was long in the making.

The final chapter focuses on the Farnese's shaping of their dynastic memory, specifically how it was given shape in their patronage of a family tomb on Isola Bisentina, as well as the surrounding church and affiliated Franciscan friary. The chapter places these in the context of artistic and societal developments around the middle of the fifteenth century, most prominently developments in devotional practices in Franciscan circles and a renewed interest in the topography and sites of the Holy Land. Moreover, even before his nomination as cardinal, Alessandro Farnese concerned himself with propagating Isola Bisentina's fame in literary texts. One of these texts, Paolo Cortesi's dialogue *De hominibus doctis*, was written by a Farnese family friend and takes the island as its setting. Alessandro is one of the interlocutors and the introduction of this dialogue reveals something of how the Farnese engaged with their ancestors' memory and utilised their mausoleum as a mnemonic device that triggered this memory. Furthermore, some suggestions are made as to the influence of the Farnese's Quattrocento patronage on the much more conspicuous and better-studied art, architecture, and literature produced at the Farnese's behest in the Cinquecento.

Ultimately, this thesis shows how the Farnese's example can inform the ongoing conceptual debates on the nature of dynasty when these are addressed in the conclusion. The conclusion draws together the strands from all chapters in which the outlines of my conceptual framework for dynasty were sketched, and presents the general conclusions. Finally, the conclusion looks at the Farnese's history beyond the Quattrocento and how decisions and strategies adopted during that century influenced the Farnese's sixteenth-century history well into Paul III's pontificate. The striking longevity of the ties that the Farnese created and inherited over the course of several generations may provide an impetus to recentring dynasty as a historical phenomenon that existed and thrived besides and in relation to the state.

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History sometimes acts as madly as heredity, and her most unpredictable performances are often her most glorious.

Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941)

What a tremendous fresco there is to paint, what a colossal human comedy and tragedy there is to write, on heredity, which is the very Genesis of families, and societies, and of the world.

Émile Zola, *Le Docteur Pascal* (1893)

List of Abbreviations

ACAT	Archivio Capitolare di Tuscania, Tuscania
ASC	Archivio Storico Capitolino, Rome
ASCOT	Archivio Storico Comunale di Tuscania, Tuscania
ASF	Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Florence
<i>DB</i>	<i>Dieci di Balìa</i>
<i>LC</i>	<i>Legazioni e Commissarie</i>
<i>MAP</i>	<i>Mediceo avanti il Principato</i>
<i>MR</i>	<i>Missive e Responsive</i>
<i>OP</i>	<i>Otto di Pratica</i>
ASL	Archivio di Stato di Lucca, Lucca
<i>Anziani</i>	<i>Anziani al tempo della libertà</i>
ASN	Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Naples
ASO	Archivio di Stato di Orvieto, Orvieto
ASR	Archivio di Stato di Roma, Rome
ASS	Archivio di Stato di Siena, Siena
<i>Concistoro</i>	<i>Lettere al concistoro</i>
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano), Vatican City
<i>Arm.</i>	<i>Armadio</i>
<i>Cam. Ap.</i>	<i>Camera Apostolica</i>
<i>Intr. Ex.</i>	<i>Introitus et Exitus</i>
<i>Reg. Aven.</i>	<i>Registri Avignonesi</i>
<i>Reg. Lat.</i>	<i>Registri Lateranensi</i>
<i>Reg. Vat.</i>	<i>Registri Vaticani</i>

ASVit	Archivio di Stato di Viterbo, Viterbo
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City
<i>Barb. Lat.</i>	<i>Barberiniani Latini</i>
<i>Ott. Lat.</i>	<i>Ottoboni Latini</i>
<i>Urb. Lat.</i>	<i>Urbinati Latini</i>
<i>Vat. Lat.</i>	<i>Vaticani Latini</i>
BCA	Biblioteca comunale degli Ardenti, Viterbo
BSS	Biblioteca di Santa Scolastica, Subiaco

Carteggio umanistico *Carteggio umanistico di Alessandro Farnese*, edited by Arsenio Frugoni (Florence, 1950).

DBI *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome, 1961-)

RIS *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (Città di Castello – Bologna, 1900-1975)

f./ff.	<i>folio/folios</i>	r.	<i>recto</i>
ed.	edited	v.	<i>verso</i>
Ms.	<i>Manuscritto</i>	vol.	volume

Introduction

In 1545, Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga complained to his cousin Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, in tones of affected scandalization: Pope Paul III Farnese (1534-1549) had invested his son, Pier Luigi, as Duke of Parma and Piacenza. This new Italian prince had sprouted up "in one night like a mushroom," he lamented.¹ Yet, papal families who established themselves in dukedoms were no mere fly-by-nights, and investigating their origins can provide insights into the strategies, networks, and institutions that enabled some families to succeed where others did not.² The Farnese's case is especially salient as it shows how a family of Quattrocento barons (as the Farnese were) could perpetuate, and even extend, their power in an era generally considered to be characterised by the growth of state influence at the expense of noble power.³ Furthermore, the period between the return of a single (mostly) uncontested papacy to Rome after the resolution of the Western Schism in 1417 and the outbreak of the Italian Wars in 1494 saw crucial developments in authority and lordship both within the Papal States and in its relation with other Italian states.⁴ These had repercussions for the Farnese's internal family organisation and inheritance strategies; they also guided the family's relationship with individual popes as well as the papacy as an institution. In this period, the groundwork was laid for the Farnese's pursuit of clerical office, which subsequently led to Alessandro Farnese's promotion to the cardinalate in 1493 and to his eventual election as Pope Paul III in 1534 – the events which secured the family's legacy in the sixteenth century and beyond.

¹ "pare una strana cosa il veder[e] far[e] un Duca di due simili citta in una notte come nasce un fungo." Ercole Gonzaga to Ercole d'Este, 18 August 1545. BAV, Barb. Lat. 5793, f. 6^v; For Gonzaga's membership of a cabal hostile to the Farnese, see Elena Bonora, *Aspettando l'imperatore: Principi italiani tra il papa e Carlo V* (Turin, 2014).

² Peter Rietbergen, *Power and Religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini Cultural Policies* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 61-4.

³ In general, see Julius Kircher (ed.), *The Origins of the State in Italy* (Chicago, 1993).

⁴ Giorgio Chittolini, "The Papacy and the Italian States", in Andrea Gamberini & Isabella Lazzarini (ed.), *The Italian Renaissance State* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 467-89.

Papal Government

The Papal States have inevitably attracted the attention of scholars interested in state formation. Paradoxically, the Papal States were notoriously difficult to govern, yet had all the trappings of a supposed 'modern state'. Renaissance popes inherited from their predecessors Europe's largest and most sophisticated bureaucracy and, theoretically at least, papal power was near absolute (although conciliarists vehemently disputed this). Paolo Prodi has investigated the theoretical and theological underpinnings of papal universal monarchy and how these manifested themselves in the Papal States' government. Prodi argued explicitly for the centrality of a process of osmosis between the state and religion as the driving force behind modernisation, a process that was particularly visible in the Papal States.⁵ This differed from the perspectives of Peter Partner and Thomas Frenz who focused on papal institutions, foremost on temporal governmental offices: the papal chancery, and the Camera Apostolica which organised papal finances.⁶ Both approaches greatly contributed to our understanding of papal government, yet central to them is a conception of papal power as something to be imposed top-down, and in which noble power figures as a counter-acting force ultimately to be overcome. Partner admitted that "we are not dealing with an ideal model of 'absolute' government as it might have been, but with Italian fifteenth-century government as it actually was" and it thus certainly also entailed collaboration and negotiation with other political actors. Nonetheless, absolute government figures as a goal that could be theorised and worked towards by a succession of popes. The focus in subsequent research on papal politics has shifted from how the centre envisaged, articulated, and achieved its power to the ways in which the centre negotiated its authority vis-à-vis other political stakeholders in the Curia. This body of research has paid attention to the difficulties inherent in the

⁵ Paolo Prodi, "Europe in the Age of Reformations: The Modern State and Confessionalisation", *The Catholic History Review* 103/1 (2017), pp. 1-19; Paolo Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice: un corpo e due anima, la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna* (Bologna, 1982); Paolo Prodi, *Lo sviluppo dell'assolutismo nello Stato Pontificio* (Bologna, 1968).

⁶ Peter Partner, *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1990); Peter Partner, "Papal Financial Policy in the Renaissance and Reformation", *Past & Present* 88/1 (1980), pp. 17-62; Peter Partner, *The Lands of St Peter: The Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (London, 1972); Thomas Frenz, *Die Kanzlei der Päpste der Hochrenaissance (1471-1527)* (Tübingen, 1986).

exercise of pontifical power, how these problems were created or exacerbated by the elective nature of the papacy, and how popes had recourse to using their family in clerical and temporal offices as a (partial) solution to these problems.⁷

This shift towards investigating interactions between political centre and periphery follows a wider trend in the political history of Italy and more broadly across Europe. Where the focus in papal historiography has been on the College of Cardinals and the Roman Curia, and hence on the role of the clergy in the government of the Papal States, research elsewhere readily acknowledges the nobility's importance in princely government.⁸ Indeed, Christine Shaw and Sandro Carocci have asserted that baronial families also played a crucial role in the Papal States' government, and not only through their clerical family members, but also their laymen.⁹ This thesis further contributes to this view of politics in the Papal States both by looking beyond the great baronial families of the Colonna and Orsini, who could muster resources and military forces that rivalled those of the fifteenth-century papacy and whose political influence within their polity was unrivalled in Europe; it also addresses in unprecedented depth the means through which the nobility maintained their influence 1) in the locality, 2) in the cities near their patrimony, and 3) in relation to the papacy. Crucially, I argue that the Farnese did not oppose, but in fact actively supported, the extension of pontifical power in the Papal

⁷ Miles Pattenden, *Electing the Pope in Early Modern Italy, 1450-1700* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 195-204; Marco Pellegrini, *Il papato nel Rinascimento* (Bologna, 2010); Birgit Emich, *Bürokratie und Nepotismus unter Paul V. (1605-1621). Studien zur frühneuzeitlichen Mikropolitik in Rom* (Stuttgart, 2001); Wolfgang Reinhard, "Papal Power and Family Strategy", in Ronald Asch & Adolf Birke (eds.), *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1650* (London, 1991), pp. 329-56 provides a summary of his earlier German work; Wolfgang Reinhard, "Nepotismus: Der Funktionswandel einer papstgeschichtlichen Konstanten." *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 86 (1975), pp. 146-85.

⁸ Among the most stimulating studies are Andrea Gamberini, *The Clash of Legitimacies: The State-Building Process in Late-Medieval Lombardy* (Oxford, 2018); Frederik Buylaert, "Lordship, Urbanisation and Social Change in Late Medieval Flanders", *Past & Present* 227 (2015), pp. 31-75; Frederik Buylaert & Andy Ramandt, "The Transformation of Rural Elites in Late Medieval Flanders: Oligarchy, State Formation and Social Change in the Liberty of Bruges (ca. 1350 – ca. 1525)", *Continuity and Change* 30/1 (2015), pp. 39-69; John Watts, *The Making of Polities: Europe, 1300-1500* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁹ Sandro Carocci, "The Papal State", in Gamberini & Lazzarini, *The Italian Renaissance State*, pp. 69-89; Christine Shaw, *The Political Role of the Orsini Family from Sixtus IV to Clement VII: Barons and Factions in the Papal States* (Rome, 2007); For an opposing view, see Alberto di Santo, *Guerre di torri: violenza e conflitto a Roma tra 1200 e 1500* (Rome, 2016).

States, even if simultaneously they sought virtual independence from papal interference for their own patrimony.

Central to my analysis of the Farnese's political, social, and dynastic history is the investigation of the persistence of lordship, not just as a mode of political organisation in marginal feudal remnants on Europe's fringes, but as a phenomenon that pervaded political thought and language, and determined economic modes of production. Italians have conceptualised this as *pervasità signorile*, a term that both encapsulates the phenomenon's endurance as well as the pervasiveness of seigneurial political power in urban contexts, and that highlights the economic relations that connected city and countryside.¹⁰ The Farnese's social, economic, and political organisation was deeply rooted in this system of dynastic lordship, and it is the overarching framework that connected their internal organisation, their marriage strategies, their wider political course on the peninsular level, as well as their efforts in preserving and representing their dynastic memory through acts of patronage.

Politics in Wider Italy

This thesis also moves in other directions that may help to alter views about fifteenth-century state-formation in Italy. Dynasties do not fit easily into the current picture as their relation to the state was often complicated.¹¹ In principalities, dynasties were the state, and dynastic accidents account for most of the European states that were formed and the states that vanished.¹² In many European principalities, noble dynasties had to define their relationship with the ruling princely dynasty and, in

¹⁰ Andrea Gamberini introduces the Italian research project *La signoria rurale nel XIV-XV secolo: per ripensare l'Italia tardomedievale* (2017-2020), uniting scholars at six universities and sponsored by the Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, in his "'Pervasività signorile' alla fine del medioevo: Qualche nota su un recente progetto di ricerca", *Studi di Storia Medioevale e di Diplomazia* 1 (2017), pp. 293-302.

¹¹ Christine Shaw, *Barons and Castellans: The Military Nobility of Renaissance Italy* (Leiden, 2015); Serena Ferente, *Gli ultimi guelfi: linguaggi e identità in Italia nella seconda metà del Quattrocento* (Rome, 2013), pp. 7-13; Federica Cengarle, "Lordships, Fiefs, and 'Small States'", in Gamberini & Lazzarini, *The Italian Renaissance State*, pp. 284-303.

¹² Robert Bartlett, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2020); John Morrill, "Dynasties, Realms, Peoples and State Formation, 1500-1720", in Robert von Friedeburg & John Morrill (eds.), *Monarchy Transformed: Princes and Their Elites in Early Modern Western Europe* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 17-43; Jeroen Duindam, *Dynasties: A Global History of Power, 1300-1800* (Cambridge, 2016); Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London, 2012).

their opposition or collaboration, they often shaped key political developments towards centralisation or broader participation and representation. Simultaneously the high nobility's influence stretched along the nodes of their kinship and client networks far beyond the region of their possessions and beyond those boundaries that we nowadays interpret as separating states.¹³ Indeed, Isabella Lazzarini, Oren Margolis, Maria Antonietta Visceglia, Federica Cengarle, Francesco Somaini and Serena Ferente have emphasised how in fifteenth-century Italy vast and dense networks of political affiliation connected factions and families – among them the Farnese – across various polities and which moreover connected Italy to the political landscape of wider Europe.¹⁴ Some of the most potent challenges to processes of internal organisation that took place in Italian Renaissance states came from coalitions of factions, kinship groups, or exile communities across various states. Both the formalised Italian leagues and interpersonal alliances that were created between various political actors, including the Farnese, could, as two sides of the same medallion, have a stabilising function that inhibited recourse to war through diplomatic interactions, as well as a destabilising one where local factional squabbles led to large-scale conflict. It was this unstable situation that allowed the Farnese to thrive as their social, political, and military resources made them valuable allies to the other Italian powers.

Writing the Farnese's History

History and mythology have been deeply intertwined in the narratives on the early Farnese. In their extensive patronage members of the family themselves sought to actively sponsor the fabrication of

¹³ Exemplary studies are Bertrand Schnerb, *La noblesse au service du prince. Les Saveuse: un hostel noble de Picardie au temps de l'État bourguignon (v. 1380-v. 1490)* (Turnhout, 2018); Alessandro Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta: I Colonna tra papato e impero nella prima età moderna (1431-1530)* (Rome, 2008).

¹⁴ Isabella Lazzarini, "Reti dinastiche e reti informative: I rapporti diplomatici fra i regni iberici e i principati padani nel secondo Quattrocento (Mantova e Ferrara)", *eHumanista* 38 (2018), pp. 146-62; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "Factions in Rome between Papal Wars and International Conflicts (1480-1530)", in Mathieu Caesar (ed.), *Factional Struggles: Divided Elites in European Cities & Courts (1400-1750)* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 82-103; Oren Margolis, *The Politics of Culture in Quattrocento Europe: René of Anjou in Italy* (Oxford, 2016); Federica Cengarle & Francesco Somaini, "Geografie motivazionali nell'Italia del Quattrocento: Percezioni dello spazio politico peninsulare al tempo della Lega Italica (1454-1455)", *Semestrale di Studi e Ricerche di Geografia* 28 (2016), pp. 43-60; Francesco Somaini, *Geografie politiche italiane: tra Medio Evo e Rinascimento* (Milan, 2012); For an interesting parallel in the Holy Roman Empire, see Duncan Hardy, *Associative Political Culture in the Holy Roman Empire: Upper Germany, 1346-1521* (Oxford, 2018).

narratives with all the paraphernalia and trappings of a glorious past. This has had a lasting influence on the subsequent writing of the Farnese's history. This process of glorification is discernible from at least the late fifteenth century when Annius of Viterbo created a now lost mythical genealogy that had the Farnese descend from the Egyptian god Osiris.¹⁵ Incredulous as we may be of such claims, Annius' successors continued his tradition of forgery but in much more subtle and hard-to-refute ways that, consequently, have had a much more lasting impact on the Farnese's histories.¹⁶ Like Annius, these historian-genealogists for hire were attached to the Farnese through ties of patronage, and the court of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese the Younger was especially populated by their kind.¹⁷ This direct link between the Farnese themselves and their historiography endured into the eighteenth century, when in anticipation or celebration of the arrival of Elisabetta Farnese in Spain for her wedding to King Philip V, court historian and genealogist Luis de Salazar y Castro compiled the Farnese's history in a eulogy to the queen's venerable line of descent – not yet realising that she would be that last Farnese.¹⁸

The first Farnese historian without an official affiliation to the family was Flaminio Maria Annibali, a key figure whose work influenced subsequent Farnese histories for two centuries. By the time he was writing, however, historians had to navigate a carefully constructed and often bewildering artifice of dynastic glorification. Tellingly, Annibali commenced his history of the House of Farnese by commenting on the confusion that existed over their origins.¹⁹ For the Farnese's history before the election of Paul III, Annibali largely follows sixteenth-century forged narratives and the mythologizing fresco cycles on the walls of Caprarola's Palazzo Farnese. More importantly for the purpose of this

¹⁵ Fragments survive in a manuscript in Viterbo: BCA, Ms. II.C.49, ff. 214^r-15^v.

¹⁶ Francesco Sansovino, *Dell'origine et de' fatti delle famiglie illustre d'Italia* (Venice 1609), vol. I, f. 167^v; Stefan Bauer, *The Invention of Papal History: Onofrio Panvinio between Renaissance and Catholic Reform* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 39-50; Stefan Bauer, "History for Hire in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Onofrio Panvinio's Histories of Roman Families", *Erudition and the Republic of Letters* 4/4 (2019), pp. 397-438; Jan de Jong, *The Power and the Glorification: Papal Pretensions and the Art of Propaganda in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (University Park, 2013), pp. 92-117.

¹⁷ On Alessandro Farnese the Younger's patronage, see Clare Robertson, *'Il Gran Cardinale': Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts* (New Haven, 1992); Loren Partridge, "The Farnese Circular Courtyard at Caprarola: God, Geopolitics, Genealogy, and Gender", *The Art Bulletin* 83 (2001), pp. 259-93; Loren Partridge, "Divinity and Dynasty at Caprarola: Perfect History in the Room of Farnese Deeds", *The Art Bulletin* 60 (1978), pp. 494-530.

¹⁸ Luis de Salazar y Castro, *Indice de las glorias de la Casa Farnese* (Madrid 1716), pp. 3-33.

¹⁹ Flaminio Maria Annibali, *Notizie storiche della Casa Farnese, della fu città di Castro, del suo ducato e delle terre e luoghi che lo componevano* (Montefiascone 1817-1818), vol. I, p. 3.

thesis, as a Franciscan friar, Annibali had access to the papal archive and as a local of Latera to archives in the former Farnese patrimony, and made use of their records – the last historian to date to do so extensively for the fifteenth century. Despite its inaccuracies, Annibali’s work has remained the fundamental source for subsequent works that dealt with the Farnese’s history in its entirety, and these works tended to repeat uncritically his conclusions for the fifteenth century.²⁰ Trying to correct the trend by which myths or embellished tales entered the historical record, Helge Gamrath, the Farnese’s most recent historian, dismisses all received knowledge on the basis of its origins in histories written for the Farnese themselves. Instead he argues that at the turn of the fifteenth century the Farnese were farmers and minor landowners.²¹ Gamrath’s primary interest is in the Farnese’s later history, and his rejection of earlier narratives was not substantiated by a new investigation of the fifteenth century, and as a result his conclusions could hardly be further off the mark. As I argue in this thesis, the Farnese already belonged to the Papal States’ baronial elite at the turn of the fifteenth century, and this shaped their dynastic strategies, choices for the creation of dynastic ties, cultural forms and the language of interpersonal interaction, as well as the shape their political relations in Italy assumed.²² The biographical entries for several of the Farnese in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* do attest to the Farnese’s prominence and political importance throughout the Quattrocento, yet they lack analytical depth and attention to long-term developments – in any case hardly fair criticism of articles that were written as short prosopographical pieces. Thus, apart from contributing to debates on state formation in Quattrocento Italy, this thesis fundamentally alters the present understanding of the Farnese’s fifteenth-century history.

²⁰ Edoardo del Vecchio, *I Farnese* (Rome, 1972); Emilio Nasalli Rocca, *I Farnese* (Milan, 1969); Giovanni Drei, *I Farnese: Grandezza e decadenza di una dinastia italiana* (Rome, 1954).

²¹ Helge Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (Rome, 2007), p. 1.

²² For the preceding period, see Loek Luiten, “‘Like a Lily Amongst the Thorns’: Patterns of Noble Power and Violence between Farnese and Orsini, 1378-1447”, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 87 (2019), pp. 245-65, especially 248-56.

Sources and Methodology

With such a limited historiographical footing for an investigation into the fifteenth-century Farnese, it was clear from the outset that only extensive archival research could provide a firm foundation for my analysis. The most fruitful line of approach seemed to focus first on archives that contained bodies of source material that shed light on the legal complex of Farnese properties and jurisdictions, and how this was connected to their internal organisation and strategies for keeping the patrimony intact during its intergenerational transmission. First and foremost, I visited the Farnese archive preserved in Naples' Archivio di Stato. Like most noble family archives, the Farnese archive was initially created to preserve the legal documentation pertaining to the family's patrimony.²³ After its integration into the ducal archives in Parma, the Farnese archive was inherited by the Bourbons, who took it with them to their main seat in Naples, where the parts of the Farnese archive that are relevant for this thesis remain. Unfortunately, during the Second World War, the Farnese archive was heavily damaged during the fire that destroyed a large part of the Archivio di Stato's patrimony.²⁴ As I discovered, all of the Farnese's parchments and most of the boxes containing paper sources vanished in the flames, but fortunately transcriptions of some Quattrocento parchments do survive in paper copies.²⁵ Above all, a sixteenth-century inventory, probably dateable to around the period of the creation of the Farnese ducal archive in Parma, and preserved in a manuscript in the Chigi archives of the Vatican Library, goes some way towards reconstructing its original parchments; however, there too the first pages are missing. Cross-referencing some of the inventory's entries related to papal investitures of lands with copies of these investitures preserved in the Vatican Archives and with the surviving copies of notarial acts in Naples established the inventory's authenticity, which was later corroborated by another comparison with a chronicle written by an apostolic protonotary with access to the Farnese ducal archive.²⁶ Nevertheless,

²³ Markus Friedrich, *The Birth of the Archive: A History of Knowledge* (Ann Arbor, 2018), pp. 43-6.

²⁴ Riccardo Filangieri di Candida, "Perdita e ricuperi del Diplomatico Farnesiano", in Angelo Mercati (ed.), *Miscellanea archivistica* (Vatican City, 1952), pp. 269-79.

²⁵ The transcriptions are preserved in ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071.

²⁶ The "Inventarium mutilum jurium et scripturarum domui farnesia et ducibus Parme pertinen[s]" is BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^r-142^v. I warmly thank Philippa Jackson for this reference. The first inventory item is numbered as document 56 and is a bull by Martin V dated 1419. The latest date mentioned for an entry in the

the descriptions of the documents only summarise their contents, telling us the most important thing, what they were about, but lacking the detail of the originals. For those investitures of which copies remain in the Vatican – and in singular cases where the notary’s copy is preserved – I have used the full text whenever it provided insight into the legal nature of papal privileges and whenever phrases were used that illustrated the discursive framework for papal-noble collaboration.

The Farnese archive is thus no exception to the archival turn’s lemma that the creation and subsequent life of archives, influenced by political power and interests as they were, shape historians’ accounts.²⁷ Only at a later stage in their history, when the Farnese had become a princely family and their archive moved to the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, did they come to preserve correspondence in it. Dynastic interests thus determined not only where material ended up being preserved, but also what kind of material was preserved at which point in the archive’s formation. The important implication is that for the century that is the topic of this thesis, when correspondence has survived it is scattered, and that surviving copies of letters and letters written by the Farnese outnumber those written to them.

Subsequently, I investigated the Farnese’s relations with the papacy, with Florence and the Medici, with Siena, and with other smaller cities like Lucca, Orvieto, and Viterbo. State archives, as heirs to their communal predecessors, often still preserve the original letters that were received by governing bodies – with different names in every city – or minutes of incoming and outgoing letters read in public consistory.²⁸ Furthermore, an early form of accountability had been developed in Italian city-states for public officials, and by the Quattrocento extended to agents and diplomats, records of whose letters were kept, and who may have been expected to hand over their correspondence to the

inventory is 24 November 1590. The Farnese ducal archive was created in 1593. Giovanni Drei, *Gli archivi farnesiani: loro formazione e vicende* (Parma, 1930), p. 5; The work written by an apostolic protonotary with access to the Farnese ducal archive is: Gironimo Morisco, *Cronica farnesiana* (1629). BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, ff. 2^r-11^r.

²⁷ Randolph Head, *Making Archives in Early Modern Europe: Proof, Information, and Political Record-Keeping, 1400-1700* (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 1-21.

²⁸ The governmental bodies’ various names are as follows. Lucca: Anziani (Elders); Orvieto: Conservatori Pacis (Conservators of Peace); Viterbo: Priori (Priors); Siena: Concistoro (Consistory).

state (even if they not always did), and were certainly expected to write a final report and appear in public consistory to comment on this report and answer any potential questions about their conduct.²⁹ As a result, the diplomatic correspondence in Florence is particularly rich and well-preserved, which is important because of the Farnese's close connections to that city. Moreover, the two institutions concerned with the military organisation of Florence's armies, the Dieci di Balìa and the Otto di Pratica, have also left behind an extensive trail of documentation consisting of incoming and copies of outgoing letters that provide insight into the Farnese's military relations with that Tuscan city.³⁰ Especially for the 1480s the records are almost complete, which, exceptionally, allows for reconstructing correspondence by combining incoming and outgoing letters to and from the Farnese. Equally important, it allows them to be placed beside the letters written by diplomats around Italy or agents in the army who discussed attracting, employing, and consulting with Farnese *condottieri* in their letters back to Florence.

The Florentine archives also provide private correspondence to and from the Medici, who besides writing to and receiving letters from political figures, relatives, and clients, maintained a correspondence with Florentine diplomats separate from official channels of government. Thus, apart from targeting governmental institutions' archives that reveal the more official and institutionalised side of the Farnese's relations with Italian polities, I have made an effort to pursue research in as many family archives as possible which contain fifteenth-century material. Noble families had fewer incentives to preserve incoming letters and, as a result, it is often the case that few or none survive.

²⁹ Guy Geltner, "Fighting Corruption in the Italian City-State: Perugian Officers' End of Term Audit (*sindacato*) in the Fourteenth Century", in Ronald Kroeze, André Vitória & Guy Geltner (eds.), *Anti-Corruption in History: From Antiquity to the Modern Era* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 103-21; Isabella Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 49-58; John Sabapathy, "A Medieval Officer and a Modern Mentality? *Podestà* and the Quality of Accountability", *The Mediaeval Journal* 1/2 (2011), pp. 43-80.

³⁰ For the different Florentine offices related to military organisation and how their archives were created and kept, see Fabrizio Ansani, "Military Archives of Renaissance Florence: Resolutions and Bookkeeping of the Dieci di Balìa and Otto di Pratica", *European History Quarterly* 48/3 (2018), pp. 409-34; Andrea Guidi, "The Florentine Archives in Transition: Government, Warfare and Communication (1289-1530 ca.)", *European History Quarterly* 46/3 (2016), pp. 458-79; For *condottiere* diplomacy in general, see Maria Covini, "Guerre e relazioni diplomatiche in Italia (secoli XIV-XV): la diplomazia dei *condottieri*", in Alvaro Fernández de Córdova Miralles (ed.), *Guerra y Diplomacia en la Europa occidental, 1280-1480* (Pamplona, 2005), pp. 163-98.

This is the case in the Colonna archives (with the exception of those copied by later family historians) and those of the Sforza-Cesarini, which also encompass the archives of the Savelli and Conti. When collections of letters do survive, they tend to be ill-organised, fragmentary, at times (heavily) damaged, and collected without any particular purpose in mind. Nevertheless, I have hunted down the few private letters that provide invaluable insight into practices of noble networks fostering and political collaboration in a few family archives, most notably the Archivio Orsini and Caetani in Rome and the Pucci, Strozzi and Medici archives in Florence.

In the final phase of my research, I turned to narrative sources, and visual and material evidence. Most narrative sources – diaries, chronicles, and histories – have been published, although some sixteenth and seventeenth-century family histories survive only in unpublished manuscript form in family archives, often preserved in a separate section that also includes copies of letters or inscriptions – or, occasionally, original sources extracted from archives elsewhere – gathered by collectors and family historians. Furthermore, I have made a tour of the most imposing castles and monuments of the Farnese patrimony and collected photographic evidence where elements from Quattrocento embellishments survive.

It would be inappropriate in the space available to address my methodological approach to all types of sources – whether textual, visual, or material – and I am explicit about how I use particular sources throughout the chapters. But in the case of the two most important types of sources available for the Farnese – letters and legal documents – particular methodological approaches are required. For the latter, it is important to note that written legal documents did not replace spoken communication or ritualised gestures, but were an extension thereof; they often in fact included descriptions of legalistic rituals and noted down the presence of witnesses who could further corroborate that these legalistic rituals had taken place.³¹ In one telling example, it was the act of

³¹ Paul Dresch & Hannah Skoda (eds.), *Legalism: Anthropology and History* (Oxford, 2012); Christoph Dartmann, “Writing and Political Communication in Italian City Communes”, in P.S. Barnwell & Marco Mostert (eds.), *Medieval Legal Process: Physical, Spoken and Written Performance in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 197-209.

receiving the key from the castellan, circling the courtyard on horseback, and closing the gate behind the outgoing proprietor that governed the transfer of the castle and lordship of Bisenzio, not the writing of a notarial act.³² Importantly, this is also true of the papal investitures that were located in the Vatican, and additional evidence suggested that these at times were formal *de jure* recognitions of *de facto* ownership. Occasionally, legal documents contain phrases that express expectations of certain behaviour or relations with a normative character. Such discursive phrases can be found especially in the clauses of papal investitures outlining the motivation behind their proliferation – as a reward for loyalty, or a pledge in expectation of future collaboration – as well as in wills which explicitly exhort heirs to uphold political traditions and to maintain cordial filial relations.

Where notarial documents mainly provide insight into the Farnese patrimony's complex jurisdictional nature and the Farnese's internal organisation, letters are the most prominent source on which my reconstruction of the Farnese's personal and political interactions with related families is based. Letters had a distinct relationship to spoken language. They were written in the expectation that they would be read aloud and shared, and their style often mimicked spoken language, or at times even included verbatim recordings of conversations.³³ At the other extreme, a letter might simply state in a sentence or two that the letter's bearer was entrusted with or could be trusted to convey sensitive information that was best kept secret or for which a personal meeting was requisite, either because of the confidential nature of the topic or because the topic was to be actively negotiated with the recipient. The close relation between the written and spoken word in Quattrocento letter writing is further reflected in the variations of style that were adopted for letters. Often, stylistically these letters occupy some mid-point between the formal (often Latinate) letter writing that was practised at the chancery and followed the regular patterns of *salutatio*, *captatio benevolentiae*, and *narratio* or *petitio* – tellingly, patterns founded in classical rhetoric originally devised for speeches – and the informal

³² ASVit, Archivio notarile distrettuale di Viterbo 325, ff. 44^v-46^r.

³³ Filippo de Vivo, "Archives of Speech: Recording Diplomatic Negotiations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy", *European History Quarterly* 46/3 (2016), 519-44; Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, pp. 189-212.

letter. This holds true for both male and female authors of letters; moreover, it is entirely unconnected to the formal or informal nature of the letter's content.³⁴

Whether formal or informal, many letters contained the latest news (*novelle/advisi*), the market for which had greatly expanded in Quattrocento Europe and which, as a resource, was of primary importance for a family whose mainstay was military action.³⁵ In terms of how to distil relevant information from letters, letters thus are utilised to reconstruct factual information about political events, events that can be corroborated by a parallel reading of chronicles and diaries. Additionally, personal letters and diplomatic correspondence were literary performances that sought to negotiate status, persuade the reader to pursue action (or inaction), or strengthen feelings of emotional attachment between kinsmen or political allies.³⁶ Such letters can be read on three levels by taking into account what may have been the goal in mind that prompted the writing of the letter, by analysing the specific discourses employed in these letters, and the ways in which these resonated with the epistemes of wider society – in short, discourse analysis.

This thesis is divided in five chapters. In the first four chapters I work outwards from the Farnese's internal organisation and their patrimony's government, through the establishment and fostering of dynastic ties, to their external politics and patronage. As public power was intimately connected to the possession of land and jurisdictions in fifteenth-century Europe, I argue in Chapter 1 that the organisation of their patrimony's government and the regulation of their inheritance was one of the primary concerns for the Farnese as a dynasty. In the second chapter, I focus on the means through which (pseudo-)dynastic ties were created, what considerations played a role in the decision to conclude marriage alliances, and how, once concluded, these ties were maintained and

³⁴ Rita Fresu, "Educazione linguistica e livelli di scrittura femminile tra XV e XVI secolo: Le lettere di Giulia Farnese e di Adriana Mila Orsini", *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 28 (2014), pp. 105-52; Francesco Senatore, "Ai confini del 'mundo de carta': Origini e diffusione della lettera cancelleresca italiana (XIII-XVI secolo)", *Reti Medievali* 10 (2009), pp. 239-91.

³⁵ Lazzarini, *Conflict & Communication*, pp. 69-85; Isabella Lazzarini, "L'informazione politico-diplomatica nell'età della pace di Lodi. Raccolta, selezione, trasmissione. Spunti di ricerca dal carteggio Milano-Mantova nella prima età sforzesca (1450–1466)", *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 83 (1998), pp. 247–80; Francesco Senatore, *Uno mundo de carta: forme e strutture della diplomazia sforzesca* (Naples, 1998).

³⁶ Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, 2009).

strengthened. Chapter 3 then deals with how dynastic connections came to fruition and shaped the Farnese's peninsula-wide political action in Quattrocento Italy. In Chapter 4, I turn to the Farnese's connections to the papacy and the papal court. In the final chapter, I focus on the Farnese's shaping of their dynastic memory, specifically in their patronage of their family tomb on Isola Bisentina in the Lago di Bolsena, as well as the surrounding church and affiliated Franciscan friary, and place these in the context of artistic and societal developments around the middle of the fifteenth century. Ultimately, I show how their example can inform the ongoing conceptual debates on the nature of dynasty.

Chapter One

Dynasty and Patrimony: Possessions, Government, Citizenship, and Inheritance Strategies

Patrimony was the primary political, social, and economic consideration for medieval and early modern dynasties.¹ Lordships were the foundational building blocks of medieval polities, and possession of land and jurisdictions over castles and tenants was the basis of a dynasty's noble status.² Their tenure located the social construct of a noble dynasty in space, and other edifices, such as family tombs, functioned in a similar manner by anchoring it to place. Moreover, narratives surrounding dynastic origins, often mythologised, linked a dynasty's memory to a location from which they often derived their name.³ Buttressed by the notion of historical precedent, albeit one that transcended individual ownership, these aspects confirmed a right to rulership. After all, the patrimony belonged to the dynasty as a social unit, both horizontally and vertically within the patrilineage. Dynasty and patrimony thus connected the past to the present and provided a sense of direction for the future – in which biological procreation went hand in hand with the obligation of custodianship over the future heirs' possessions. Such considerations are expressed with considerable care by Ranuccio XVII Farnese in his 1450 will:

Likewise, the aforementioned testator desiring that the Magnificent house of Farnese in as much as is possible shall be maintained and enlarged, he intended and ordered that the aforementioned Magnificent Meo and his sons and descendants, as well as the Magnificent Angelo, Gabriele Francesco

¹ Thomas Kuehn, *Family and Gender in Renaissance Italy 1300-1600* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 6; Marta Gravela, "The Primacy of Patrimony: Kinship Strategies of the Political Elite in Turin in the Later Middle Ages (1340-1490)", *Continuity and Change* 32/3 (2017), pp. 293-321; Vivak Sharma, "Kinship, Property, and Authority: European Territorial Consolidation Reconsidered", *Politics & Society* 43/2 (2015), p. 158.

² Alessio Fiore, *The Seigneurial Transformation: Power Structures and Political Communication in the Countryside of Central and Northern Italy, 1080-1130* (Oxford, 2020); Chris Wickham, *Medieval Europe: From the Breakup of the Western Roman Empire to the Reformation* (New Haven, 2016), pp. 99-120; Chris Wickham, *Medieval Rome: Stability & Crisis of a City, 900-1150* (Oxford, 2015), 42-52; Shaw, *Barons and Castellans*, pp. 9-50.

³ Cristina Andenna & Gert Melville, "Einleitung", in Cristina Andenna & Gert Melville (eds.), *Idoneität – Genealogie – Legitimation. Überlegungen zur Begründung und Akzeptanz von dynastischer Herrschaft im hohen und späten Mittelalter* (Cologne, 2015), pp. 11-20.

and Pier Luigi, the legitimate and natural sons and descendants of the testator himself, one for the others and the others for the one [literally other], are to be obliged, whenever misfortune will strike, to provide help, advice, and support de jure and de facto, even if a thousand times, in order to maintain and defend the state, lands, houses and possessions of any type, of the aforementioned house of Farnese.⁴

Ranuccio's will is lengthy and in all its attention paid to the avoidance of interfamilial strife and exhortations to collaboration between the family's various branches it provides a rare insight into the concerns and hopes of a Quattrocento nobleman, his conception of dynasty and patrimony, and his intergenerational strategic thought – all of which are addressed in this chapter. For now, it is important to note that Ranuccio XVII considered himself as part of something bigger, the *Magnifica domus de Farnesio*.⁵ This house consisted of, apart from the family members, their state, lands, jurisdictions, houses, and moveable and immoveable goods. According to the will, maintaining or enlarging the patrimony before passing it on to the next generation should be a unifying ambition of Ranuccio's heirs, although the worry that the patrimony will become a bone of contention is audible behind the dry notarial lexicon. These considerations, which were embraced as much by the women of the dynasty as the men, were the driving force behind many of the Farnese's political decisions. If dynasty and patrimony do not entirely represent "two sides of the same medallion," the fortunes of both were nonetheless closely intertwined.⁶

⁴ "Item desiderans et cupiens prefatus testator, quod Magnifica domus de Farnesio in quantum possibile est manuteneatur et agumentetur [sic: augmenctetur] voluit et mandavit ut prefatus Magnificus Meus et eius filii et descendentes, ac etiam Magnifici Angelus, Gabriel Franciscus et Pierlouisius eius testatoris legiptimi filij et naturales et descendentes ipsorum unus alteri et alter alteri, teneatur et obligatus sit, quotienscunque et quandocunque casus occurreret etiam si milies, prestare auxilium, consilium et favorem de jure et de facto, manuteneatur et defendere Statum, Terras, domos et bona quecunque, prefate domus de Farnesio." Two copies survive: ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 351, ff. 136^r-141^r and ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated. The latter published as: Renato Lefevre, "Il Testamento di Ranuccio Farnese il Vecchio (1450)", *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 103 (1980), pp. 189-207.

⁵ It must be noted that the adoption of the term house in Italy predates its wider spread throughout Latin Europe. Michael Hecht, "Das Adels-Haus in der Frühen Neuzeit: Genealogisches Konzept, verwandtschaftliche Ordnung, architektonische Gestalt", *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 11/1 (2017), pp. 29-48.

⁶ Franca Allegrezza, *Organizzazione del potere e dinamiche familiari: gli Orsini dal duecento agli inizi del quattrocento* (Rome, 1998), pp. 16-17.

Farnese 1417-1494

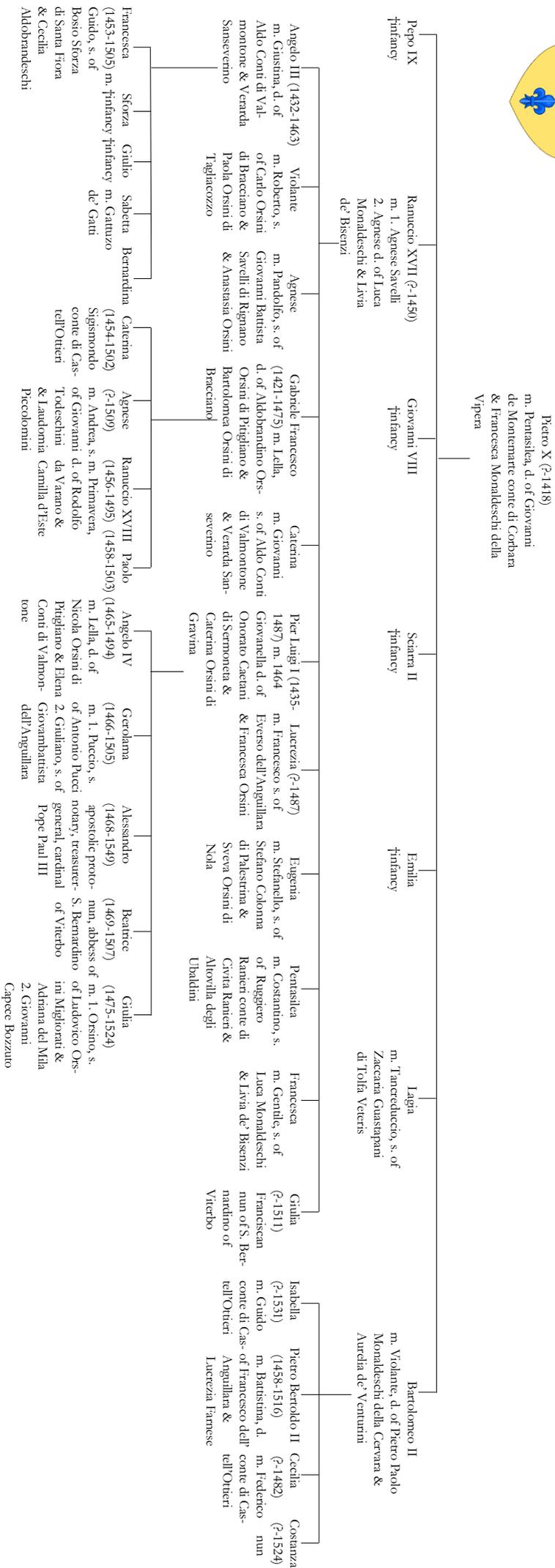
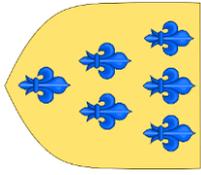


Figure 1: Farnese Family Tree 1417-1494

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first, I reconstruct the Farnese patrimony: a rough assessment is made of the agricultural, financial, and military resources that formed the foundation for the Farnese's political power. The steady flow of income that the patrimony generated provided the means for their military endeavours as *condottieri*, and it is likely that it also provided much of the manpower for their mercenary companies.⁷ Combined, the Farnese's economic and military resources secured for the dynasty the ability to act as a virtually independent political actor on a peninsular scale. It is important to note, however, that the source material imposes restrictions on any precise assessment of Farnese wealth and resources. Many documents that could have provided insight into the Farnese's material possessions such as transactions relating to land and jurisdictions were written on parchments, of which none survived the great fire in the Neapolitan State Archive's collections. Furthermore, none of the surviving documents and wills provide a comprehensive list of the Farnese's holdings. This makes it difficult to trace the provenance of individual castles and estates, and many castles that were firmly in Farnese hands during the fourteenth century vanish from the record by the turn of the fifteenth century.⁸ Presumably, some remained in Farnese possession and survived as *tenimentum*, the term usually reserved for estates and pasture land. It is important to keep in mind, therefore, that this assessment of the Farnese's patrimony represents a minimum. Nonetheless, in tracing the development of the Farnese patrimony through time, it is possible to rewrite their history in two significant ways. First, the period traditionally regarded as the Farnese's great advent – that of Ranuccio XVII, when he was invested by Martin V (1417-1431) and Eugene IV (1431-1447) with a dozen or so castles – hardly saw an astronomical rise in their familial fortunes. In fact, although the Farnese patrimony now extended to some areas outside of those they had previously controlled, many of the

⁷ Shaw, *Barons and Castellans*, pp. 100-47, especially 100-9; Christine Shaw, "The Roman Barons and the Security of the Papal States", in Mario Del Treppo (ed.), *Condottieri e uomini d'arme nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Naples, 2001), pp. 311-25.

⁸ Very useful are: Roberto Parenti, *Vitozza: un insediamento rupestre nel territorio di Sorano* (Florence, 1980); Umberto Pannucci, *I Castelli di Bisenzio e Capodimonte: Cronisteria* (Viterbo, 1976); Francesco Giannotti, *Storia di Toscana scritta da Francesco Giannotti nel 1500* (Tuscania, 1969); Giulio Silvestrelli, *Città, castelli e terre della regione romana: ricerche di storia medioevale e moderna sino all'anno 1800* (Rome, 1940); Secondiano Campanari, *Tuscania e i suoi monumenti* (Montefiascone, 1856).

castles with which Ranuccio was invested had been in the Farnese's possession before, which explains why Ranuccio, according to a family friend, primarily regarded himself as the restorer of a dispersed patrimony.⁹ Secondly, I show that his heirs continued to invest in acquiring new lands and castles during the second half of the fifteenth century. Simultaneously, they also took great care to secure the indivisibility of the patrimony as a shared property of the various Farnese branches.

Building on these conclusions, I address the Farnese's patrimonial administration. The Farnese's ambitions for enlarging their patrimony were matched by their efforts to improve its internal organisation. Within their patrimony, hindrances to the movement of workers were removed and acquiring, renewing, and defending the Farnese's citizenship in nearby cities ensured that their patrimony was linked economically to the markets of those communes. Furthermore, I argue the women of the dynasty took a leading role in the day-to-day running of their husbands' patrimony. Taken together, my analysis of how the Farnese governed their patrimony contributes to two areas of historical debate. First, it shows that barons such as the Farnese were no idle *rentiers* simply siphoning off the agricultural surplus of their landed possessions without taking any interest in how they were run.¹⁰ Rather, they were actively involved in managing their territories and improving its agricultural and financial yields. Moreover, I question the tendency to regard Italian medieval and early modern political and cultural history as exclusively urban. Until recently, scholars assumed that Italy was to such an extent an urbanised society that this had reverberations that reached every level of society, including the nobility, completely shaping its cultural as well as social and political outlook.¹¹ Rather, I show that urban residence only played a marginal role in the political and social life of a baronial

⁹ Stefano dell'Aquila to Alessandro Farnese, 7 September [1490], *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 43-4.

¹⁰ Mario Caravale & Alberto Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio da Martino V a Pio IX* (Turin, 1978), pp. 48-9, 107-9.

¹¹ Guido Castelnuovo, *Être noble dans la cité: les noblesses italiens en quête d'identité* (Paris, 2014); Giorgio Chittolini, "Private Wars at the End of the Middle Ages: Notes on Italy and Germany in the 15th Century", in Yoshihisa Hattori (ed.), *Political Order and Forms of Communication in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Rome, 2014), pp. 109-32; Giorgio Chittolini, "Ascesa a declino di piccoli stati signorili (Italia centro-settentrionale, metà trecento-inizi cinquecento): alcune note", *Società e Storia* 31/121 (2008), pp. 473-98; Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur (ed.), *Signorie cittadine nell'Italia comunale* (Rome, 2013); Renato Bordone, Guido Castelnuovo & Gian Maria Varanini (eds.), *Le aristocrazie dai signori rurali al patriziato* (Rome, 2004); Philip Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford, 1997).

dynasty like the Farnese. Barons such as the Farnese moved between city, countryside, and princely court.

Finally, I analyse the Farnese's succession strategies. The considerations in play that determined such succession strategies have been extensively addressed for ruling families. Although global comparisons have contributed to an appreciation of the variety in different strategies available to rulers across the globe, the emphasis has nonetheless remained on the centralisation of power in the hands of the ruler.¹² In looking at a non-sovereign dynasty, this part of the thesis explores different solutions to issues involving inheritances. In particular, comparison with similar families in Italy and beyond highlights the viability and popularity of partible inheritance. Simultaneously, some aspects unique to the Farnese are explained in the context of the Papal States' legal framework. It is clear that dynasty as a unifying concept was central to the Farnese's social and political logic and played a central role in guiding choices in writing their wills and determining succession. Yet it is important to stress that this did not necessarily lead to the formation of a 'fully-formed' dynasticism with strategies that formally laid down the parameters of succession over the course of multiple generations.

Possessions

The history of the accumulation of the Farnese patrimony starts in the twelfth century. Over the course of two centuries, the family acquired possessions and assets, bought, inherited, received in feudal investiture, constructed, conquered, as well as lost, destroyed, sold, or alienated. The Farnese patrimony therefore was a dynamic phenomenon, which expanded and shrunk depending on the necessities of, the opportunities available to, and the political circumstances its custodians faced.¹³ This dynamism is evident during the latter years of the Western Schism, when the Farnese's patrimony contracted significantly as they struggled to mediate between the ambitions of the era's great *condottieri* – Muzio Attendolo Sforza, Braccio da Montone, and Angelo Tartaglia – whose ambitions

¹² Jeroen Duindam, "A Plea for Global Comparison: Redefining Dynasty", *Past & Present* 242/Suppl (2019), pp. S318-47; Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 87-155.

¹³ For the Farnese patrimony during the Western Schism, see Luiten, "Like a Lily Amongst the Thorns".

also centred on the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia.¹⁴ In 1417, around fifteen towns and castles still remained in Farnese hands: Farnese itself, Ischia, Sala, Castiglione, Mezzano, Valentano, Latera, Cellere, Pianiano, Vitozzo, Tessennano, Arlena, Civitella, and Capodimonte.¹⁵ Most prominently, the Farnese owned castles and fortified towns that came with seigneurial jurisdictions. But the Farnese patrimony also consisted of fortified manors, landed estates, villas, forests and pasture lands, as well as small vineyards, gardens, and orchards. Additionally, it contained the infrastructure to produce and process agricultural yields such as mills and granaries, forests providing the wood required for construction and heating, and edifices for catching fish from the rivers.¹⁶ As the Farnese's possessions were located in an area where the volcanic soil of the river Marta's diluvial plain was irrigated by many local rivers and streams, their patrimony consisted of some of the most fertile stretches of land in Italy.¹⁷ The bountiful land supported a dense infrastructure of towns and boroughs, some of which consisted of little more than a fortified manor with a few farmsteads. However, other Farnese towns had several hundred or over a thousand inhabitants and were small functioning communities populated by lesser nobles, merchants, and a host of artisans and tradesmen. These fortified towns formed the recruiting grounds for the military companies raised and led by Farnese captains. In short, by Quattrocento standards, the Farnese were certainly no minor landowners and farmers.

¹⁴ A bull of investiture for Angelo Tartaglia included several castles formerly controlled by the Farnese. ASV, Reg. Vat. 348, ff. 166^v-171^r. In an agreement between Muzio Attendolo Sforza and Braccio da Montone of 2 September 1414 both promised not to harm each other's territories, nor those of the Farnese. *Codice diplomatico della Città d'Orvieto: documenti e registi dal secolo XI al XV e la carta del popolo*, ed. Luigi Fumi (Florence, 1884), p. 661.

¹⁵ See Appendix 2.

¹⁶ Loek Luiten, "Friends and Family, Fruit and Fish: The Gift in Quattrocento Farnese Cultural Politics", *Renaissance Studies* 33/3 (2019), pp. 342-57.

¹⁷ The tax returns of the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia were substantially larger than those of any other area of the Papal States. Partner, *The Lands of St Peter*, pp. 426-7.

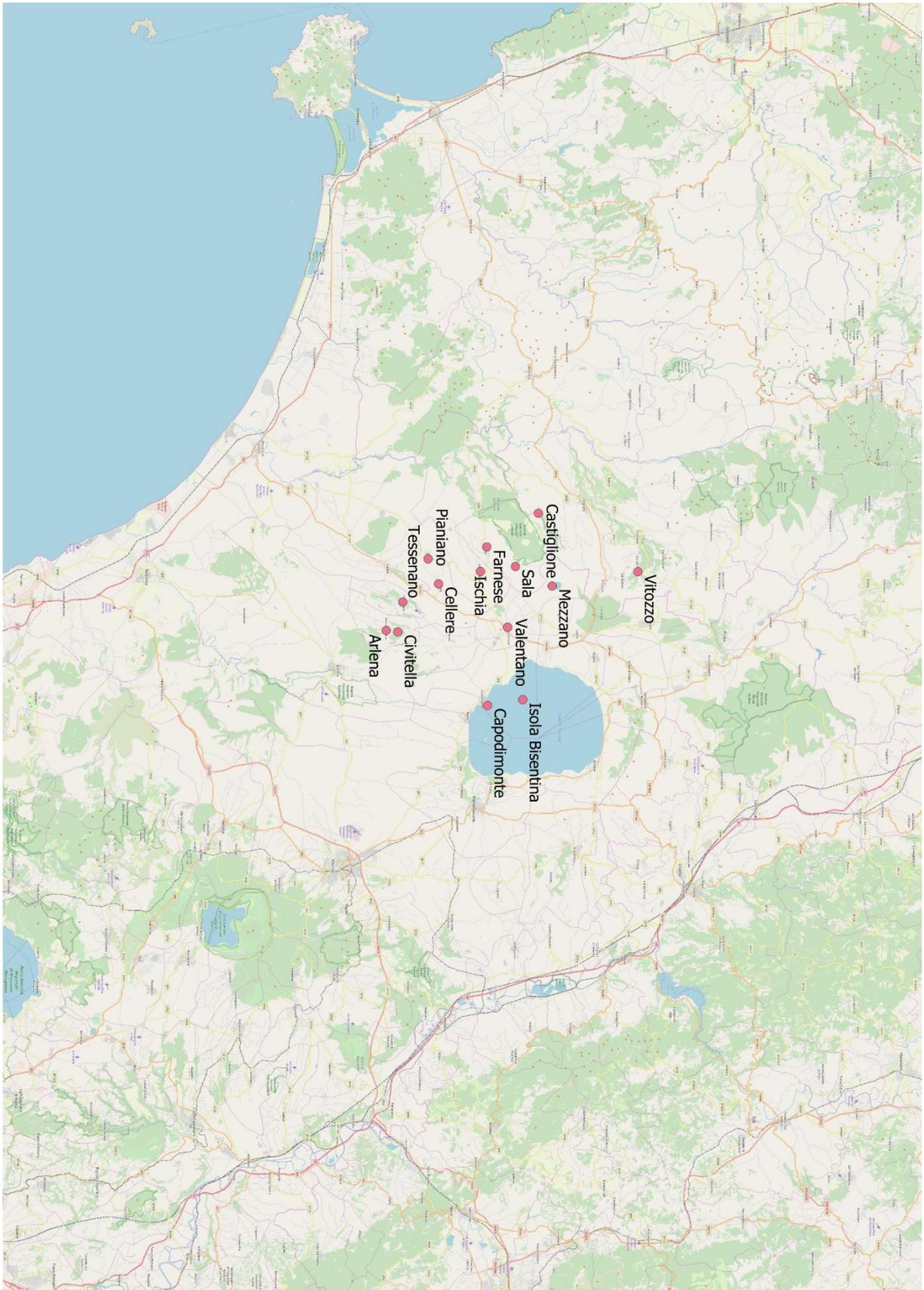


Figure 2: Map Farnese Possessions 1417

The legal basis of the Farnese's lordships determined the nature of the relationship with their suzerain, the pope. Three types of possessions were distinguished: allodial holdings, fiefs, and vicariates. However, the differences between these tended to be blurred. Older possessions that had been within the family since times immemorial were considered allodial holdings, and were the most common type in the Papal States. These could be disposed of freely through sale, inheritance, or otherwise without any legal basis for papal interference in the transaction. These holdings were also free of feudal dues or taxes except for the salt tax levied throughout all the Papal States. Moreover, *allodia* could be subdivided among heirs in contrast to fiefs. The Farnese had sold their fiefs during the Western Schism and thus no longer held any during the Quattrocento, although their sale does reflect the gradually fading differences between fiefs and *allodia*. Papal and imperial vicariates had been around since the thirteenth century, and initially, the grant entailed something akin to a governorship. As the nature of the vicariate was technically temporary as well as personal, such investitures had the obvious benefit of rewarding supporters without permanently alienating lands and castles. In fact, enfeoffments for limited and set periods of time appeared as an instrument in a development that ran parallel with the development of the vicariate. However, the vicariate also took on characteristics of a fief in the sense that it became a fully-fledged lordship and was increasingly inheritable.¹⁸ None of these institutions came with any feudal dues or prescribed military service, although the vicariate did provide the pope with an income in the form of the *census*, a tax levied on the vicariate. This payment was often symbolic – hunting dogs, falcons, or candle wax occur regularly as *census* – and in any case, this tax was infrequently levied.¹⁹ In one year picked at random, 1473, Napoleone Orsini of Bracciano paid a few *lira bolognini*, but neither the Farnese nor any other baron paid any taxes, with the notable exception of the Dell'Anguillara.²⁰ Proof of payments made in 1442, 1487, and 1492 can be found in the inventory of the Farnese archive, but these can hardly have been significant amounts as the total

¹⁸ Sandro Carocci, *Vassalli del papa: Potere pontificio, aristocrazie e città nello Stato della Chiesa (XII-XV sec.)* (Rome, 2010), pp. 34-8.

¹⁹ The census for Tessennano was one hunting dog; for Piansano 10 *libbra* of candle wax. ASV, Reg. Vat. 349, f. 93^{r-v}; ASV, Reg. Vat. 354, f. 183^v; ASV, Reg. Vat. 373, ff. 200^v-201^r.

²⁰ ASR, Camerale I, Tesoreria provinciale del patrimonio 17; In general, see Shaw, *The Political Role*, pp. 39-45.

taxes on the Farnese patrimony in 1498 amounted to a mere 16 ducats.²¹ Crucially, however, the vicariate did give the pope a potential say in its inheritance, even if popes were reluctant to enforce their will; after all, intervention in the patterns of succession among a prince's most powerful subjects had sparked rebellion throughout the Middle Ages.²² But before addressing the internal organisation of the patrimony, intergenerational strategies for succession, and negotiations with the pope regarding the Farnese patrimony, it is worthwhile delineating its development over time.

In a bull dated 2 September 1419, Martin V confirmed the Farnese's legal rights to all of their possessions as well as to all grants promulgated during the Western Schism by popes of either adherence.²³ Moreover, a second bull provided the Farnese with an indulgence that allowed them to recover any of their possessions that were lost during the Western Schism.²⁴ Although unspecified, this presumably included vicariates that the Farnese received during the legateship of Cardinal Gil de Albornoz and were subsequently confirmed or renewed during the Western Schism: Valentano, Onano, and Latera.²⁵ Some other castles had been conquered, like Piansano and Capodimonte, and were subsequently granted by Boniface IX (1389-1404) to secure Farnese military support.²⁶ Furthermore, it is unclear whether Martin's bull included the city of Castro, later the capital of the Farnese Duchy of Castro, with which the Farnese had been invested on 29 June 1381, as it remains

²¹ ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 17, f. 191^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^v, 127^{r-v}; A total of 20 florins were paid in 1463, 1472, 1478, 1479, 1480, for three unspecified years of Innocent VIII's pontificate and five of Alexander VI's. Annibali, *Notizie storiche*, vol. I, pp. 37-8.

²² Jane Fair Bestor, "Bastardy and Legitimacy in the Formation of a Regional State in Italy: The Estense Succession", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38/3 (1996), pp. 549-85.

²³ ASV, Reg. Vat. 347, f. 161^{r-v}; ASV, Reg. Vat. 348, ff. 172^v-173^r, published in *Codex diplomaticus dominii temporalis S. Sedis: Recueil de documents pour servir à l'histoire du gouvernement temporel des États du Saint-Siège*, ed. Augustin Theiner (Rome, 1861-1862), vol. III, pp. 249-50; Another copy can be found in ASV, Arm. XXXVII, 17, ff. 485^r-487^v.

²⁴ ASV, Reg. Vat. 348, ff. 173^r-174^r, published in Theiner, *Codex diplomaticus*, vol. III, p. 250.

²⁵ ASV, Reg. Vat. 227, f. 379^r; Reg. Aven. 129, f. 126^v; Reg. Vat. 228, f. 11^v; Reg. Aven. 166, ff. 473^v, 474^r; Reg. Vat. 257, ff. 4^v, 5^r; Reg. Aven. 171, ff. 381^v, 405^r, 515^v; Reg. Vat. 301, ff. 131^v-132^v; Arm. XXXVII, 40, f. 275^r; Onano was sold to the Monaldeschi in the 1390s. Bonafede Mancini, "I Monaldeschi ad Onano", in Antonio Quattranni (ed.), *I Monaldeschi nella storia della Toscana: Atti della giornata di studio Bolsena 24 giugno 1994* (Bolsena, 1995), pp. 69-87.

²⁶ ASV, Reg. Vat. 315, ff. 153^v-154^v, 169^v, 195^v-197^v; Cronaca di Luca di Domenico Manenti, RIS, tomo XV, parte 5, vol. I, pp. 398, 405-6; Francesco de Montemarte, *Cronaca inedita degli avvenimenti d'Orvieto e d'altre parti d'Italia dall'anno 1333 all'anno 1400* (Turin, 1846), p. 58.

uncertain whether the Farnese still controlled the city four decades later.²⁷ During the subsequent decades, the Farnese patrimony expanded as a result of their active support for the re-established papacy in Rome, which was reciprocated with the investiture of several towns and castles during the pontificates of Martin V and Eugene IV.²⁸ In 1420, Martin conceded half of Tessennano to Giorgio Farnese.²⁹ The other half of this castle's jurisdictions was already in Farnese possession in 1334 and the castle was certainly controlled by the Farnese during the 1350s and 1360s.³⁰ They owned three quarters in 1385, and Tessennano was presumably already under Farnese control by the time of Martin's investiture.³¹ Moreover, in 1421, the Farnese received confirmation for their possession of the former Templar preceptories of San Savino and San Leonardo.³² Finally, on 10 May 1422, Ranuccio XVII Farnese received the investiture of Piansano and Musignano, which had temporarily been lost to Angelo Tartaglia.³³ Thus, these additions were only a recuperation of territories formerly lost or a legal confirmation of those already in Farnese possession.

With Ranuccio's growth in stature as a condottiere in papal service under Eugene, his *condotte* became more sizeable as did his personal fee. However, the income of the Camera Apostolica never sufficed to cover the papacy's military expenses. In consequence, papal territories were pawned to the Farnese in situations of insolvency and were subsequently transformed into permanent grants. Six months into his pontificate Eugene already acknowledged a debt of 4,000 florins to Ranuccio, and when it became clear that the papal coffers were empty the debt was translated into the investiture of Marta, a possession that had been temporarily granted to Ranuccio's second wife, Agnesella Monaldeschi, under Martin V.³⁴ Shortly after, the ownership of Tessennano was transferred to

²⁷ ASV, Reg. Aven. 230, f. 252^{r-v}; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 129^v; The *cronica farnesiana* does construe a link between Clement VII's investiture of Castro of 1381 and Martin V's 1419 bull. BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 6^v.

²⁸ For the political context, see Chapter 5.

²⁹ ASV, Reg. Vat. 349, f. 93^{r-v}; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 124^v.

³⁰ ASV, Arm. XXXV, 14, ff. 20^r-25^r; ASV, Cam. Ap., Intr. Ex. 266, ff. 97^v, 315^v; ASS, Capitoli 3, ff. 425^r-427^r; ASS, Capitoli 67.

³¹ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

³² BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 124^r.

³³ ASV, Reg. Vat. 354, f. 183^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^v, 129^v.

³⁴ ASV, Reg. Vat. 371, ff. 99^v-100^r; ASV, Reg. Vat. 372, ff. 18^v-19^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 129^v.

Ranuccio after the death of Giorgio Farnese.³⁵ Nonetheless, the Camera Apostolica ran up an increasingly larger bill with Ranuccio – 11,000 florins by November 1433 – and was forced to cede the strategically important town and castle of Montalto on 4 December 1435 in exchange for writing off 12,900 florins of debt. This grant of Montalto was periodically renewed and came with extra privileges for the export of grain to Rome.³⁶ Several smaller grants followed, such as the investiture in 1439 with an estate called Vermeliasca, close to the city of Castro, as well as the hamlet of Casano.³⁷ A last major grant in exchange for 5,000 florins that were due to Ranuccio came when he received the investiture for half of the jurisdictions over Canino, Gradoli, and Abbazia ad Ponte – the other half belonged to Aldo Conti of Valmontone.³⁸ Finally, some of the money that Ranuccio did receive was used to acquire part of the rights over the estate of Pian d’Arcione. All these additions represented a considerable addition to the Farnese’s possessions. In fact, they were regarded as the impetus that revamped the Farnese from provincial nobles to great barons of the Papal States.³⁹ Such views warrant nuancing. Even if the Farnese had never managed to attain permanent ownership, many of the castles that the Farnese were invested with during the pontificates of Martin and Eugene had already been under their control during the Trecento. These included Abbazia ad Ponte and Montalto for intermittent periods but others like Musignano and Tessignano for decades on end. The investitures under Martin and Eugene, then, were partly a recovery of what had been in Farnese possession in the fourteenth century. Conversely, these investitures did not represent a further alienation of Church property, but a means through which the papacy rewarded the Farnese for their military service. It did so by granting castles and lands that had only recently devolved onto the papacy in the first place to which the Farnese perhaps sported a claim or that were already controlled by them in expectation of formal papal recognition. In turn, it allowed the Camera Apostolica to service its debts. The implications of

³⁵ ASV, Reg. Vat. 373, ff. 200^v-201^r.

³⁶ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 1871, ff. 2^v-5^v; ASV, Reg. Vat. 370, ff. 153^v-154^r; ASV, Reg. Vat. 373, ff. 306^r-307^r; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^v, 134^{r-v}.

³⁷ ASV, Arm. XXXVII, 17, f. 465^r; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^v, 130^r; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^r.

³⁸ ASV, Reg. Vat. 383, ff. 6^r-11^r; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 125^r, 130^r.

³⁹ Jean Guiraud, *L'état pontifical apres le grand schisme: etude de geographie politique* (Paris, 1895), pp. 131-2; Gamrath, *Farnese*, p. 23; Del Vecchio, *I Farnese*; Drei, *I Farnese*.

these suggestions are further developed in Chapter 5, where the Farnese's political affairs within the Papal States and their relationship with successive popes are addressed. The rhythm of the Farnese patrimony's expansion and contraction during the first half of the Quattrocento was in harmony with the strength of relations fostered between the Farnese and the papacy, although it ran in counterpoint to the solidity of papal finances.

These developments petered out around the middle of the century as the papal finances improved and rewards for military service by the baronial elite increasingly consisted of monetary payment rather than feudal investiture. The positions of Nicholas V (1447-1455), Callixtus III (1455-1458), and Paul II (1464-1471) were more secure than that of their predecessors, but the pontificates of Pius II (1458-1464), Sixtus IV (1471-1484), and Innocent VIII (1484-1492) were notoriously unruly. In general, it has been hypothesised that these developments resulted in decreased use of the vicariate in papal government while a programme of recovering Church property that had formerly been ruled directly by the papacy was instigated. This led to a reduced scope for baronial families to expand their territories.⁴⁰ Nicholas V's pontificate is exemplary in this respect; the pope pursued a vigorous policy of recuperating territories that his predecessor pawned to barons, and above all those pawned to the Farnese and their Orsini and Monaldeschi kin. Nicholas duly repaid the papacy's outstanding debts to the Farnese and thus regained Montalto and Marta.⁴¹ Montalto, Marta, and Abbazia ad Ponte controlled strategic bridges over the rivers Marta and Fiora that were pivotal for the migration of herds of livestock. The Camera Apostolica paid Ranuccio XVII Farnese 2,643 ducats in 1446 alone to provide passage for the papal flocks through various Farnese territories, of which 800 ducats was for Montalto.⁴² Thus, even if 16,900 florins were required to regain Marta and Montalto for the papacy, it was an investment that would eventually repay itself. During Pius II's troubled pontificate, the pendulum swung back in the opposite direction, and Marta was regained by the Farnese in return for

⁴⁰ Carocci, *Vasalli del papa*, pp. 19-38, 76-7.

⁴¹ Marta was an *universitas immediata subiecta* when its walls were repaired in 1455. ASV, Reg. Vat. 436, ff. 281^v-282^v.

⁴² Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, *Les pâturages de l'Église et la douane du bétail dans la province du Patrimoine (XIV^e-XV^e siècles)* (Rome, 1981), pp. 80-8.

bankrolling the Camera Apostolica with 5,000 florins.⁴³ Moreover, Pius provided the Farnese with subsidies amounting to 1,000 florins to repair the walls of Canino and Marta.⁴⁴ At the start of Paul II's pontificate, the Farnese were also able to acquire the other half of the jurisdictions over Canino, Gradoli, and Abbazia ad Ponte from Aldo Conti in 1464, which had been acquired first by Pius' cousins, Antonio and Jacopo Todeschini-Piccolomini.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Marta was the last formal papal grant made to the Farnese for the remainder of the century. Unsurprisingly, this led to the conclusion that the window for further acquisitions for the Farnese patrimony had closed by the end of Pius' reign.⁴⁶ Although these conclusions are partly negated by the evidence of subsequent additions to the Farnese patrimony – the Farnese purchased Castellardo from the Orsini in 1460, as well as half of Burghetto in 1446, the other half in 1459, and 5/8 of Bisenzio in 1484 from the de' Bisenzi – these acquisitions were minor by comparison to the papal investitures of the first half of the century.⁴⁷ The Farnese's history therefore seems to corroborate the argument that there was a change in attitude towards the use of the vicariate in papal government, which took place around the mid-century alongside an increase in revenues, improvements in bureaucracy, and a gradual consolidation of temporal power. These developments resulted in fewer opportunities for territorial gain within the Papal States for ambitious barons. Yet, even if such opportunities were limited, papal government did not make any substantial inroads in expanding its power in territories under baronial control either. In fact, in imitation of papal government, the Farnese increasingly focused their efforts on the internal organisation of their patrimony.

⁴³ ASV, Arm. XXXV, 33, ff. 139^r-141^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 125^v; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^r.

⁴⁴ ASV, Arm. XXXV, 33, ff. 139^r-141^v; ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

⁴⁵ ASV, Reg. Vat. 497, ff. 190^r-191^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 126^r, 130^r; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^r; Aldo Conti still paid a *census* of 12 libbra of candle wax for Canino, Gradoli and Abbazia ad Ponte in 1463. ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 841, filza 24.

⁴⁶ Zorzi, "Ranuccio Farnese" and "Gabriele Francesco Farnese", *DBI*.

⁴⁷ ASV, Reg. Vat. 478, f. 252^r; ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 843, filza 21; ASVit, Archivio notarile distrettuale di Viterbo 325, ff. 43^v-46^r; ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 125^v-127^r, 130^v; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, ff. 8^r-9^r.

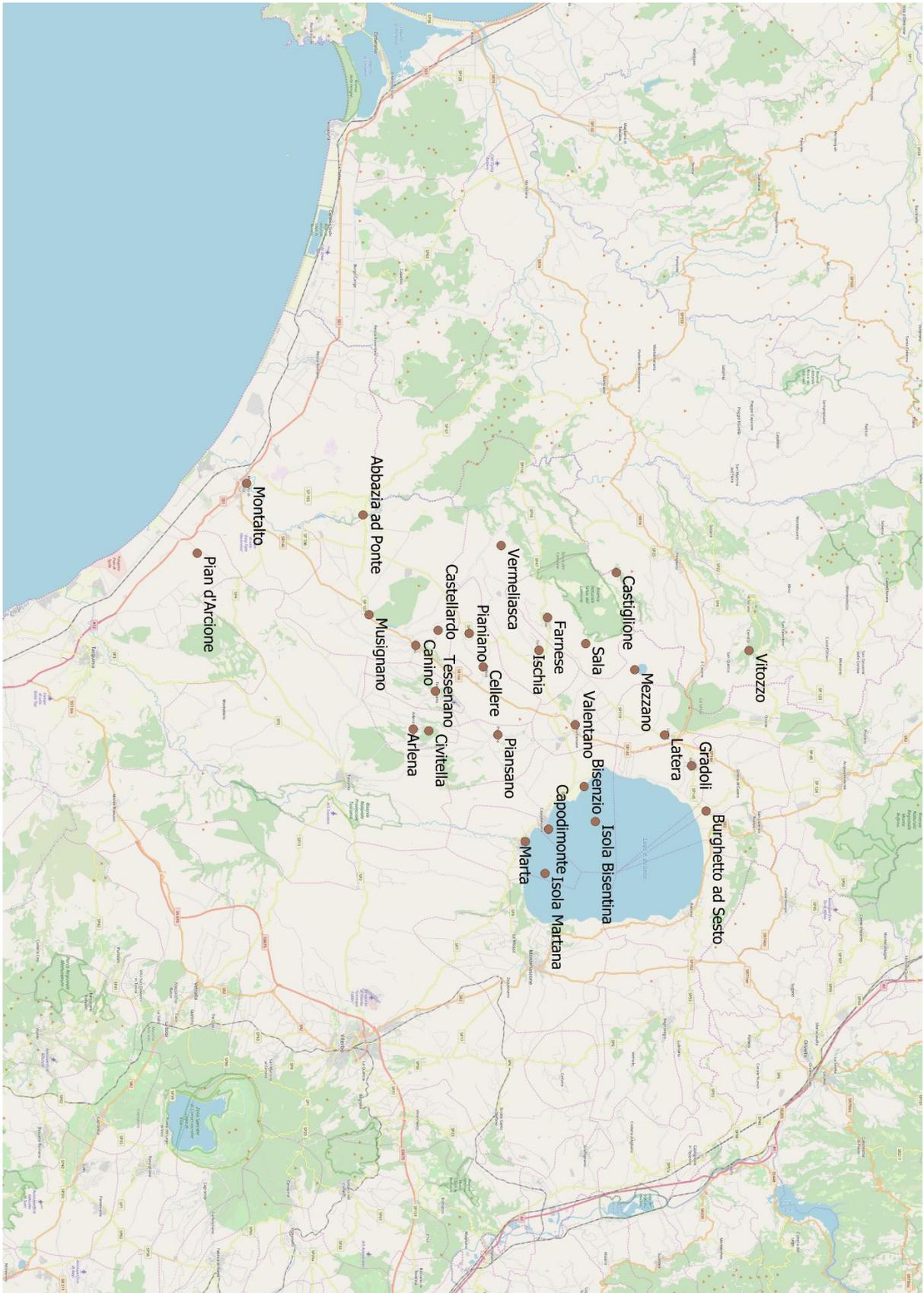


Figure 3: Map Farnese Possessions 1494

To put all the information regarding the extent of the Farnese patrimony into a broader perspective: by controlling roughly thirty holdings, the Farnese were nowhere in the same league as the Orsini and Colonna. Nevertheless, Christine Shaw has found similar numbers for families such as the Savelli, Conti, and Caetani, which had all benefited from a relative elected to the papacy.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the Farnese portfolio was diversified. Like the Orsini in Rome, the Farnese invested extensively in real estate in the cities bordering their patrimony and even further afield.⁴⁹ In 1453, as well as in 1467, the Farnese were taxed in Siena for owning real estate within the city walls valued at the considerable sum of 6,250 florins.⁵⁰ As a point of comparison, the wealthy and influential Siennese knight Mariano Bargagli owned 3.383 florins in assets in 1453, offset by 1,081 of debt to others.⁵¹ Yet, the Farnese owned real estate elsewhere, too. In Corneto – present-day Tarquinia – Ranuccio XVII donated a palace containing four shops located at a prominent spot at the city’s castle gate to Giovanni Vitelleschi, who subsequently gave it to the city magistrate.⁵² From Ranuccio’s will, it is clear the Farnese owned a palace in the city of Castro and several houses in Montalto. As citizens of Orvieto and Toscanella, the Farnese must have owned palaces there as well, which were a prerequisite for citizenship. Then there was the large palace in Viterbo. Moreover, Ranuccio had invested 11,000 florins in the Florentine public debt.⁵³ These shares yielded a return of roughly 8% per year and represented roughly 15% of the size of the working capital of the Medici bank in its heyday between 1435 and 1450.⁵⁴ Baronial families also owned large herds that represented vast quantities of capital. For example, in 1433 Ranuccio XVII’s men stole 300 pigs that turned out to belong to Ceccho de’ Baschi, one of his relatives. In order to right this wrong, Ranuccio duly paid the hefty sum of 1,000 ducats to

⁴⁸ Shaw, *The Political Role*, Appendix.

⁴⁹ Guendelina Ajello Mahler, “The Orsini Family Papers at the University of California, Los Angeles: Property Administration, Political Strategy, and Architectural Legacy”, *Viator* 39/2 (2008), pp. 297-322.

⁵⁰ ASS, Lira 57, f. 4^v; Lira 61, f. 92^v. I thank Philippa Jackson for this reference.

⁵¹ ASS, Lira 138, ff. 697^r-698^v; On his political influence and exile from Siena in 1456, see Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 32.

⁵² Giovanni Insolera, *Discorsi, Annali, e Privilegij di Corneto dell’Archidiacono Mutio Polidoro* (Tarquinia, 2007), p. 245; Paola Supino, *La ‘Margarita Cornetana’: Regesto dei documenti* (Rome, 1969), pp. 396-7.

⁵³ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 315, f. 83^r; Angelo III, Gabriele Francesco, Pier Luigi I, and Pietro Bertoldo II Farnese to Cosimo de’ Medici, 20 March 1457. ASF, MAP, VI, 220^{r-v}.

⁵⁴ Raymond de Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397-1494* (Cambridge MA, 1963), p. 61.

compensate this loss.⁵⁵ Mindful that baronial families owned herds amounting to thousands of cows, pigs, goats, and sheep, we get a sense of the vast wealth that underpinned their political and military power.⁵⁶ The Farnese's castles, lands, cattle, and real estate represented a net worth that amounted to several hundred thousand florins.

These vast possessions also yielded a significant income. Again, it is impossible to reach any conclusive numbers, but it is evident that the agricultural production of the Farnese's fertile tracts of land produced ample surpluses for sale at local markets.⁵⁷ The rivers and lakes, especially the river Marta and the Lago di Bolsena, yielded plenty of fish for sale in the city as the registers of the fish market in Rome attest.⁵⁸ Control over roads that facilitated the seasonal migration patterns of large herds allowed for the levying of a toll, the *dogana*. If we remember that the Camera Apostolica alone paid 2,643 ducats to Ranuccio for the transfer of the papal herds across his territories, one might imagine that the overall income from the *dogana* was much higher. A record of litigation over stolen cattle shows that livestock from as far as the city of Aquila in the Kingdom of Naples grazed on Ranuccio's lands near Montalto.⁵⁹ Other sources of income came from feudal privileges and from fees charged for dispensing justice.⁶⁰ To the income generated by the Farnese patrimony must be added the significant sums that were earned as mercenary-captain. To illustrate, Jean Guiraud calculated that the Camera Apostolica, despite running into ever larger debts with Ranuccio, nevertheless did pay out 13,886 florins to him over the course of several years.⁶¹ Personal stipends to Farnese *condottieri*

⁵⁵ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Balia of Siena, 31 December 1433. ASS, Concistoro 1931, 67.

⁵⁶ To illustrate, Onorato III Caetani di Sermoneta was accused of stealing 1,400 sheep in one single raid from his neighbours, whereas his cousin Onorato Caetani di Filettino absconded 50 horses in another. Archivio Caetani, 178591 & 188078.

⁵⁷ Orvieto, for example, bought large quantities of grain during a period of shortage in 1420. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 2, filza 22.

⁵⁸ Alfio Cortonesi & Angela Lanconelli, *La Tuscia pontificia nel medioevo: Ricerche di storia* (Trieste, 2016), pp. 347-60; Angela Lanconelli, "I registri della gabella di S. Angelo (1463 e 1466): una fonte per la storia dell'approvvigionamento e del consumo di pesce fresco nella Roma del Quattrocento", *Archivi e Cultura* 45 (2012), pp. 79-98.

⁵⁹ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Balia of Siena, 21 April and 4 July 1438. ASS, Concistoro 1940, 16, 59.

⁶⁰ Sandro Carocci, *Baroni di Roma: dominazioni signorili e lignaggi aristocratici nel Duecento e primo Trecento* (Rome, 1993), pp. 261-6; Alfio Cortonesi, *Terre e signori nel Lazio medioevale: Un'economia rurale nei secoli XIII-XIV* (Naples, 1988), pp. 175-217; Among the feudal privileges mentioned in Ranuccio XVII's will are the *glandaticum*, *herbaticum*, *spigaticum*, and *ius molendini*. Lefevre, "Il Testamento".

⁶¹ Guiraud, *L'état pontifical*, pp. 131-2.

ranged from several hundred ducats to a thousand for a period of six months, and it is likely that experienced captains could make some profit on the lump sum provided for levying and maintenance of troops.⁶² In all, therefore, it would be a reasonable estimate that the Farnese's annual income ranged in the region of 10% of the Camera Apostolica's overall revenue, which received around 150,000 florins a year during Martin's pontificate, although this had doubled under Sixtus to roughly 300,000 in 1480.⁶³ Therefore, solid wealth and a vast income formed the foundation of the Farnese's ability to maintain a military presence and pursue influence in the political sphere. Moreover, favourable marriages guaranteed by a large dowry could be arranged, and clerical offices for Farnese sons had to be purchased at steep prices. Finally, large sums must have been spent on the extensive construction work undertaken at various castles, palaces, and other places where the Farnese dynasty was memorialised. Overall, the evidence pertaining to the Farnese's patrimony supports an argument that the Farnese's rise was less meteoric, and more obviously founded on a solid economic basis that was already largely in place at the start of the century.

The Government of the Farnese Patrimony

Ruling over a large patrimony with a complicated stream of revenues required investment in good government. Organising the patrimony's government entailed the creation of a bureaucratic apparatus including a chancery for promulgating legislation, delegating areas of government to vassals – the term *vasalli* was used to denote subjects living within the areas of jurisdictional power in general and did not imply a legal status with feudal duties attached to it – and maintaining relations with nearby cities for the export of agricultural surpluses or arranging provisions in times of dearth. Baronial government was at times light-handed and offered platforms where local nobles and prominent townsmen could express their voice. Local governmental institutions often complemented baronial rule.⁶⁴ Ranuccio XVII

⁶² Michael Mallett & John Hale, *The Military Organisation of a Renaissance State: Venice, c. 1400 to 1617* (Cambridge, 1984), 115-16.

⁶³ Partner, "Papal Financial Policy", pp. 17-62; Partner, *The Lands of St Peter*, p. 404; Christine Shaw found similar revenues for barons of a comparable standing. Shaw, *Barons and Castellans*, pp. 32-6.

⁶⁴ Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*, pp. 75-85; Shaw, *The Political Role*, pp. 61-8.

even exhibited some largesse and included a clause in his will that exempted the inhabitants of Farnese, Ischia, Latera, Valentano, and Cellere from all feudal dues for the duration of one year. Moreover, Ranuccio “warned his aforementioned sons that they should respect and treat well all of their subjects and servants in such a manner that they may be accordingly respected and will receive their subjects’ spontaneous, free, and loyal service.”⁶⁵ Good government was as much a moral imperative as a practical attitude. Seeing to all these responsibilities meant that members of the Farnese family were regularly engaged in actively governing their lands and often moved from place to place. This vision of baronial government stands in contrast to an older one. In this earlier vision, it was generally presumed that the barons in the Quattrocento Papal States had little incentive to improve the agricultural yields of their territories, and that they even pursued active policies of transforming arable land into pastures so that they could be rented out.⁶⁶ Yet, this depiction of absentee lordship, even if certainly true in individual cases, does not reflect the care taken by the Farnese in running their patrimony. Rather, the notion of dynasty imposed a sense of custodianship towards a patrimony that found its expression in the active involvement of all members of the Farnese in administration – especially that of the Farnese’s wives and matriarchs. It was manifested in the organisation of production, the institution of fairs, dispensing of justice, the appointment of officers to civic and ecclesiastical offices, and the removal of barriers for the freedom of movement of labourers and products. Although the source material is too scant to provide much detail on the day-to-day management of the Farnese’s affairs and its impact on the social life of their lordships, the general picture that emerges is one in which the Farnese took care in the active government of their patrimony.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ “Item monuit suprascriptos eius filios ut diligere debeant et bene tractare omnes eorum subditos et servitores, taliter ut ab ipsis merito diligantur et spontaneum et liberum ac fidelem servitium recipiant.” Lefevre, “Il Testamento”, p. 206.

⁶⁶ Caravale & Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio*, pp. 48-9, 107-9.

⁶⁷ For the much better documented area of Lombardy, see Gamberini, *The Clash of Legitimacies*, pp. 166-76 and references there, especially the works of Gamberini, Marco Gentile, Massimo della Misericordia, Federico del Tredici, and Giorgio Chittolini. For the extensively studied government of the Principality of Taranto in the Kingdom of Naples, see Lorenza Vantaggiato, “Les registres 245 et 246 des archives de Giovanni Antonio Orsini del Balzo. Étude de cas: commerce et pêche à Tarente (1463-1466)”, *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome: Moyen Age* 128/2 (2016), pp. 511-26; Gemma Colesanti (ed.), *‘Il Re cominciò a conoscere che il principe era un*

A dynastic consciousness gave the Farnese men and their wives a shared interest in passing on a preserved or enlarged patrimony to their heirs, either their own offspring or that of close relatives. Although it is true that Farnese men were often away on military campaigns earning their living as *condottieri*, the view of absentee lordship is also largely predicated on an outdated view of women's perceived role in society. Women's supposed seclusion from society has been overstated by Renaissance historians due to the prominence traditionally attributed to the Florentine and Venetian contexts, cities where restrictions on movement and interaction notably reduced female agency.⁶⁸ However, baronial noblewomen from the Papal States were educated from a young age in the expectation that they would take on an active role in the government of their husband's and son's patrimony and learned the basics of writing, arithmetic, and the rudiments of Latin.⁶⁹ Natalie Tomas illuminates how differences in expectations of gender roles led to confusion and even criticism when the Orsini wives of Medici rulers trespassed on Florentine sensibilities.⁷⁰ Similarly, Geronima Farnese at times surprised her Florentine in-laws with the liberties she took. For example, when she felt her husband, Puccio Pucci, made too little effort to see or write to her from his position as Florentine commissioner in Faenza, she neither announced her plan to visit him there, nor asked for the usual permission to leave Florence. During her journey, she caught the unsuspecting Leonello Tolomei, Viscount of Brisighella, completely off-guard (Brisighella is a castle on the border between Florentine and Faentine territory). To his own horror, Tolomei was neither able to stage a formal reception nor to obtain appropriate provisions for a suitably splendid banquet as a result of Geronima's unexpected arrival.⁷¹ Nor did Geronima shrink back from using her husband's diplomatic network to acquire cake

altro re': Il Principato di Taranto e il contesto mediterraneo (secc. XII-XV) (Rome, 2014); Luciana Petracca & Benedetto Vetere (eds.), *Un principato territoriale nel Regno di Napoli? Gli Orsini del Balzo principi di Taranto (1399-1463)* (Rome, 2013).

⁶⁸ Carolyn James, "Florence and Ferrara: Dynastic Marriage and Politics", in Robert Black & John Law (eds.), *The Medici: Citizens and Masters* (Florence, 2015), pp. 365-78. See also the stimulating studies in Letizia Arcangeli & Susanna Peyronel (eds.), *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento* (Rome, 2008).

⁶⁹ Fresu, "Educazione linguistica", pp. 105-52.

⁷⁰ Natalie Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 44-82.

⁷¹ Leonello de Ptolemeis alias de Assassinis to Puccio Pucci, 24 July 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 150^{r-v}.

from Siena, which she much preferred to that of Florence.⁷² Noblewomen could thus expect to exercise a certain authority and agency in their affairs. In matters of government, the Farnese wives both oversaw the management of finances and trade, but also readily engaged in litigation with neighbouring communities – and possibly lords. Primavera da Varano and Lella Orsini of Pitigliano litigated over stolen horses and cows with Siena and Orvieto and personally conducted financial transactions.⁷³ Giovannella Caetani was involved in the sale of the agricultural surplus from her castle of Marta in Orvieto, as was Violante Monaldeschi.⁷⁴ Perhaps the most eloquent example that illustrates the authority with which baronial women could participate in public affairs is a letter written by Battista dell'Anguillara, wife of Pietro Bertoldo II Farnese, to the government of Orvieto in defence of her husband's jurisdictional powers in Farnese and Latera:

Magnificent men and those I regard as fathers, after my commendations etcetera. Because I heard that your podestà has taken and imprisoned one of my subjects from here in Latera named Pietro, also known as the ox, for a certain homicide committed by him against another of my subjects from Farnese in the countryside of Pitigliano, who has already been punished by the lord Pietro Bertoldo and released with his life because the death was the same as if he died for a cause, I am not a little bit surprised that your podestà wants to punish crimes committed in the territories of us Lords here, because it is neither his jurisdiction nor his duty, not knowing the [nature of the] crimes and not wanting to grasp that these were committed in our territories, which I cannot understand the reason of. I therefore pray your magnificences to take into consideration our [point of view] and that you will want justice to be done of your governor or his lieutenant as my subjects do not endure such injustice in your city as long as I demonstrate to desire no injustices to be done to any of yours in my territories. But as a result of my respect for justice and also the affection that I have for your city I shall use all my own power for my

⁷² Geronima Farnese to Andrea da Foiano, 30 April 1491. ASF, MAP, LXXVII, 283^{r-v}.

⁷³ Primavera da Varano to Balìa of Siena, 30 November 1483. ASS, Balìa 515, 99; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 127^r; Agneella Orsini to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 2 March 1470 & 1475. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

⁷⁴ Giovannella Caetani to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 23 May 1486. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Violante Monaldeschi to Balìa of Siena, 12 & 20 March 1465. ASS, Concistoro 2010, 71, 80.

men here, asking you to release him and not give cause for offence before our superiors as I hope your magnificences will do, to whom I offer myself in all benefit and honour.⁷⁵

Such a forceful defence by Battista dell'Anguillara against intrusion in the area of criminal justice that could potentially set a dangerous precedent shows strength of character. Moreover, she also expected that her voice would be heard and listened to. In such a context, it is unsurprising that wives and mothers not only had an active role in fostering their adoptive family's kinship network but were actively involved in political affairs. A rare surviving (and heavily damaged) letter that Agnese Farnese wrote to Gentile Virginio Orsini, the employer of her sons Luca and Giovanni Savelli, on 3 September 1494 requesting advice on what course to pursue – this was the point at which King Charles VIII of France crossed the Alps and invaded Italy – via letter or via personal intermediary if secrecy were required, is further proof that the senior women of the Farnese family took an active role in political affairs.⁷⁶

The efforts of the Farnese men and their wives went further than merely overseeing their territories' economic activity and social life.⁷⁷ As lords, the Farnese invested in improvements of both

⁷⁵ “Magnifici viri & tamq[uam] p[at]res post c[om]men[dationem] etc[etera]. P[er]ch[e] intendo el podesta vostro sti ha preso & tene i[n] pregione uno mio s[er]vitor[e] de qui da lathera chiamato pietro all[ia]s el toro p[er] certo homicidio p[er] esso co[m]messo c[on]tra unaltro mio s[er]vitor[e] da farnexe i[n] el te[n]ime[n]to de pitigliano del quale p[er] el s[igno]re pierbertholdo e stato punito e lib[er]atoli la vita p[er]ch[e] el caso della mo[r]te fu stesso q[ua]lch[e] mori se ne de cagione, piglio admiration[e] no[n] piccola el podesta vostro vogli punire li maleficij facti i[n] le te[r]re di noi signori de qua p[er]ch[e] no[n] e sua jurisdictione ne officio no[n] solo dicog[n]osciuti malefitij ma diq[ua]le si voglia no[n] cognosciuto essendo c[om]messo i[n] le t[er]re nostre no[n] po di ragion[e] cognoscicare. P[er] tanto prego le m[agnificen]tie v[ostre] ch[e] i[n]tuitu n[ost]ro & della iustitia voglino p[ro]veder[e] appresso al vostro gove[r]nator[e] o suo luocotene[n]te le miei s[er]vitori no[n] patino tale i[n]iustitie i[n] la citta vostra p[er]ch[e] ne dum chio soppo[r]tasse i[n] le mie t[er]re fusse f[ac]to i[n]iustitia ad nissuno de vostri. Ma p[er] respecto de la iustitia et poi affection[e] ho a la citta vostra mettaria delle faculta mie p[ro]p[ri]e p[er] li ho[m]ini di quella prega[n]dolo lo facci relassar[e] ne ce dia materia di querela appresso li sup[er]iori come spero le v[ostre] m[agnificen]tie op[er]ara[n]no ad leq[ua]le me offero i[n] om[n]e loro beneficio e honore.”

Battista dell'Anguillara to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 4 July 1485. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

⁷⁶ Agnese Farnese to Virginio Orsini, 3 September 1494. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 3, f. 671^r.

⁷⁷ Again, when it comes to investment in improving noble patrimony's productivity the Lombardy region is much more extensively covered than the Papal States for the fifteenth century and provides an interesting point of comparison: Andrea Gamberini & Fabrizio Pagnoni (eds.), *La signoria rurale nell'Italia del tardo Medioevo: 1. Gli spazi economici* (Milan, 2019).

an organisational as well as a technological nature. Gabriele Francesco Farnese, for example, arranged a licence for a certain *maestro* Valentino da Gubbio to run his woodworks as master carpenter.⁷⁸ The Farnese patrimony contained an infrastructure of mills, fisheries, and at the Lago di Bolsena bird nets were used to catch fowl for consumption or sale.⁷⁹ Organising fishing rights for the communities on the shores of the lake was regulated by a treaty signed on Isola Bisentina in a meeting presided by Gabriele Francesco Farnese in 1463.⁸⁰ Furthermore, in 1461 Angelo III, Gabriele Francesco, Pier Luigi I, and Pietro Bertoldo II Farnese instituted an annual fair in Valentano that started on the third Sunday of May for livestock, horses, donkeys, and other sorts of merchandise – for which all customs were abolished for the duration of the market fair.⁸¹ The abolition of customs and the organisation of market fairs were instruments used for stimulating economic activity normally adopted by regional states or princely rulers, but the Farnese’s case shows that barons could emulate their economic policies.⁸² What the institution of a fair, management of tolls, and a treaty over fishing rights also suggests is a sense of authority over borders; the men, animals, and goods moving across them; and an interest in their spatial organisation.

The Farnese’s interest in defining precise borders reflects a wider Quattrocento occupation with the spatiality of borders and control over the movement of persons and goods.⁸³ In many cases, members of the Farnese were called upon to preside over meetings wherein neighbouring cities tried to resolve their local border disputes. Yet, the Farnese themselves likewise hammered out a series of deals with the Orsini of Pitigliano between 1472 and 1474 defining the exact border between Mezzano,

⁷⁸ Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 25 July 1464. ASS, Concistoro 2008, 57.

⁷⁹ Luiten, “Friends and Family, Fruit and Fish”.

⁸⁰ Archivio Storico di Marta, Copie di lettere, sentenze e memorie diverse 357, ff. 6^r-8^r, published in Fabiano Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, “Gli oratori dell’Isola Bisentina dal tempo di Ranuccio Farnese agli interventi di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane”, in Maurizio Calvesi, Roberto Cannatà & Claudio Strinati (eds.), *Il Quattrocento a Viterbo* (Rome, 1983), p. 127, note 29.

⁸¹ Cruciano Codoni, *Cenni storici intorno alla terra di Valentano* (Viterbo, 1848).

⁸² Franco Franceschi & Luca Molà, “Regional States and Economic Development”, in Gamberini & Lazzarini, *The Italian Renaissance State*, pp. 444-66.

⁸³ I thank Luca Zenobi for our discussions on the issue of borders and for letting me read parts of his unpublished manuscript. For borders and territoriality in Quattrocento Italy, see the upcoming book based on his DPhil thesis. Luca Zenobi, “Borders and the Politics of Space in Late Medieval Italy: Milan, Venice and their Territories in the Fifteenth Century” (D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 2018). See also, Luciano Piffanelli, “Crossing Boundaries: A Problem of Territoriality in Renaissance Italy”, *Viator* 49/3 (2018), pp. 245-75.

Castiglione, and Pitigliano – and by extension the border between the Papal States and the Holy Roman Empire.⁸⁴ Similarly, the Farnese brokered acts to clarify the border between Valentano and Latera on 4 January 1450, between Valentano and Bisenzio on 21 January 1466, and again Valentano and Latera on 18 May 1480.⁸⁵ It is important to recognise, however, that greater precision in the spatial definition of borders and an increase in control did not necessarily lead to greater impediments to the freedom of movement as some of the surviving material vividly attests. On the contrary, on 22 March 1465 Gabriele Francesco Farnese negotiated, also in name of his brother Pier Luigi, an agreement with the government of Castro that allowed the labourers of that city, under certain conditions, to work in the territory of Abbazia ad Ponte. This agreement was modelled on an earlier agreement between the communal government of Canino, on the one hand, and Gabriele Francesco Farnese and Aldo Conti as lords of Abbazia ad Ponte and Canino on the other. This earlier settlement, dated 14 April 1459, allowed workers from Canino access to the territory of Abbazia ad Ponte, and the Caninesi also received the right to let their cattle, especially their milk cows and buffalos, graze in the pastures there.⁸⁶ In these cases, the Farnese removed restrictions on the freedom of movement of goods and labour with aims of integrating their patrimony, rationalising its labour force, and organising husbandry. These arrangements therefore serve as an illustration of the Farnese's care for their patrimony but also shed light on their self-perception as independent lords in full control of their borders and with full authority to legislate.

This sense of independence and negotiation on a basis of equality with the larger Italian territorial states is perhaps best reflected in the constant stream of litigation with Siena over the release of imprisoned vassals or the extradition of convicts. Two examples from 1434 can be taken as illustrative. In a nocturnal raid, men from the *contado* of Siena had entered Farnese territories near Montalto and were caught stealing horses belonging to one of his subjects. They made off with their

⁸⁴ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 126^v.

⁸⁵ Archivio Storico del Comune di Valentano e Archivio di Castro, Atti di delimitazione dei confini territoriali 45, 46 & 47.

⁸⁶ Copies of these deals are preserved in ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

booty, while another party had stolen 68 *bestie grosse* after a scuffle that left a man from the town of Farnese dead. When writing to the Sienese government, Ranuccio insisted that all losses be compensated for and the perpetrators be handed over to him for punishment.⁸⁷ The perpetrators were soon identified as soldiers of Niccolò Fortebraccio, Siena's army captain, and although there are no clues as to how and whether the dispute was resolved, Ranuccio sent one of his men to Siena – potentially to defend his lord's case in person.⁸⁸ There was no guarantee that payments would in fact be made, although occasionally they were. When in 1438 a Catalan galley, presumably engaged in the wars raging in the Kingdom of Naples, staged a raid near Montalto and took twelve cows aboard and sailed off, Siena reimbursed these losses inflicted by its allies, although the subsequent litigation did lead to a conflict over respective jurisdictional boundaries and superiority. At the same time, as Ranuccio lamented, the dispute of 1434 was still left unresolved.⁸⁹ As the exchange between Battista dell'Anguillara and Orvieto, a city under direct papal rule, attests, such litigation was ubiquitous between any neighbouring communities or lords who could claim authority over criminal affairs. In fact, Ranuccio even intervened in favour of the city of Viterbo when Sienese forces stole 3,000 sheep. However, he did so as papal commissioner and commander of the armies in the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, exercising the right to request reparations seemed to be intrinsically linked to the possession of jurisdictional authority. The Farnese possessed full jurisdictional powers for all their allodial holdings, and the texts of the papal vicariates without exception delegate the *merum et mixtum imperium cum gladiis potestatis*.⁹¹ Lords were expected to exercise their judicial office, and if they were absent on military campaigns, their wives took over.⁹² Papal justice was still a distant prospect during the Quattrocento: it only made significant inroads in the Papal States during the late-

⁸⁷ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 10 June, 23 July & 3 August 1434. ASS, Concistoro 1932, 44, 54, 63.

⁸⁸ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 15 August 1434. ASS, Concistoro 1932, 71; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 20 August 1434. ASS, Concistoro 2008, 68.

⁸⁹ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 21 April, 6 June, 17 June & 4 July 1438. ASS, Concistoro 1940, 16, 44, 45, 50, 59.

⁹⁰ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 6 March 1433. ASS, Concistoro 1931, 99.

⁹¹ Cengarle, "Lordships, Fiefs, and 'Small States'", 284-303; Carocci, *Vassalli del papa*, pp. 34-8.

⁹² Violante Monaldeschi to Balìa of Siena, 22 September 1468. ASS, Concistoro 2020, 18.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and not without fierce resistance from not only the nobles at whose expense it was introduced but also from local communities who preferred to have criminal justice dispensed by lords with whom they entertained personal connections rather than foreign papal agents with a rapid turnover in office.⁹³ The papacy simply did not possess the manpower or authority to infringe on baronial privileges, and the delegation of criminal justice to the feudal nobility was as much a practical solution as a right that barons felt was entirely their due.

It is important to note that the Farnese's exercise of their lordship did not mean that there were no other local institutions in place. In fact, many sources attest to the existence of a host of offices and institutions to which lordly powers were delegated. These included castellans, viscounts, *podestà*, and communal councils.⁹⁴ For example, in 1469 the *Consiglio comunale* of Canino, after a request by its *sindaco generale* on behalf of Benedetto da Orte – the *podestà* appointed by Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi Farnese – appointed two representatives to present the small sum traditionally due to Toscanella on the feast of Santi Martiri Secondiano, Veriano, and Marcelliano so the town could remain part of Toscanella's *contado*.⁹⁵ The implications of remaining formally subject to Toscanella will be examined below; here the discussion will focus on the institutions and offices in place in a large town like Canino. Even if the *podestà* was appointed by Canino's lords, there was also a communal council that decided on day-to-day affairs and a (presumably elected) mayor who oversaw the deliberations. There is no reason why Canino should be regarded as exceptional. Marta, for example, had an appointed *podestà* and communal governments are attested during the short period of direct papal rule under Nicholas V and Callixtus III.⁹⁶ Bequests to chancellors and castellans in Farnese wills further

⁹³ Irene Fosi, *Papal Justice: Subjects and Courts in the Papal State, 1500-1750* (Washington DC, 2011).

⁹⁴ Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*, pp. 75-85; Caravale & Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio*, p. 45; The interaction between local communal government and noble power in the Papal States is much-better understood for 'new' papal families like the Borghese and Barberini. Bertrand Forclaz, *Le famille Borghese et ses fiefs: l'autorité négociée dans l'État pontifical d'Ancien Régime* (Rome, 2006); Caroline Castiglione, *Patrons and Adversaries: Nobles and Villagers in Italian Politics, 1640-1760* (Oxford, 2005).

⁹⁵ ACAT, Pergamena 67, published in Giuseppe Giontella (ed.), *Le pergamene dell'Archivio Capitolare di Tuscania* (Rome, 1998), pp. 192-4.

⁹⁶ ASV, Reg. Vat. 436, ff. 281^v-282^v; ASVIt, Archivio notarile distrettuale di Viterbo 56, f. 6^{r-v}.

support the presence of offices that reinforced seigneurial government.⁹⁷ Apart from lay offices, the Farnese were often in possession or were granted the *iuspatronatus* of churches and other clerical institutions. In Valentano, for example, they were granted the *iuspatronatus* over the Church of Sant'Antonio by Eugene IV in 1437, of Sant'Antonio again and San Barnabeo in Valentano by Pius II in 1462.⁹⁸ Additionally, Ranuccio's will specifically mentions the *iuspatronatus* of the church of Latera.⁹⁹ It is likely the Farnese retained the *iura patronatus* of the Franciscan friaries founded on Isola Bisentina and in Canino.¹⁰⁰ Farnese lordship must therefore not only have impacted the lay government of the towns under their rule but also their religious affairs. At the same time a balance was struck that left practical matters to self-government and maintained the existing communal institutions unaltered. Only the appointment of a *podestà*, viscount or castellan supplemented these bodies. The view that emerges, therefore, is one in which a plurality of governmental institutions characterised the political community of the lordship.

Citizenship

The involvement of Farnese women and men in governing their patrimony presupposes their presence in the Farnese territories. However, this begs the question of how to interpret the Farnese's possession of city palaces and the prominence attributed to them. In part this revolves around the assumption that the city was a natural focus of any dynasty with political aspirations in Quattrocento Italy. Yet, the evidence suggests this view requires alteration. As virtually all letters written by members of the Farnese family mention a date and place of writing, it is possible to make some assumptions on the basis of, albeit limited, information. Table 1 plots the location of writing for 141 letters written between 1417 and 1495 at one of their territories in the countryside or city residences. I have not included those letters written while on military campaign. Table 2 and 3 then subdivide these results

⁹⁷ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 351, f. 131^v; Lefevre, "Il Testamento", p. 201.

⁹⁸ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^v-126^r.

⁹⁹ Lefevre, "Il Testamento", p. 198.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 3.

for the period 1417-1450 and the period 1450-1495. Only nine letters were written by the Farnese's wives due to their underrepresentation in the surviving material.

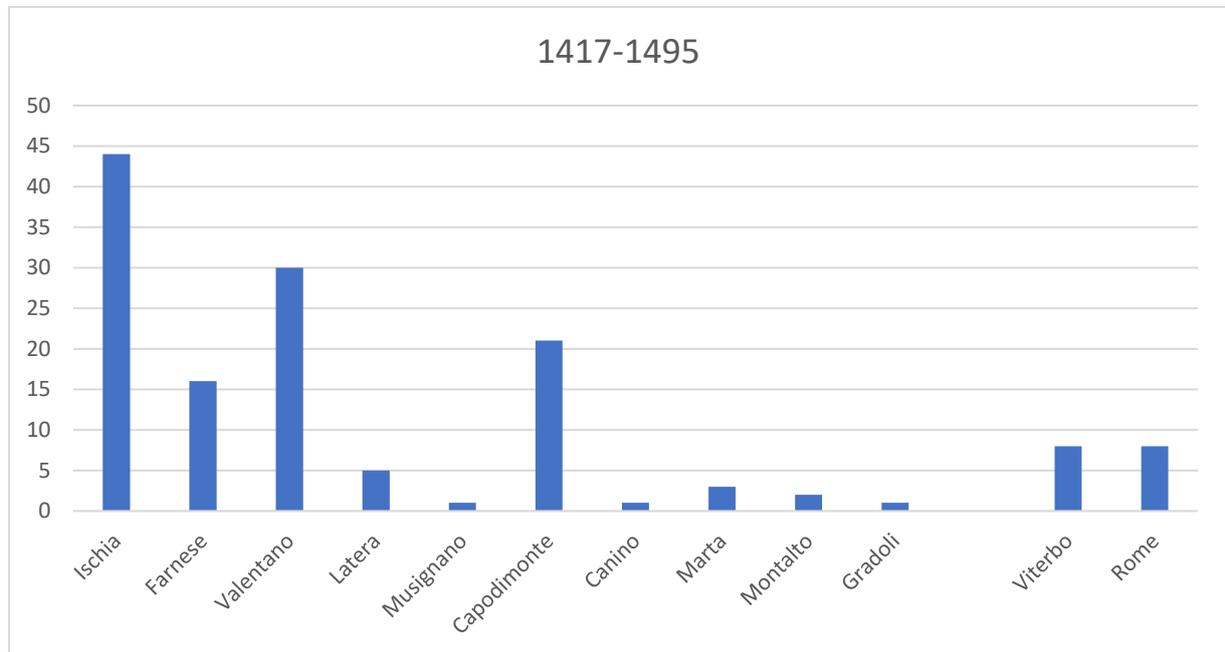


Table 1: Letters 1417-1495

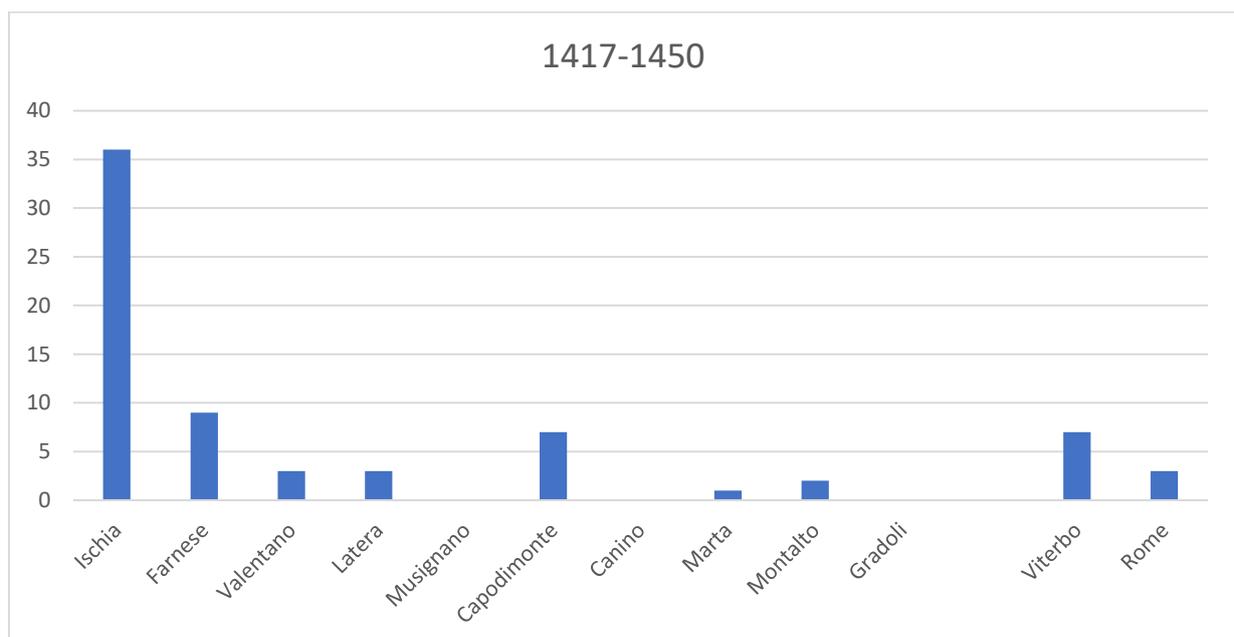


Table 2: Letters 1417-1450

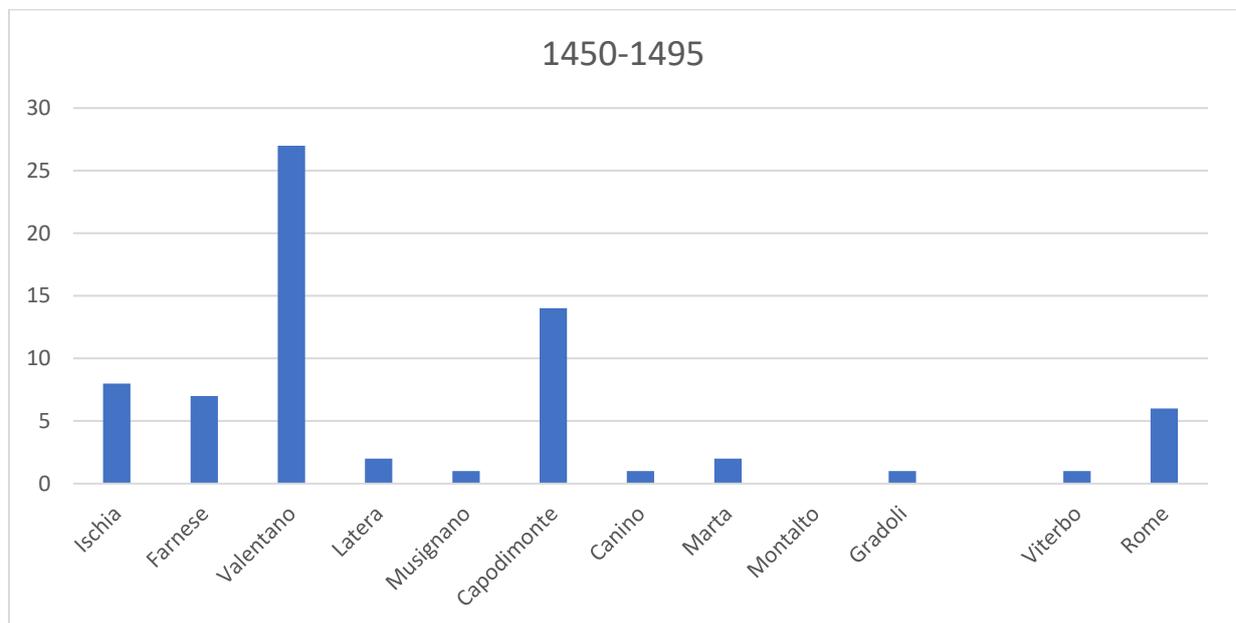


Table 3: Letters 1450-1495

Several important conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the information contained in these tables. First, a preference for several residences is observable, and within that preference there is a shift between the first and second half of the Quattrocento. Where during the first half of the Quattrocento the imposing castle of Ischia was Ranuccio XVII's favoured residence, his descendants resided more often in Valentano and Capodimonte.¹⁰¹ This shift coincides with construction work that was executed at both Valentano and Capodimonte when both castles were transformed into more palatial residences around the middle of the century.¹⁰² The presence of extensive living quarters suitable for housing the family, hosting guests, and displaying dynastic authority seems to have been the determining factor over considerations of a military nature. Abbazia ad Ponte, for example, was one of the Farnese's most imposing castles with its impressive moated fortifications and large keep that

¹⁰¹ For the castles of Ischia, Valentano, and Capodimonte, see Figures 11 and 13-14 in the Appendix.

¹⁰² Pannucci, *I castelli*, pp. 139-41.

dominated the bridge over the river Fiora.¹⁰³ However, living space inside was constricted and, as a consequence, its role as a seat of government limited. Secondly, although the tables do not show it, there is a peculiar preference of Farnese wives for castles that their respective husbands did not often frequent. Giovannella Caetani wrote two of the three letters preserved by her hand in Marta – a castle we know her father-in-law Ranuccio XVII had reserved in his will as a residence for his soon to be widowed wife, Agnesella Monaldeschi.¹⁰⁴ Pietro Bertoldo II's favoured residence was Farnese, but his wife Battista dell'Anguillara wrote from Latera.¹⁰⁵ Whereas Ranuccio XVIII spent most of his time in Valentano, his wife Primavera wrote from Ischia.¹⁰⁶ Another such oddity is that the only letter written by Lella Orsini is also the only letter written in Gradoli.¹⁰⁷ Whether this tells us something about the absence of marital bliss in arranged marriages for political benefit or the tendency to live separately in order to share in the government is hard to tell. Contemporary examples suggest that couples tended to collaborate as *Arbeitspaar* at all levels of early modern society. It is conceivable that in order to utilise the advantages of physical presence for government and dispensing justice, living separately for durations of the year, a state often the case anyways when the husband was away on military duty, was the norm for noble spouses.¹⁰⁸

The most important conclusion that follows from an analysis of the Farnese letters' place of writing is the low number written from city palaces. Only Viterbo and Rome appear, and Viterbo is overrepresented as all letters written there by Ranuccio XVII Farnese date from the period in 1431 and 1432 when he used that city as a base for military manoeuvres. The only other letter from Viterbo was

¹⁰³ See Figures 31 and 32 in the Appendix.

¹⁰⁴ Giovannella Caetani to Lorenzo and Giannozzo Pucci, 26 October 1493, and Giovannella Caetani to Lorenzo Pucci, 26 January 1494. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, ff. 42^r, 138^r.

¹⁰⁵ Battista dell'Anguillara to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 4 July 1485. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Battista dell'Anguillara to Paolo Cavallaro, 1 August 1488. ASF, MAP, LXXXVIII, f. 34^r.

¹⁰⁶ Primavera da Varano to Balia of Siena, 30 November 1483. ASS, Balia 515, 99.

¹⁰⁷ Lella Orsini to Puccio Pucci, 30 January 1494. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, f. 140^r.

¹⁰⁸ Carolyn James, *A Renaissance Marriage: The Political and Personal Alliance of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga, 1490-1519* (Oxford, 2020); Carolyn James, "Marriage by Correspondence: Politics and Domesticity in the Letters of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga, 1490-1519", *Renaissance Quarterly* 65/2 (2012), pp. 321-52; Sarah Cockram, *Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga: Power Sharing at the Italian Renaissance Court* (Farnham, 2012); The term *Arbeitspaar*, a collaborating couple, was conceptualised in Heide Wunder, *'Er ist die Sonn, sie ist der Mond': Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 1992), pp. 90-117.

written by Alessandro Farnese on 4 November 1493 when he was part of the entourage of Pope Alexander VI.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Ranuccio XVII and Gabriele Francesco wrote letters from Rome when visiting the papal court although the remainder of letters from Rome were indeed penned when the Farnese had acquired a palace there at the end of the century. In light of these conclusions it is possible to re-evaluate Helge Gamrath's assertion that the Farnese's level of provinciality is attested by their construction of a palace in Viterbo, not Rome.¹¹⁰ His remark entirely misses the point in two respects: Ranuccio XVII never intended for himself or his heirs to live in Viterbo permanently, and it anachronistically regards Rome as the place where any aspiring family was supposed to own a palace. It was only in the second half of the Quattrocento that Rome started to exhibit the traits of a capital city. Moreover, the decision to invest in palaces in the vicinity of the papal court ran parallel with the growing attraction of acquiring offices at the papal Curia as well as their increasing venality. Rome's palaces were in the first place built or embellished for and by prominent clerics. For some of the most prominent lay members of Renaissance society – the baronial elite – their city palaces remained uninhabited for most of the year.¹¹¹ Christine Shaw is certainly correct in asserting that barons would have had little incentive to become involved in civic politics themselves, although baronial families did influence civic politics through their connections to factions and palaces were a useful tool for dynastic representation in the city.¹¹² It may not be entirely accidental that Ranuccio XVII when he was personally involved in organising the war against the Prefetti di Vico and their Ghibelline faction in Viterbo bought a palace that belonged to the Tignosi, Viterbo's leading Ghibelline family. Its new façade with a Farnese coat of arms displayed above the main gate, the various Farnese escutcheons on the windowsills of the eastern front facing the bridge that formed the main road leading from the

¹⁰⁹ Alessandro Farnese to Giannozzo Pucci, 4 November 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, f. 48^{r-v}; It must be noted, however, that Gabriele Francesco Farnese passed away in the Palazzo Farnese in Viterbo. BCA, Riforme 20, ff. 71^v-72^v.

¹¹⁰ Gamrath, *Farnese*, p. 23; Andrea Zorzi, "Ranuccio Farnese", *DBI*.

¹¹¹ Sandro Carocci makes a similar point about Trecento Roman barons. Even though their Roman residences were extensive fortifications with keeps, palisades, and curtain walls and differed little in architecture from countryside castles, barons tended to spend most time in the latter. Sandro Carocci, "Baroni in città: Considerazioni sull'insediamento e i diritti urbani della grande nobiltà", in Etienne Hubert (ed.), *Rome aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles: Cinq études* (Rome, 1993), pp. 137-73.

¹¹² Shaw, *Barons and Castellans*, pp. 51-66.

city centre to the cathedral, and the other sills reminiscent of those of the papal palace left little doubt about who owned the edifice or their political allegiance. Ultimately, therefore, the Farnese palace in Viterbo was built for projecting power rather than creating a space for inhabiting.

Apart from power projection, owning a palace within the city walls was also a prerequisite for obtaining citizenship. Yet, the incentives for requesting citizenship by feudal nobles are not always well understood. The notion of an opposition between *cives* – citizens and politically active burghers of towns – and feudal nobles is persistent.¹¹³ But, as Massimo Vallerani argues, citizenship in late-medieval Italy was rarely a fully articulated legal status but a personal attribution – one that was not necessarily passed on to next generations. Citizenship could encompass different hierarchies of belonging, and as a result, the rights and obligations that came with it varied.¹¹⁴ Thus, members of the Farnese family were enrolled as barons of the *contado*, which excluded them from taking up political office under the prevalent anti-magnate legislation. Moreover, whenever citizenship was granted, the individual or family pledged themselves to paying an annual contribution to the commune's coffers. Thus, when on 22 November 1482 the government of Viterbo formally granted Pier Luigi I Farnese and his heirs citizenship, an annual contribution of 50 ducats and 200 *salmas* of grain was stipulated.¹¹⁵ Pier Luigi probably committed himself to similar obligations when he requested the citizenship of Toscanella for himself and his heirs in 1483.¹¹⁶ There is evidence that the Farnese owned tracts of land, palaces, and real estate in Viterbo, Toscanella, Corneto, and their immediate surroundings during the Trecento and Quattrocento, and apart from Pier Luigi both his brother Gabriele Francesco and his father Ranuccio XVII had acquired citizenship as well.¹¹⁷ The sums invested in Florence and the real

¹¹³ Pierre Racine, "La citoyenneté en Italie au Moyen Âge", *Le Moyen Age* 115/1 (2009), pp. 87-108.

¹¹⁴ Massimo Vallerani, "La cittadinanza pragmatica: Attribuzione e limitazione della *civilitas* nei comuni italiani fra XIII e XV secolo", in Sara Menzinger (ed.), *Cittadinanze medievali: Dinamiche di appartenenza a un corpo comunitario* (Rome, 2017), pp. 113-43.

¹¹⁵ BCA, Riforme 21, f. 197^v.

¹¹⁶ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 136^r.

¹¹⁷ BCA, Riforme 20, ff. 71^v-72^v; ASCOT, Fondo Diplomatico 141/1 & 141/2, published in Giuseppe Giontella & Anna Alberta Santi (eds.), *Codice diplomatico tuscanese (XIV secolo)* (Rome, 2017), pp. 291-4; ACAT, Pergamene 42, published in Giontella, *Le pergamene*, pp. 116-18; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 125^r-126^v; Insolera, *Discorsi, Annali, e Privilegij*, p. 245; Supino, *La 'Margarita Cornetana'*, pp. 396-7.

estate owned in Siena suggest that the Farnese had obtained certain rights or citizenship of both communes – a privilege that in the case of Siena had already been granted to various Farnese in 1339, 1361, 1381, and 1384.¹¹⁸ In 1436 Ranuccio participated in the ritual procession held annually in Siena on the feast day of Santa Maria Assunta carrying and presenting to the city a banner (*palio*) estimated to be worth 100 lira thus performing an act that underscored the bond existing between the commune and its ‘subject’ lord.¹¹⁹ Several weeks before Ranuccio had staunchly defended his juridical independence, suggesting that performance of the ceremony was above all intended to ensure that he kept his citizenship. Finally, the Farnese had held the citizenship of Orvieto since the early Trecento.

A dispute over the precise interpretation of the nature of the Farnese’s citizenship in Orvieto sheds light on the motivations that lay behind the efforts of acquiring and keeping citizenship – even if this entailed the payment of an annual contribution.¹²⁰ This dispute between Orvieto and Gabriele Francesco Farnese was decided before a tribunal consisting of Pope Sixtus IV and the governor of the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia. The Farnese argued, almost certainly justified on the basis of precedent, that by virtue of their citizenship they did not have to pay import tolls in Orvieto or its territory.¹²¹ Sixtus and the governor ruled in their favour, and the town council acquiesced on 5 February 1473, that Gabriele Francesco Farnese, all members of his house, and their subjects were exempt from paying any *gabella* on agricultural products and animals sold or bought in the city or its territories.¹²² This did not permanently resolve all conflict, and Pier Luigi complained on 18 January

¹¹⁸ Orlando Malavolti, *Historia del Sig. Orlando Malavolti* (Venice 1599), II, ff. 99^r, 122^v, 147^r-148^r, 150^r-151^r.

¹¹⁹ Michael Martocchio, “Burning the Candle at Both Ends: Candle Making as State Making in Renaissance Siena and Florence”, in Mark Jurdjevic & Rolf Strøm-Olsen (eds.), *Rituals of Politics and Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of Edward Muir* (Toronto, 2016), pp. 111-36.

¹²⁰ Interestingly, the Farnese did not feature among Orvieto’s tributaries in 1394 and 1448 but did for 1468. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 2, filza 17, ff. 450^r-462^v.

¹²¹ Ranuccio XVII Farnese did not expect to have to pay any toll for transporting his cattle through Orvietan territory: “Nobiles amici carissimi salute[m]. Io mando al p[rese]nte p[er] octo mio bestiame el quale ho in quello di Todi p[er] ritornare de qua. P[er]tanto prigo le V[ost]re M[agnificentie] ve piazza op[er]ar[e] possino liberame[n]te passare p[er] lu v[ost]ro tenimento senza alcuno pagamento.” In another letter: “Leonardo e Petricone p[rese]nti portatori ad mia instantia menano certa qua[n]tita de mei porci nele parti dista, p[er]tanto prego le M[agnificentie] V[ostre] ch[e] nelor transito no[n] siano molestati dalcuna gabella ne daltro passaggio.” Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 23 October 1433 & undated. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

¹²² ASO, Riformagioni 221, ff. 48^v-50^r.

1474 that his castellan of Cellere was requested to pay the *gabella*.¹²³ Over a decade later, when Ranuccio XVIII sent some of his men to Orvieto to purchase a large quantity of wine, he presumed to be able to acquire it without paying any additional dues, “considering myself an Orvietan citizen because we used to live habitually in Orvieto.”¹²⁴ The emphasis of having lived in Orvieto was overstated, but what Ranuccio tried to purvey was a sense of belonging. He articulated this by asserting that he had lived both spatially within Orvieto’s city walls, and socially by interacting with Orvieto’s citizens *familiarmente*. Regulations for citizenship nonetheless specified the need to own a city palace and to live there for a certain part of the year. As it was near impossible to ascertain the latter, barons tended to get away with merely owning a palace within the city walls and perhaps occasionally inhabiting it when business affairs required. The economic privileges that came with citizenship mattered more. The cities neighbouring the Farnese patrimony were the most important markets for the sale of agricultural surpluses. Moreover, being able to access these markets without having to pay an import tax clearly outweighed the obligation of an annual contribution to the city’s treasury. By acquiring citizenship, and hence no longer being subjected to taxes, duties, and fees on agricultural produce from their territories, the Farnese sought to achieve the best conditions for the economic integration of their patrimony into the wider Italian market.

Paying tribute to register the nominal subjection of individual Farnese lordships to nearby cities served in similar fashion – the *sottomissioni* the small annual contributions referred to had often been negotiated in the distant medieval past. The aforementioned instance where the communal council and the *podestà* appointed by the Farnese decided to pay their annual contribution to Toscanella provides a vivid example.¹²⁵ When towns were formally part of a city’s *contado*, freedom of movement

¹²³ “La cagion[e] di questa [lettera] sie ch[e] S[er] Amadio n[ost]ro castellano in Cegliali ha ve[n]duti certi porci in testo de Orvieto nelli quali noi havemo qualch[e] interesse: do[n]ne ce ha d[e]c[t]o e stato richieso del pagare la gabella, credo sappiate ch[e] in quello noi havemo da far[e] no[n] siamo tenuto ad pagar[e] gabella.” Pier Luigi I Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 18 January 1474. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

¹²⁴ “Reputandomi no[n] altramente cittadino di Orvieto ch[e] se familiarmente habitassimo in Orvieto.” Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Oriveto, 30 November 1486. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

¹²⁵ ACAT, Pergamena 67, published in Giontella, *Le pergamene*, pp. 192-4.

of persons, animals, and commodities was ensured. The Farnese's endeavours for improving their patrimony's agricultural yields were therefore matched by their efforts for ensuring that surpluses reached the market and fetched the best possible price. Hence also the importance attributed to papal privileges for the import and export of cereals, salt, and wine. Several of such privileges that were bestowed by Eugene IV and Nicholas V are attested in the inventory of the Farnese archive.¹²⁶ Moreover, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese obtained a privilege for the export of grain destined for the Apostolic Palace on 3 November 1477, whereas Pier Luigi I Farnese obtained one for supplying the papal wine cellars.¹²⁷ Political connections and economic interests thus overlapped. It is difficult to reconstruct the minutiae of the connections between landed nobles and the world of agricultural trade, but Luciano Palermo has analysed the organisation of grain imports from the Papal States to Rome. It may be significant that mercantile families such as the Medici, Piccolomini, Tolomei, Vitelleschi, and Bussi – families with whom the Farnese had close political and dynastic affiliations – were extensively involved in the cereal trade.¹²⁸

Economic ties with nearby communes encouraged social ties with the leading families of the civic patriciate. A body of clients and kin that was eligible for communal office and partook in council deliberations could defend and support the Farnese's economic and social privileges. In turn, it was expected that the Farnese would use their not inconsiderable power to promote their kin's and client's interests.¹²⁹ Thus, when Luca Monaldeschi was imprisoned by the regime of Orvieto in 1474, Gabriele

¹²⁶ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 134^{r-v}; These privileges are also referred to in Paul III's 1535 concession of Montalto to his son Pier Luigi II Farnese. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 1871, ff. 4^v-5^v.

¹²⁷ Sixtus IV to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 3 November 1477. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 1739; Sixtus IV to Pier Luigi I Farnese, 15 March 1483. ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 15, f. 423^r.

¹²⁸ Luciano Palermo, "L'approvvigionamento granario della capitale: strategie economiche e carriere curiali a Roma alla metà del Quattrocento", in Sergio Gensini (ed.), *Roma capitale (1447-1527)* (San Miniato, 1994), pp. 145-205.

¹²⁹ The historiography on noble influence in nearby cities is much better covered for the communes of Lombardy. See at least, Marco Gentile, *Fazioni al governo: politica e società a Parma nel Quattrocento* (Rome, 2009), pp. 226-51; Pierre Savy, "Entre monde urbain et pouvoir ducal: l'identité sociale de quelques familles aristocratiques dans la Lombardie du XV^e siècle", in Anna Bellavitis & Isabelle Chabot (eds.), *Famiglie e poteri in Italia tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Rome, 2009) pp. 151-87; Letizia Arcangeli, "Un lignaggio padano tra autonomia signorile e corte principesca: i Pallavicini", in Marco Gentile & Pierre Savy (eds.), *Noblesse et états princiers et Italie et en France au XV^e siècle* (Rome, 2009), pp. 29-100; Letizia Arcangeli, "Principi, homines, e 'partesani' nel ritorno dei Rossi", in Letizia Arcangeli & Marco Gentile (eds.), *Le signorie dei Rossi di Parma tra*

Francesco pressured the government to release his cousin.¹³⁰ In Viterbo the Farnese took the interests of the Bussi and Gatti families at heart during an inheritance dispute these families had with the Bellanti of Siena.¹³¹ The Farnese also despatched representatives to attend the funeral of Princivalle de' Gatti, Viterbo's nominal leader, after he was murdered by his political rivals – an act that seemed to legitimise the succession of Princivalle's son, Giovanni, as his political heir.¹³² Ranuccio XVII borrowed considerable sums from Domenico Bussi in order to support the communal government of Castro.¹³³ His grandson, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, supported the election of Cesare dei Malvicini as *podestà* of Lucca, a protégé from one of Viterbo's leading families who had just finished his studies.¹³⁴ Ranuccio XVIII also maintained contact with Paolo Ciose in Viterbo who had been a former soldier in his service. Ranuccio exchanged news about international affairs – the recent alliance concluded between the Sforza and France in 1492 and the commitment to peace of Innocent VIII and King Ferrante of Naples are two of the topics broached – but also local news concerning Giovanni de' Gatti and Viterbo's affairs.¹³⁵

The Farnese's keen interest in the factional divisions of important nearby cities was translated into military action whenever it was felt that the situation required. In this regard they differed little from the other prominent baronial families of the Papal States.¹³⁶ During a period of factional strife Gabriele Francesco Farnese defended himself from the accusation that a certain Renzo da Roma sent by him to Orvieto was in fact as that commune claimed a spy. In his defence, Gabriele Francesco argued

XIV e XV secolo (Florence, 2007), pp. 231-306; For the similarities and differences between the Roman barons, with whom the Farnese shared most characteristics, and nobles elsewhere in Italy, see Igor Mineo, "Nobiltà Romana e Nobiltà Italiana (1300-1500): Parallelismi e contrasti", in Sandro Carocci (ed.), *La Nobiltà Romana nel Medioevo* (Rome, 2006), pp. 43-70.

¹³⁰ Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 25 January 1474. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

¹³¹ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 125^v-127^v.

¹³² Feliciano Bussi, *Istoria della città di Viterbo* (Viterbo 1741), pp. 245-6.

¹³³ Noris Angeli, *Famiglie Viterbesi: storia e cronaca: genealogie e stemmi* (Viterbo, 2003), pp. 75-89.

¹³⁴ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Anziani of Lucca, 1 September 1485 & 28 May 1486, and Anziani of Lucca to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 9 September 1485 & 30 May 1486. ASL, Anziani 533, registro 38, ff. 105^v-106^r, 113^{r-v}; On Malvicini's studies, see Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 243, 407.

¹³⁵ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Paolo Ciose, 9 February 1492. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

¹³⁶ Shaw, *The Political Role*, pp. 125-50.

that he had many interests in Orvieto of a financial nature that needed oversight.¹³⁷ A few days later, Gabriele Francesco's brother, Pier Luigi Farnese, and his brother-in-law, Troilo Orsini of Pitigliano, entered Orvieto at the head of an army and installed the Muffati, a faction headed by their relatives, the Monaldeschi della Cervara, in power.¹³⁸ Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi's brother, Angelo III, had done the very same in 1449, and would again be despatched to Orvieto in 1462 by Pius II to prop up the Muffati government.¹³⁹ Similarly, in 1460 Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano and Pier Luigi Farnese intervened in person in Viterbo in order to quell the unrest caused by the exile of the Guelph Gatteschi by their rivals, and reinstated their Gatti kin in power.¹⁴⁰ Feliciano Bussi also argues that one of the reasons why Alessandro Farnese replaced Giovanni de' Medici as legate to the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia in 1494 was that, as a Farnese, he was better positioned than his predecessor to mediate between parties after the eruption of factional violence.¹⁴¹ Nor did the Farnese's interest in interfering in factional strife stop at the borders of the Papal States. After a successful plot by Siena's exile community led to a change of government in 1487, persistent reports announced, their vehement denial notwithstanding, that the Farnese, Orsini of Pitigliano, and Sforza of Santa Fiora harboured the former leaders of government, now in turn exiled, on their estates.¹⁴² This led to consternation among the Balìa of Siena who agreed to send a spy to investigate the matter on 16 February 1488.¹⁴³ A century before in 1384, the Farnese had headed an army that overthrew the *popolo* government of Siena and reinstated the nobles in power. Thus, the fears of the Siennese government may not have been entirely unjustified.¹⁴⁴ What it also suggests is that the ways in which the Farnese engaged with cities within

¹³⁷ Gabriel Francesco Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 17 June 1461. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

¹³⁸ Aldobrandino Orsini to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 7 June 1461. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Bindo de' Bindi reported the unrest in Orvieto and the involvement of the Orsini and Farnese to his native Siena on 9 June 1461. Fumi, *Codice diplomatico*, pp. 720-1.

¹³⁹ BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^r; Monaldo Monaldeschi della Cervara, *Comentari storici della città d'Orvieto* (Venice, 1584), f. 136^{r-v}.

¹⁴⁰ Monaldeschi, *Comentari storici*, f. 138^v.

¹⁴¹ BCA, Riforme 25, f. 136^r; Bussi, *Istoria della città di Viterbo*, pp. 285-6.

¹⁴² Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, pp. 161-218.

¹⁴³ Nicola Orsini to Balìa of Siena, 23 June & 29 July 1489. ASS, Balìa 540, 46, 91; ASS, Balìa 408, ff. 5^v-6^r, 16^v, 18^v-19^r, 43^v, 45^{r-v}, 97^{r-v}, 103^v-104^r, 107^r-108^r; ASS, Balìa 409, f. 119^v.

¹⁴⁴ *Cronaca senese di Paolo di Tommaso Montauri*, RIS, tomo XV, parte 6, pp. 705-10; Malavolti, *Historia*, II, ff. 129^v-130^r.

the Papal States and those in Tuscany differed little, a point that may be relevant when discussing the Farnese's extensive connections with the latter in Chapter 3.

Apart from further unidentified chancellors, chaplains, servants, falconers, *trombettieri*, and friars, the various intermediaries the Farnese were wont to use reflect their success in establishing ties of patronage with both the nobles in their immediate vicinity, minor nobles from the towns in their lordly possession, as well as the scions of the civic patriciate of nearby cities.¹⁴⁵ A roll call of their names – Angelo di Ranuccio de Vitozzo, Casuccio, Galeazzo and Giorgio Farnese, Giovanni, Jacopo and Bertoldo di Guicciardo de' Baschi, Hercolano de' Gatti, Paolo Pietro, Giovanni Francesco and Bernardo Monaldeschi, Ser Cherubino Ghezzi – illustrates the Farnese's widespread influence and suggests they could rely on a large following of nobles, kin, and clientele hailing from the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia.¹⁴⁶ Their status in the communes neighbouring their patrimony is perhaps best reflected by the government of Viterbo's decrees after the death of Gabriele Francesco Farnese in the Farnese palace there. The council decided to honour the memory and dignity of Gabriele Francesco, whom they deemed an outstanding citizen, by contributing 40 florins and 10 wax candles to the funerary procession that would escort his remains to his final resting place and ordered that all the priors, that is, the highest dignitaries of the government, as well as all guild rectors and city judges accompany his remains as far as the city gate.¹⁴⁷ It is this dominant position in the economic and social life of their patrimony, as well as the surrounding cities – a position that heirs were expected to inherit from their fathers – that provided the Farnese with the economic, social, and military resources to sustain their influence at the peninsular level. Even more so than their vast wealth, the Farnese's political

¹⁴⁵ For the use in Florentine Trecento diplomacy of lower-ranking officials for secretive missions, see William Caferro, *Petrarch's War: Florence and the Black Death in Context* (Cambridge, 2018), 168-77.

¹⁴⁶ Ranuccio XVII to Balìa of Siena, 2 August 1423. ASS, Concistoro 1904, 1; Ranuccio XVII to Balìa of Siena, 10 February 1426. ASS, Concistoro 1911, 87; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici 10 April 1436 and 6 November 14??, ASF, MAP, XI, 96^{r-v}, 575^{r-v}; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 1 August 1485. ASS, Balìa 524, 67; Ranuccio XVIII to Balìa of Siena, 6 January 1486. ASS, Balìa 529, 12; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 8 March 1489. ASF, MAP, XLI, 77^{r-v}.

¹⁴⁷ BCA, Riforme 20, ff. 71^v-72^v.

prominence in Quattrocento Italy was predicated on their extensive social network that extended like capillary vessels deep into the tissue of the body politic and social.¹⁴⁸

Unity and Division: Inheritance Strategies and Conflict Management

Inheritance was central to the conception of dynasty. In its original Aristotelian sense, *δυναστεία* already denoted a hereditary oligarchy linked to notions of lordship and sovereignty.¹⁴⁹ Dynasty as a heuristic tool is therefore only of value when it also encompasses the hereditary transfer of public power.¹⁵⁰ In medieval Europe, public power remained linked to the possession of land and jurisdictions, and lordship (*dominium*) was understood to blend rulership and ownership that had gradually become transferable down hereditary lines.¹⁵¹ As a result, medieval European dynasties are best understood as a fusion of lordship and lineage. Although dynastic lordship governed the transfer of public power among both royal and noble lineages, inheritance strategies, solutions to tackle the contingencies of biological reproduction, and the requirements of government did not always conform to uniform norms. Royal dynasties have received extensive treatment in Jeroen Duindam's *Dynasties*, in which a comparative approach is used to uncover the underlying similarities between the superficially vastly differing strategies used by dynasties around the globe. Among his conclusions, Duindam observes that royal inheritance strategies tended to support the centralisation of power in the hands of a single ruler.¹⁵² Yet, this was not necessarily the case for noble dynastic strategies in Europe. Since the stability of the realm did not depend on it to such a large extent, noble dynastic strategies were less likely to become enshrined in public legislation. As a result, inheritance strategies varied widely and left much more room for flexibility. Customs varied between kingdoms and counties, and wills had to take into

¹⁴⁸ Christine Shaw, "The Roman Barons and the Popes", in Gentile & Savy, *Noblesse et états princiers*, pp. 107-8.

¹⁴⁹ Jeroen Duindam, "Dynasties", *Medieval Worlds 2* (2015), pp. 59-78.

¹⁵⁰ Natalia Nowakowska, "What's in a Word? The Etymology and Historiography of Dynasty: Renaissance Europe and Beyond", *Global Intellectual History* (Forthcoming 2021). I thank the author for generously letting me read the article before publication.

¹⁵¹ Watts, *The Making of Politics*, pp. 68-98; Rees Davies, "The Medieval State: The Tyranny of a Concept?", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 16/2 (2003), pp. 280-300; But, see Susan Reynolds, "There were States in Medieval Europe: A Response to Rees Davies", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 16/4 (2003), pp. 550-5.

¹⁵² Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 87-9.

account the legal nature of the various holdings the testator wanted to bequeath.¹⁵³ In the Papal States, as in wider Italy and much of Central Europe, partible inheritance was the norm.¹⁵⁴ Each son was entitled to a part of the patrimony as it could provide him with the means to pursue a career as condottiere, which in return allowed him to earn his living and receive favours from his employer. The high mortality rates that came with a life in arms further mitigated the effects of partible inheritance. But apart from the notion that all male heirs deserved an equal portion of the inheritance, very few rules existed. As I argue below for the Farnese, this absence of rules was a strength as well as a potential weakness.

Partible inheritance and fragmentation of noble lineages into multiple branches often went hand in hand with inter-familial strife.¹⁵⁵ Ranuccio XVII was a first-hand witness of its pernicious effects at the end of the fourteenth century. When several of his cousins banded together with the Orsini of Pitigliano – back then still the Farnese’s arch rivals – and instigated a rebellion in Ischia, the young Ranuccio only barely survived by hiding in a well.¹⁵⁶ By the end of his lifetime, Ranuccio had managed to unify most of his family’s lost territories, but his earlier experiences may have cautioned him to ensure that his heirs would not fight among themselves. Furthermore, political events had resulted in extensive grants for himself but not his brother Bartolomeo II, and to complicate matters even further, he had sired sons with two spouses, a situation that was always fraught with dangers. To eliminate any cause for future conflict, Ranuccio thus made a will that is unusually exhaustive in its precise partitioning of his patrimony and in the admonitions to his sons to always provide each other with mutual support and to solve any conflict among themselves through negotiation. Ranuccio’s testament

¹⁵³ Daniel Power, “The Briouze Family in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries: Inheritance Strategies, Lordship and Identity”, *Journal of Medieval History* 41/3 (2015), pp. 341-61; Arie van Steensel, “Kinship, Property, and Identity: Noble Family Strategies in Late-Medieval Zeeland”, *Journal of Family History* 37/3 (2012), pp. 247-69; Jacques Heers, *Le clan familial au moyen age: Etude sur les structures politiques et sociales des milieux urbains* (Paris, 1974).

¹⁵⁴ Shaw, *Barons and Castellans*, pp. 14-18; Carocci, *Baroni di Roma*, pp. 165-83; Paula Suttner Fichtner, *Protestantism and Primogeniture in Early Modern Germany* (New Haven, 1989); Dale Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori, and Rucellai* (Princeton, 1977).

¹⁵⁵ Christian Rémy, “Des divisions dans l’indivision: tensions lignagères au coeur des coseigneuries limousines et périgourdines (XII^e-XIV^e siècles)”, in Martin Aurell (ed.), *La Parenté déchirée: les luttes intrafamiliales au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 251-68.

¹⁵⁶ Luiten, ““Like a Lily Amongst the Thorns””, pp. 252-3.

therefore provides insight into the worries of a Renaissance baron over his inheritance, the moral framework that he devised for his dynasty, and the solutions he deemed an appropriate response to countering potential conflicts. As this section will make clear, his final will was not solely codified in the form of a notarial document but actively assimilated into the mental framework of his heirs. It was adapted as new circumstances dictated and its prescriptions transmitted to future generations.

In his will, Ranuccio first tackled the risk of a disparity in possessions and wealth between the Farnese's family branches. Such an imbalance could fire the flames of envy as less well-off cousins coveted their wealthier kin's assets. That at least seems the best explanation why Ranuccio gave his brother Bartolomeo a share of his possessions equal to that of his sons. Ranuccio reserved the towns of Farnese and Latera with their castles for his brother, as well as the estates with castle ruins of Castiglione, Sala, and Mezzano. Moreover, Bartolomeo received the family palace in the city of Castro, an equal share of Ranuccio's animals, and also a part of the 11,000 florins deposited in Florence.¹⁵⁷ Ranuccio's will contained many more clauses. Ranuccio also delineated with precision the possessions he intended that his third son should inherit. Pier Luigi was bequeathed Capodimonte, Musignano, Canino, Abbazia ad Ponte, a quarter of the jurisdictions over Pian d'Arcione, as well as all houses and lands in the territory of Montalto.¹⁵⁸ At the time Ranuccio made his last will, Pier Luigi was still underage, and perhaps by specifying his part of the inheritance, the chance that his older brothers would wrest his share from him would be reduced. Moreover, Pier Luigi was not just Angelo III and Gabriele Francesco's underage brother, he was also probably, as I argue more extensively in the next chapter, their half-brother. In such a scenario Ranuccio may well have considered that fraternal affection was a less evidently reliable inhibitor to sibling rivalry. Ranuccio did not forget his spouse, Agnesella Monaldeschi, either and assigned her the castle and town of Marta where she could retire if she so desired, although eventually her son Pier Luigi was to succeed her.¹⁵⁹ Ranuccio's daughter Pentasilea received an extra supplement on top of her dowry, whereas 400 ducats were reserved for

¹⁵⁷ Lefevre, "Il Testamento", pp. 201-4.

¹⁵⁸ *Idem*, p. 205.

¹⁵⁹ *Idem*, p. 202.

Ranuccio's sister Lagia and her heirs.¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, Angelo and Gabriele Francesco were to inherit the remainder of the patrimony and share it between them.¹⁶¹ Ranuccio's testament therefore exhibits a curious mix of two types of partible inheritance. In general, despite the different strategies that were adopted, an equal balance was struck between Ranuccio's heirs. What this seems to suggest is that strictly applied partible inheritance that entailed the subdivision of individual holdings was the norm. Partitioning the patrimony was deemed a useful solution that lowered the chances of potential conflict related to exceptional political and biological circumstances.

Angelo III & Gabriele Francesco	Pier Luigi I	Bartolomeo "Meo" II
Ischia	Capodimonte	Farnese
Valentano	Musignano	Latera
½ Gradoli	½ Abbazia ad Ponte	Mezzano
Cellere	½ Canino	Castiglione
Piansano	¼ Pian d'Arcione	Sala
Pianiano	Marta	Palace in Castro
Tessennano	Properties in Montalto	
San Savino		
Civitella		
Arlena		
Casano		
Vermeliasca		
½ Vitozzo		

Table 4: 1450 Division of the Farnese Patrimony

Despite, or perhaps because of, the partitioning of his patrimony, Ranuccio took several precautions that were intended to assure future collaboration between his heirs and the ultimate

¹⁶⁰ *Idem*, p. 201.

¹⁶¹ *Idem*, p. 206.

indivisibility of the entire Farnese patrimony. These fall into three categories. First, the shared property or usufruct of key possessions or jurisdictions enforced regular cooperation between Ranuccio's heirs. For example, Ranuccio stipulated that the palace in Viterbo remain a shared property of all his sons.¹⁶² Moreover, although the mill of the town of Farnese was transferred along with its feudal privileges to his brother Bartolomeo, the inhabitants of Ischia, who made use of it, were to be allowed to continue to do so. In case repairs were required whoever controlled Ischia was to contribute as well.¹⁶³ Similarly, Bartolomeo, on the one hand, and Angelo and Gabriele Francesco on the other, were to share the income from the feudal dues of Castiglione, Sala, and Mezzano.¹⁶⁴ These stipulations engendered a need for close collaboration, which could strengthen the social ties between members of the family. Secondly, in various clauses, Ranuccio sought to foster a sense of moral obligation amongst his heirs, so that they would always aim at providing mutual assistance and at resolving conflicts through negotiation. Thus, Ranuccio specifically requested that Bartolomeo solemnly swear to uphold his part of the deal in a separate notarial document and reject any future claim to more than his due. In turn, Angelo and Gabriele Francesco, also in name of their underage brother Pier Luigi, were to take an oath to the same end.¹⁶⁵ As cited in the text from his testament in the introduction, all of Ranuccio's male heirs were to provide counsel and come to each other's aid whenever misfortune struck – even if they had to do so a thousand times – all in the service of defending the Farnese patrimony. To hammer home the message, Ranuccio implored his sons again to live in concord and brotherly affection in yet another clause and entrusted Angelo and Gabriele Francesco to act as administrators and tutors of

¹⁶² "Quam domum existentem Viterbii ut supra voluit et mandavit dominus testator fore et esse comunem inter magnificos Angelum, Gabrielem Franciscum et Pierlouisium eius filios." Idem, p. 201.

¹⁶³ "Item reliquit eidem Magnifico Meo jure legati molendinum dicti castri Farnesij cum hoc quod si per homines habitatores castri Ischie iretur ad macinandum ad dictum molendinum, quod multura bladi cuiuscunque generis quod macinaretur per dictos homines dicti castri Ischie pertineat et esse debeat eius vel eorum qui dominium dicti castri Ischie habebant. Ita tamen quod si aliqua expensa occurreret pro ipsius molendini actatione, teneantur prefati domini Ischie contribuere pro rata fructuum qui perciperentur ex hominibus dicti castri Ischie ibidem macinantibus." Idem, pp. 202-3.

¹⁶⁴ "Et omne predictum quod dictis occasionibus ex dictis tribus tenimentis perciperetur, dividatur comuniter inter ipsum Magnificum Meum ex una parte, et Magnificos Angelum et Gabrielem Franciscum ex altera, videlicet medietas dicti pretij percipiendi spectet ad ipsum Magnificum Meum et alia medietas ad prefatos Magnificos Angelum et Gabrielem Franciscum." Idem, p. 203.

¹⁶⁵ A copy of this document is preserved in ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

their younger brother.¹⁶⁶ Finally, one of the clauses introduced the adoption of the *fideicommissum* (entail) as an instrument that laid down the unity of the Farnese patrimony and its horizontal transfer between branches in case of dynastic failure.¹⁶⁷ Andreas Rehberg, Alessandro Serio, and Thomas Kuehn have investigated the importance of the adoption of the *fideicommissum* within the Colonna of Genazzano in 1427 and the Orsini of Bracciano during the second half of the fifteenth century. They have emphasised its increasingly prominent use to avoid transfer of property outside of the dynasty.¹⁶⁸ As Kuehn argues, the *fideicommissum* defined the dynasty as a legal entity: “In a real way, the *fideicommissum* WAS the Orsini di Bracciano.”¹⁶⁹ The Farnese, too, took recourse to the *fideicommissum* at an early stage. That they did so thus suggests a broader historical development in which the adoption of legal instruments taken from Roman law was utilised to maintain the unity of baronial patrimonies and prevent alienation of property.¹⁷⁰ The goal that Ranuccio ultimately pursued in his will seems therefore – somewhat paradoxically – to be unity through division.

If successful collaboration and division of the patrimony secured its integrity when transferred to designated heirs, exclusion of others formed the other side of the medallion. Since daughters formally relinquished their claim to their father’s inheritance when receiving a dowry, women were excluded from inheriting a fair share of the patrimony. Ranuccio even specified in his will that he

¹⁶⁶ “Item monuit dictos suos filios ut fraternaliter vivant et perfectum amorem et bonam voluntatem inter se habeant.” Lefevre, “Il Testamento”, pp. 205-6.

¹⁶⁷ “Item voluit et mandavit prefatus testator quod casu quo aliquis dictorum Magnificorum Mey, Angeli, Gabrielis Francisci et Pierlouisij decederent quicunque, suis filijs vel nepotibus masculis legitimis et naturalibus uno vel pluribus, in bonis per ipsum testatorem dumtaxat ipsis vel alteri eorum relictis, qui superfuerint unus vel plures, ipsi decedenti uno vel pluribus succedant equali portione et bona predicta morientis vel morientium ut premittitur devenire voluit ad alios superstites unum vel plures equaliter, et eos omnes invicem substituit vulgariter et pupillariter per fidei commissum si sine filijs vel nepotibus decederent vel decederet ut supra.” Idem, p. 206.

¹⁶⁸ Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*, pp. 14-16; Thomas Kuehn, “*Fideicommissum* and Family: The Orsini di Bracciano”, *Viator* 39/2 (2008), pp. 323-42; Andreas Rehberg, “*Etsi prudens paterfamilias ... pro pace suorum sapienter providet*: Le ripercussioni del nepotismo di Martino V a Roma e nel Lazio”, in Maria Chiabò, Giusi D’Alessandro, Paola Piacentini & Concetta Ranieri (eds.), *Alle origine della nuova Roma: Martino V (1417-1431)* (Rome, 1992), pp. 270-6.

¹⁶⁹ Kuehn, “*Fideicommissum* and Family”, p. 325.

¹⁷⁰ On the broader adoption of the *fideicommissum*, see the special edition ‘Fidéicommiss. Procédés juridiques et pratiques sociales (Italie-Europe, Bas Moyen Âge-XVIIIe siècle)’ of the *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome: Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* 124/2 (2012); Nicola La Marca, *La nobiltà romana e i suoi strumenti di perpetuazione del potere* (Rome, 2000), especially volume 1; Hamish Scott & Christopher Storrs, “The Consolidation of Noble Power in Europe, c. 1600-1800”, in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 2007 [1995]), vol. I, pp. 31-4.

forbade his daughters from claiming more than the agreed sum (*et plus de bonis suis petere non possint*). The patrilinear dynasty's logic dictated that any alienation of family property through female inheritance endangered the perpetuation of the masculine lineage's societal status – the prominent role of married women in the government of their marital family's patrimony notwithstanding. Furthermore, female inheritance often gave rise to legal conflict between related lineages. Exclusion of female heirs was thus deemed essential for keeping the patrimony intact as well as avoiding a clash between peers.¹⁷¹ Ranuccio XVII's heirs went even further than their father and created a pact that regulated female inheritance within the Farnese dynasty. Although the document is now lost, the entry in the inventory of the Farnese's private archive summarises its contents as a *Pacta inter Gabrielem Franc[iscu]m et Petru[m] Aloysium de Farnesio excludendo feminas ad haereditate* (an agreement between Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi Farnese excluding women from hereditary succession) and is dated 1470. Similar agreements excluding daughters from inheriting or – in case they did inherit – to wed another member of the same family, were common among Roman baronial families in Quattrocento Italy.¹⁷² Apart from daughters, Ranuccio XVII also excluded all illegitimate offspring from inheriting any part of the patrimony that exceeded the value of 300 ducats.¹⁷³ It is possible that he had Angelo III's bastard sons, Sforza and Giulio, in mind. From Angelo's will, it is clear that he did indeed only leave Sforza and Giulio 300 ducats each, although he could not refrain from also donating them houses, a patch of land, some vineyards, and a substantial number of cattle and horses.¹⁷⁴ He may be forgiven for defying his dying father's wishes. Ranuccio XVII himself left his illegitimate daughter Giulia, who had become a nun in Viterbo, an extra 1,000 ducats and a yearly pension of 40 ducats from the

¹⁷¹ Thomas Kuehn, "Lorenzo de' Medici and Inheritance Law in Florence", *Renaissance Studies* 34/2 (2020), pp. 243-59; Erica Bastress-Dukehart, "Sibling Conflict within Early Modern German Noble Families", *Journal of Family History* 33/1 (2008), pp. 61-80.

¹⁷² The Savelli excluded women from inheriting unless they marry a Savelli from another branch. ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 17, unfoliated; As did the Orsini: ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.14,063.

¹⁷³ "Item voluit et mandavit dominus testator quod de bonis relictis seu inferius reliquendis prefatis Magnificis Meo, Angelo, Gabrieli Francisco et Pierlouisio nichil per aliquem supradictorum aliquo quesito colore causa vel titulo relinqui possit alicui filio spureo seu alias ex dampnato coytu nato, uno vel pluribus nato sive nascituro vel nascituris nisi et dumtaxat usque ad summam tricentorum ducatorum pro uno quoque filiorum supra ex dampnato coytu natorum vel nascendorum." Lefevre, "Il Testamento", p. 204.

¹⁷⁴ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 351, f. 131^{r-v}.

income generated by the estate of Arlena.¹⁷⁵ Yet overall, the prospects that daughters and illegitimate offspring would inherit a share of possessions and jurisdictions – a prerequisite for noble status – decreased.

Apart from excluding women and illegitimate offspring, the decision of Ranuccio's sons Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi to direct their second-born sons towards a clerical career engendered further tensions. Even if clerical family members technically inherited an equal share of the patrimony, in practice their secular brothers controlled it. Thus, Pier Luigi had instated his sons Angelo and Alessandro as heirs *in equali portione* on 12 December 1485. Regarding their sisters, Pier Luigi made no other mention than that their brothers commit to paying their dowries.¹⁷⁶ A few years later, however, Alessandro complained about his financial situation. This resulted in a scolding by his friend, Stefano dell'Aquila, who argued that the only reason he wanted half of his brother's income was that he had been living lavishly and running up debts with merchants and Jewish moneylenders. Dell'Aquila even quoted Alessandro's grandfather, writing to him in florid Latin: "Here is that voice from the spirits of your ancestors, which resounds in my ears with nourishment and teaching: 'live, boys, as if of one mind, always bear in mind wise council, and take account of the ordering principle of time and take my example' said your grandfather Ranuccio, 'I, who was banished from my ancestral dominions as a dazed and destitute boy, in old age brought about the recovery of everything and restored the safety of our whole family, which had been dispersed and dispossessed.'¹⁷⁷ The implications of Dell'Aquila's admonition are clear: discord results in a fragmentation or even loss of the patrimony, as it had in Ranuccio XVII's younger years. Here, the logic of the dynasty was employed both as a moral category laying down the principles for fraternal behaviour as well as a safeguard for the unity of the Farnese's legal and material patrimony through favouring lay members of the family at the expense of their

¹⁷⁵ Lefevre, "Il Testamento", pp. 199-200.

¹⁷⁶ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

¹⁷⁷ "Hinc illa vox est ab umbris avitis quae mihi personat haures (sic) nutricio et magistro: 'vivite concordēs pueri, sapientum consilium tenete et rationem habete temporum et me spectate' inquit Ranutius avus 'qui regno eiectus patrio confossus puer et egenus in senecta cuncta confeci familiamque nostram radiatus evulsam restitui incolumem.'" Stefano dell'Aquila to Alessandro Farnese, 7 September [1490], *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 43-4.

clerical kin. In the end, it took the combined effort of a number of Alessandro's relatives, including Lorenzo Pucci and Adriana del Milà, and the alluring prospect of a successful career in the papal Curia for which he was especially well placed, to convince him to acquiesce and relinquish his claims.¹⁷⁸ Alessandro's reluctance to pursue a clerical career and to take holy orders has often been framed as a lack of religious vocation. Although there may be some truth in that, it is important to note that the decisions by Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi to place their sons Paolo and Alessandro Farnese in the Church instituted a *de facto* primogeniture, which was a notable diversion from contemporary practices as well as traditional custom.¹⁷⁹ In the event, it nearly led to the extinction of the Farnese at the start of the sixteenth century, and Pope Julius II's (1503-1513) attempt to appropriate the Farnese's patrimony for his own family was averted and succession only tenuously secured through papal legitimation of Alessandro's sons. These episodes from the Farnese's sixteenth-century history are indicative of how necessary it was to secure the horizontal transfer of the patrimony between different branches, as well as the potential perils of papal interference in such affairs.

The institution of the Farnese's *fideicommissum* in Ranuccio XVII's testament only suggested a framework for the hereditary transfer over subsequent generations. It was by no means legally binding and left room for a great deal of flexibility. A body of evidence suggests that the Farnese took considerable trouble during the second half of the Quattrocento to organise the collective government of their patrimony and to collaborate when it came to the horizontal transfer of possessions. Frustratingly, only one of the documents containing the agreements among the members of the Farnese family survives in a notarial copy in the archives of Viterbo. Yet, as in the case of the pact excluding women from inheriting, their description in the Farnese archive's inventory provides some hints of their contents.¹⁸⁰ If anything, the entries show that members of the dynasty regularly met to

¹⁷⁸ Lorenzo Pucci to Puccio Pucci, 15 January 1491. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 37.

¹⁷⁹ The Farnese formally introduced primogeniture with the investiture of Pier Luigi II Farnese as Duke of Castro in 1537. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 253, fasciolo 2; ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 569; On the adoption of primogeniture among the Roman nobility from the sixteenth century onwards, see La Marca, *La nobiltà romana e i suoi strumenti*.

¹⁸⁰ The documents are inventoried as: 1470 Pacta inter Gabrielem franc[isce]m et Petrum Aloysium de Farnesio; 1474 Concordia inter Gabrielem Franc[escu]m et Petrum Aloysium de Farnesio super communi

discuss their patrimony's government, at times in the presence of a notary who would record arrangements in a legal document. Interestingly, these gatherings could also involve close kin who were able to provide neutral mediation. Stefanello Colonna of Palestrina, for example, was present during the negotiations that resulted in the one document that does survive: the 1480 *concordia* between Pier Luigi I on the one hand, and his nephews Ranuccio XVIII and Paolo Farnese on the other. So was Ardicino della Porta, Bishop of Aléria and Papal Referendary, who was nominated as Sixtus IV's arbiter. The Farnese had specifically requested the presence of these two arbiters as both parties sought to avoid an odious legal process.¹⁸¹ The presence of these two prominent men reflects the importance of the negotiations and agreement they were to supervise, as it concerned nothing less than a repartitioning of the Farnese patrimony. After his death without legitimate male heirs, Angelo III had bequeathed all his possessions to his co-heir, Gabriele Francesco, and his male descendants.¹⁸² As a result, Gabriele Francesco's branch now controlled a part of the Farnese patrimony roughly twice the size of that of Pier Luigi – precisely the kind of disproportion between branches that Ranuccio XVII had sought to avoid. In the deal hammered out between the uncle Pier Luigi and his nephews, Cellere, Arlena, and Civitella were ceded to Pier Luigi and his descendants. In exchange, Ranuccio XVIII and Paolo retained a right over half of the income and presumably produce of the Cannaria of Marta, the intricate medieval construction used to catch the highly sought-after eels from the Lake of Bolsena. Moreover, the deal also guaranteed the free movement of inhabitants from one of the communities governed by the Farnese to the others for labour-related activities.¹⁸³ Similar deals created with the intent of avoiding or resolving conflicts can be found in the archives of the Savelli, Caetani, and Dell'Anguillara.¹⁸⁴ The Farnese shared their preoccupations with preserving the unity of their

partitione fructuum; 1480 Concordia super divisione inter D[omi]nos de Farnesio; 1489 Concordia inter Angelum et Ranutium et Petrum [Bertoldum] de Farnesio super fructibus Planzani et silve capitis montis. BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 126^v-127^v.

¹⁸¹ "Volentes d[ic]te partes viam odio si litigij evitare." ASVit, Archivio notarile distrettuale di Viterbo 325, ff. 14^v-15^r.

¹⁸² ASF, Carte Strozziiane, Serie I, busta 351, f. 134^r.

¹⁸³ ASVit, Archivio notarile distrettuale di Viterbo 325, ff. 14^v-15^r.

¹⁸⁴ ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 842, filze 5 & 6; ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 843, filze 7, 8 & 31; Archivio Caetani, Pergamena 2609; Archivio Caetani, 19263; ASC, Archivi di persone e famiglie,

patrimony and the unity of their family with other baronial dynasties. In doing so, they showed a practical attitude towards finding potential solutions for bones of contention and an adherence to a sense of family loyalty that paid reverence not only to the clauses concerning the Farnese's material inheritance but also the moral obligations expressed by Ranuccio XVII in his will.

Ranuccio XVIII & Paolo	Pier Luigi I	Communal
Ischia	Capodimonte	Cannaria of Marta
Valentano	Musignano	
Gradoli	Abbazia ad Ponte	
Piansano	Canino	
Pianiano	Marta	
Tessennano	Civitella	
Castellardo	Arlena	
Burghetto	Cellere	
Casano	¼ Pian d'Arcione	
Vermeliasca	Properties in Montalto	
½ Vitozzo		

Table 5: 1480 Repartitioning of the Farnese Patrimony

The Farnese's recourse to an arbiter nominated by Sixtus IV seemingly proves that they considered the potential risk of not involving the reigning pontiff in questions of inheritance or at least recognised the advantages that papal approval or those with influence within the Curia could offer. Cellere, Arlena, and Civitella were allodial holdings, and the pope thus had no official say in their transfer. This was, however, not true for the vicariates that the Farnese had received in papal investiture. Having considered the legal nature of the vicariate and the vicissitudes of papal politics, where one pope's successor might persecute his predecessor's favourites, Ranuccio XVII had tried to

Anguillara, Pergamene, credenzone 14, tomo 64, n. 12; ASC, Archivi di persone e famiglie, Anguillara, Pergamene, credenzone 14, tomo 65 n. 8, 10 & 14.

shield his heirs from the potential backlash during Nicholas V's pontificate, a backlash that did in fact materialise, by nominating executors in his will whom he entrusted with the support of his heirs.

Ranuccio's testament names five in total:

In order that all things in general and in particular may be firmly executed, maintained, and defended, the aforementioned testator appoints, constitutes, and ordains the undersigned most reverend lords as tutors, curators, *fidei commissarii*, and executors: the most reverend father and lord, the Lord Francesco [Condulmer] Cardinal-Bishop of Porto and Vice-Chancellor of the Holy Roman Church; the most reverend lord, the Lord Domenico [da Capranica] Cardinal-Priest of Santa Croce in Jerusalem; the most reverend lord, the Lord Ludovico [Trevisan] Cardinal of San Lorenzo in Damaso, Cardinal of Aquileia and Camerlengo of our lord the Pope; as well as the most reverend lord, the Lord Astorgio [Agnesi] Cardinal of Sant'Eusebio, Cardinal of Benevento; and also the reverend lord, the Lord Neri [da Montegarulo] Bishop of Siena, presently Governor of the Province of the Patrimony [of St Peter in Tuscia].¹⁸⁵

Condulmer, Capranica, Trevisan, and Agnesi were among the most senior and high-ranking members of the College of Cardinals when Ranuccio drew up his will. Additionally, as important military commanders Ranuccio had collaborated closely with them in the wars that plagued the Papal States during Eugene's pontificate.¹⁸⁶ It was expected that these executors would also represent and defend the Farnese heirs' rights to the integrity of their inheritance at the papal Curia. During the second half of the Quattrocento, the Farnese even petitioned several popes to confirm them in their possessions and were successful in doing so. Thus, on 12 November 1464, Paul II promulgated a bull that recognised

¹⁸⁵ "Pro quibus omnibus et singulis firmiter exequendis manutenendis et defendendis prefatus testator fecit constituit et ordinavit infrascriptos Reverendissimos dominos, tutores curatores, fidei commissarios et executores, reverendissimum in Christo patrem et dominum, dominum F[rancescum] cardinalem episcopum Portuensem Sacrosancte Romane Ecclesie vicecancellarium, et Reverendissimum dominum, dominum D[omenicum] tituli Sancte Crucis in Jerusalem presbiterum cardinalem ac Reverendissimum dominum, dominum L[udovicum] tituli Sancti Laurentij in Damaso cardinalem Aquilegiensem Domini nostri pape Camerarium, atque Reverendissimum dominum, dominum A[storgium] tituli Sancti Eusebij Cardinalem Beniventanum, ac etiam Reverendum dominum, dominum N[erum] Episcopum Senensem nunc Provincie patrimonij gubernatorem." Lefevre, "Il Testamento", pp. 206-7.

¹⁸⁶ See Chapter 5.

the Farnese's rights over all concessions made by his predecessors in exchange for a *census* of twelve florins.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Paul confirmed the acquisition of the other half of the jurisdictions over Canino, Gradoli, and Abbazia ad Ponte that the Farnese had purchased from Antonio Piccolomini. In exchange, they were to make an annual contribution of eight florins to the Camera Apostolica.¹⁸⁸ This bull was subsequently ratified by Paul's successor, Sixtus IV.¹⁸⁹ More importantly than just officially recognising their titles, these bulls lumped all Farnese possessions together into a single legal entity with which all heads of the various branches, Gabriele Francesco, Pier Luigi I, and Pietro Bertoldo II, and their male descendants were invested up until the third generation. In effect, therefore, these bulls were a papal recognition of the Farnese *fideicommissum* and the indivisibility of the Farnese patrimony. Ideally, these confirmations would thus ensure that, in case of one branch's dynastic failure, the patrimony's horizontal transfer was protected against papal interference. Given that it is generally argued that Roman barons were reluctant to involve the pope, it is certainly remarkable that the Farnese took such recourse to the papacy with respect to the organisation of their possessions.¹⁹⁰ On a closer look, however, it becomes evident that the Farnese only did so whenever an advantageous settlement could be negotiated that secured their patrimony's inheritance for future generations or whenever there was an opportunity to obtain a decrease in their already negligible tax contributions.¹⁹¹ The obvious advantages for the Farnese notwithstanding, the compliance of several popes in facilitating the Farnese's care for their patrimony's survival – especially popes traditionally regarded as fiercely opposed to baronial interests such as Pius and Paul – also demonstrates that the papacy and the nobility found means of collaborating and advancing each other's interest. At times, powerful cardinals – who had extensive personal networks of their own in the Papal States – mediated these arrangements. For the Farnese, having powerful spokespersons at court who could lend their support

¹⁸⁷ ASV, Arm. XXXVII, 40, f. 275^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 130^f; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^v.

¹⁸⁸ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 130^f; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^v.

¹⁸⁹ ASV, Arm. XXXVII, 40, f. 276^f.

¹⁹⁰ Shaw, "The Roman Barons and the Popes", pp. 105-6.

¹⁹¹ ASV, Arm. XXXVII, 40, ff. 275^v-276^f; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^v; The Colonna sought papal recognition of their possessions and *fideicommissum* from Pope Nicholas V. Rehberg, "Etsi prudens", pp. 279-82.

to further the Farnese's dynastic project were a valued asset. The necessity of negotiating with the pope in various areas of government and inheritance may have revealed the advantage of having a Farnese active in the papal Curia to represent their interests.

The Key to Success?

Is it possible to see the Farnese's aggregation of wealth, the care for their patrimony's government, their extensive network of clients, and their prudent strategies for avoiding intrafamilial strife as the foundation for their remarkable success? Perhaps that would be an exaggeration. Concerning the Farnese patrimony and its place within the Papal States, their efforts to create a greater legal and organisational coherence through negotiating with princely power while copying its tools for the organisation of government reflect a wider phenomenon that characterised power and lordship in fifteenth-century Europe.¹⁹² The Farnese were early in their adoption of the entail as a legal framework to regulate inheritance over the course of multiple generations, but certainly not unique. Nor were they the only family that invested in improving their patrimony's agricultural yields and removing barriers for trading in its surpluses. What can be argued, however, is that the Farnese's policies created the necessary preconditions that allowed for their success in political affairs within the Papal States and on the peninsular scale. In contrast to the Orsini and Colonna, the Farnese maintained a surprising coherence and unity of purpose.¹⁹³ Families that witnessed incessant vendettas, feuding, and litigation over inheritance disputes, like the various branches of the Caetani or the Colonna of Palestrina, inevitably lost influence.¹⁹⁴ As a result of internecine strife, conflict with neighbours, and rebellious vassals in the late fourteenth century, the Farnese had suffered a dramatic decrease in power that resulted in a contraction of the lordships under their control.¹⁹⁵ Scattered remarks made by Ranuccio XVII Farnese and Stefano dell'Aquila suggest a shared memory of these afflictions among members of

¹⁹² Watts, *The Making of Polities*, pp. 405-7.

¹⁹³ Shaw, *The Political Role*, pp. 73-96.

¹⁹⁴ Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*, p. 17; Gelasio Caetani, *Domus Caietana: storia documentata della famiglia Caetani* (Sancasciano Val di Pesa, 1927-1933), especially volume 2.

¹⁹⁵ Luiten, "Like a Lily Amongst the Thorns", pp. 250-6.

the Farnese dynasty, their friends, and relatives. These stories may have served as moral *exempla* that stimulated the commitment to good seigneurial government and complemented the exhortations to follow the path of God-fearing righteousness in the moral and political clauses of Ranuccio's will. This overarching framework of dynasty and *dominium* was articulated with a care that was rare even among the Farnese's peers. Yet the sense of commitment to collaboration and compromise that was articulated in Ranuccio's will and was adhered to by his heirs, is testimony to the strength of the individual's identification with the dynasty and the central place of the patrimony as a common and shared entity within that identification among the aristocratic families of Quattrocento Italy.

Chapter Two

Dynasty & Kinship: Networks, Identity Formation, and Noble Sociability

Over the course of the last chapter it was shown how shared ownership of castles and the exercise of jurisdictional powers stimulated the formation of bonds between members of the Farnese dynasty. Roman barons regularly invoked the idea of the ‘house’ in their attempts to bridge differences and attain unity of purpose.¹ Certainly, the Farnese shared in this noble perception of the dynasty as a unifying (and at times coercive) social construct rooted in patrilineality and notions of blood ties. The famous jurist and law professor at Bologna, Pietro d’Ancarano, hailed from a cadet branch that had split off from the main Farnese line in the late thirteenth century, but was nevertheless well-aware he came “from the noble lords of Farnese from the province of the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia (*de nobilibus de Farnesio provincie patrimonii beati Petri in Tuscia*).”² In the course of the Quattrocento, the name Farnese became a surname proper, potentially modelled on the Roman *nomen gentilicium*, a development that ran parallel with the use of the word *gens* instead of *domus*.³ Other forms of identification persisted relatively unaltered, such as the use of the Farnese coat of arms, which underwent only minor changes.⁴ Among noble families, genealogies and stories served to preserve the memory of shared ancestors and even naming practices connected descendants to their eponymous forebears – the Farnese were no different.⁵ But no dynasty existed, or could exist, in splendid isolation.

¹ Shaw, *The Political Role*, pp. 73-96.

² Pietro d’Ancarano, *Commentaria in sextum Decretalium* (Lyon 1531), f. 2^r; For Pietro d’Ancarano and his creation of a Farnese college at Bologna in 1415, see Celestino Piana, *Nuovi ricerche su le Università di Bologna e di Parma nel secolo XV* (Florence, 1966), pp. 418-33, 473; A. Corca, “L’Università di Bologna e i Farnesi: il Collegio d’Ancarano”, *Il Piacentino istruito* 93 (1916) pp. 161-76.

³ Alessandro Farnese uses the term *gens nostra Pharnesia* when writing to Annius of Viterbo, who had fabricated the Farnese’s genealogy. Alessandro Farnese to Annius of Viterbo, *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 61-2.

⁴ Attilio Offman, “L’Araldica dei Farnese”, *Archivum Heraldicum* 120 (2006), pp. 65-105.

⁵ Hamish Scott, “‘The Line of Descent of Nobles is from the Blood of Kings’: Reflections on Dynastic Identity”, in Liesbeth Geevers & Mirella Marini (eds.), *Dynastic Identity in Early Modern Europe: Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formation of Identities* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 217-41; Gert Melville, “Zur Technik genealogischer Konstruktionen”, in Andenna & Melville, *Idoneität – Genealogie – Legitimation*, pp. 293-304; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *La maison et le nom: Stratégies et rituels dans l’Italie de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1990), pp. 83-107.

Whether for the sake of political collaboration or for securing dynastic continuity, ties between dynasties were concluded through intermarriage. The marriage of women from one dynasty into another rightly suggests their indispensable role in connecting dynasties, a role that is further corroborated by the centrality of noblewomen in aristocratic sociability. In fifteenth-century Italy, married women never entirely entered their adoptive family and retained a liminal position between adoptive and natal kin. This is reflected by the fact that dowries remained a legally separate entity from the adoptive family's patrimony to be returned in case of early demise without heirs, as well as by the observation that women's identities remained commonly linked to their natal, not adoptive, family.⁶ A noblewoman's liminality allowed her to mediate between the interests of the men of her natal dynasty and those of her adoptive kin by navigating between her two identities, although this might also place severe strain on her position when their interests no longer overlapped but diverged or even conflicted.⁷ Yet marital ties also gave rise to male sociability within the family sphere, and female parallel and independent networks are attested among the Farnese. Together, the social interactions that marriage relations facilitated fostered a sense of personal affinity and trust that formed the foundation on which a potential for collaboration in the political sphere rested – a pivotal intermediate step that is often overlooked when marriage and alliance are simply conflated. This placed considerable importance on the choice of partner; finding one who came with the right connections was a chief concern for Farnese *patres familias*.

Implicitly or explicitly, much of the Farnese's historiography shares the assumption that a keen marriage strategy was one of the key factors contributing to their remarkable success. Pier Luigi's marriage to Giovannella Caetani has been singled out in particular as the crucial step that linked the

⁶ Kuehn, *Family and Gender*, pp. 108-119; Susan Stuard, "Brideprice, Dowry, and other Marital Assigns", in Judith Bennett & Ruth Karras (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook for Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 148-62; Tovah Bender, "Their Fathers' Daughters: Women's Social Identities in Fifteenth-Century Florence", *Journal of Family History* 38/4 (2013), pp. 371-86.

⁷ Carolyn James, "The Diplomacy of Clara Gonzaga, Countess of Montpensier-Bourbon: Gendered Perspectives of Family Duty, Honour and Female Agency", *Renaissance Studies* (2020), doi:10.1111/rest.12698.

Farnese to a papal family with invaluable connections in Rome.⁸ These conclusions partly stem from scurrilous tales that inflate Giovannella's role and ascribe to her a set of character traits that identify her as a transgressor of gendered boundaries and that depict the late fifteenth-century papacy as something rather like the tenth-century *saeculum obscurum* when Theopylact women and concubines supposedly controlled the papacy.⁹ The first part of this chapter challenges the notion that the Farnese-Caetani match formed the symbolic entry-point of the Farnese into the closed circle of Roman barons by presenting a wider picture of the Farnese's dynastic ties, many of which are unfamiliar. One consequence of this is to question whether it is even possible to speak of a carefully-calculated marriage strategy for the fifteenth-century Farnese. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, the focus shifts away from motivations behind establishing certain ties and dismissing others, towards the ways in which such ties were maintained, strengthened, and exploited. I address how the Farnese drew in their wider dynastic network during important stages of marriage negotiations and festivities, how the Farnese complemented their system of marriage relations with pseudo-kinship ties, what kind of social interactions the Farnese used in order to strengthen their relations, and how they represented their dynastic ties visually. Finally, the chapter explores why the family would forego the chances of concluding additional dynastic ties by placing sons and daughters in the Church, focusing on female conventual members of the family.

Strategy or Serendipity in the Farnese's Conclusion of Marriages

Dynasticism has at times been portrayed as a cynical game in which heiresses with substantial territorial possessions awaited ambitious men to claim them, perhaps in fierce competition with other potential candidates. This idea is perhaps best epitomised by the exploits of the Habsburg dynasty, whose members, through felicitous marriages and a series of dynastic accidents and large inheritances,

⁸ An ambitious marriage strategy as the key to success for the Farnese is implied in Gamrath, *Farnese*, p. 23; Nasalli Rocca, *I Farnese*, pp. 19-20; Del Vecchio, *I Farnese*, p. 18.

⁹ Loek Luiten, "Sexuality, Agency, and Honor in the Connections between the Borgia and Farnese in Renaissance Rome", in Jennifer DeSilva (ed.), *The Borgia Family: Rumor and Representation* (London, 2019), pp. 34-54.

acquired one of the largest empires the world has ever seen.¹⁰ Such ideas about dynasticism as a carefully concocted strategic game have been criticised: at the most basic level, high mortality rates ensured that such planning for the future was well-nigh impossible.¹¹ Admittedly, at the royal level, much attention was lavished on precisely delineating the hereditary transmission of the realm, but the various alternative scenarios that were explored in detail during wedding negotiations suggest that those engaged in these negotiations took into account the possibility of contingent events leading to dynastic crises.¹² Such planning made sense, because not only for those at court, but also in the mind of the public at large, dynastic continuity was closely linked to the stability of the realm. On a smaller scale, but in a not dissimilar manner due to the system of dynastic lordship that regulated the inheritance of kingdoms and small lordships alike, such dynamics characterised noble marriage strategies. Ensuring dynastic continuity in the male line was a central preoccupation for the Farnese. Moreover, as a marriage tie came with a potential for political collaboration, a myriad of considerations came into play during negotiations. In what follows, I trace these considerations for two to three generations of descendants from Pietro X Farnese and his wife, Pentasilea de Montemarte; that is to say, the main surviving line that ultimately produced Pope Paul III and gave rise to the Dukes of Parma and Piacenza and the Dukes of Latera.

The marriage of Pietro and Pentasilea's eldest son, Ranuccio XVII, to Agnesella Monaldeschi in 1427 is well-attested as is its importance to the Farnese.¹³ As Agnesella had first been married to Angelo Tartaglia, her dowry included the strategic town of Marta, which had formerly been in Farnese possession. Yet there are reasons to doubt whether she was the mother of all of Ranuccio's ten legitimate children. For instance, if Ranuccio's first-born son Angelo III was begotten with Agnesella Monaldeschi, he could have been no older than twelve when he took up his first *condotta* in 1439,

¹⁰ Martyn Rady, *The Habsburgs: The Rise and Fall of a World Power* (London, 2020); See also, Elisabetta Scarton, "Tra 'dualità et tradimenti': La politica (matrimoniale) di Ferrante d'Aragona nei primi anni Settanta del Quattrocento letta attraverso i dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli", *eHumanista* 38 (2018), pp. 186-200.

¹¹ Natalia Nowakowska argues against dynasticism as a cynically calculated strategy for extending territorial rulership in her "What's in a Word?".

¹² Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, pp. 9-26; Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 127-42.

¹³ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

which, for obvious reasons, is implausible. Moreover, a document dated 18 May 1417 reveals that the Sieneese government approved Ranuccio's request to leave the army camp that was besieging the Orsini stronghold of Pitigliano for eight days in order to celebrate his wedding.¹⁴ There can thus be little doubt that Agnesella was Ranuccio's second spouse, raising questions about the identity of his first wife. The Farnese archive's inventory contains an entry for a bull of dispensation for a marriage between Agnese Savelli and Ranuccio Farnese, although the date is only indicated as 1400 and may well have been a generic indication of the rough period when it was promulgated.¹⁵ It seems, therefore, that this bull cleared the legal ground for Ranuccio's first marriage with Agnese Savelli. With some circumspection, I propose Paolo Savelli as a likely candidate for Agnese's father. More important than Agnese Savelli's paternity is the fact that she hailed from one of Rome's most prominent baronial families, which indicates that the Farnese at this early stage already considered the Roman barons as attractive, but also appropriate, marriage partners. Moreover, the Savelli were traditionally closely affiliated to the Colonna, which, in view of Oddone Colonna's election as Pope Martin V at the Council of Constance within months of Ranuccio's wedding, had important consequences for the Farnese's relations with the papacy.

Ranuccio's remarriage to Agnesella Monaldeschi created another tie to the Colonna, for the Monaldeschi were Orvieto's ruling family, and had been the target of Martin's matrimonial policy as well. Above all, a policy of Farnese marriages with the Monaldeschi had been pursued since at least the early fourteenth century, one that was continued by Ranuccio when he negotiated the marriages of his brother Bartolomeo and his daughter Francesca.¹⁶ The marriage of Pietro and Pentasilea's daughter, Lagia, to one of the lords of Tolfa Veteris, a family traditionally affiliated to the Counts of Anguillara, also fits into a long pattern of marrying into local noble landholding families.¹⁷

¹⁴ ASS, Concistoro 1614, f. 82^r.

¹⁵ Bulla dispensationis Ranutij de Farn[esi]o cu[m] Agneta de Sabellis. BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 139^v.

¹⁶ A dispensation for a marriage between Pietro di Ugolino Monaldeschi and Giovanna di Cola Farnese is dated 25 May 1328. ASV, Reg. Aven. 30, f. 364^v; Reg. Vat. 86, doc. 1822.

¹⁷ Andrea Fara, "La famiglia Frangipane di Roma fra conservazione sociale e rinnovamento economico tra Quattro e Cinquecento: prime indagini", *Roma nel Rinascimento* 42 (2018), pp. 363-90; Marco Fracassa, "I fratelli Ludovico e Pietro nella storia di Tolfa Vecchia del '400", in Bruno Fracassa & Marco Fracassa, *L'Eremo*

Ranuccio's two marriages provided him with a host of children, meaning that he was able to pursue dynastic ties without any limitations on sons or daughters of marriageable age, while his earnings as a *condottiere* gave him the means to pursue a marriage strategy unrestrained by financial considerations. It is telling that he sought to make full use of these opportunities and only destined his illegitimate daughter for a place in the Church. In 1432, Ranuccio concluded the betrothal (*sponsalia*) of Violante Farnese and Roberto Orsini with Roberto's uncle, Cardinal Giordano Orsini.¹⁸ This connection to one of the most powerful branches of the Orsini, a family which, together with the Colonna, was regarded as the most powerful in Rome, perpetuated and strengthened the Farnese's affiliation and identification with the Roman barons. In the following decades, Ranuccio continued his policy, marrying his daughter Lucrezia to Francesco dell'Anguillara and Agnese to Pandolfo Savelli.¹⁹ No less than three marriages were reserved for families with which the Farnese through circumstances shared ownership of several castles. Both Ranuccio and Aldo Conti received, as a reward for their role as *condottieri* in the papal armies, half of the jurisdictions of the castles of Abbazia ad Ponte, Canino, and Gradoli. A double marriage between Angelo III Farnese and Giustina Conti on the one hand, and Caterina Farnese and Giovanni Conti on the other, sought to ensure that territorial co-rulership did not give rise to contention.²⁰ Indeed, the combination of a marriage and shared ownership of castles was a common and relatively successful means of tying together two dynasties. In the case of the Conti of Valmontone this solution strengthened the connections between two families that had extensively collaborated under Martin V and continued to do so during Eugene IV's pontificate; however, in the case of the Orsini of Pitigliano, it extinguished an enmity that had lasted for generations.²¹ Between 1445 and 1447 a series of deals were hammered out that resolved all conflicting claims between the

della S.S. Trinità di Allumiere (Milan, 2018), pp. 89-100; Glauco Stracci, "I Frangipane della Tolfa", *Miscellanea storica Centumcellae divo Traiano patri suo* 24 (2017), pp. 63-72.

¹⁸ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 139^v.

¹⁹ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^v-125^r.

²⁰ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 125^r, 130^r.

²¹ Luiten, "Like a Lily Amongst the Thorns", pp. 256-9.

Farnese and Orsini that had arisen over the course of decades, and their vow of peace was sealed by a wedding between Ranuccio's second son Gabriele Francesco and Lella Orsini.²²

After Ranuccio XVII's death in 1450, his heirs negotiated the marriage of their half-sister Eugenia with Stefanello Colonna of Palestrina, and finally that of their half-brother Pier Luigi I with Giovannella Caetani of Sermoneta in 1464.²³ Not only was Pier Luigi's marriage to Giovannella therefore the last of a long series of Farnese marriages with the Roman barons, but at the moment of its conclusion the Caetani were the only Roman baronial dynasty the Farnese had not yet married into (although, at the time the Sermoneta branch was not particularly in favour in either Rome or Naples).²⁴ It is therefore possible to argue that, considering the frequency and ease with which Ranuccio's children, following his own example, married into the Roman baronage, that both the Farnese and the barons felt these were appropriate matches between partners of an equal social status. Indeed, for the Farnese this was to be the preferred option when one of their number neared marriageable age. The second variety of desirable marriage was contracted in this period almost exclusively with a single family, the Monaldeschi of Orvieto. Interest and preservation of status dictated links with a seigneurial family in control of the commune with which the Farnese maintained the closest political and economic ties, a family moreover that had obtained extensive territorial lordships and investiture with the title of count. The only marriage that does not seem to entirely conform to this neat categorisation was that of Pentasilea Farnese and Costantino Ranieri.²⁵ Costantino was the son of Ruggiero, one of Niccolò Fortebraccio's captains and a leading figure among Perugia's oligarchy.²⁶ The Farnese had concluded marital ties with prominent *condottieri* like Angelo Tartaglia more frequently during the unruly years before the end of the Western Schism. In this case, acquiring a tie with Fortebraccio and

²² ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 125^r.

²³ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 126^r; Gelasio Caetani, *Epistolarium Honorati Caetani* (Sancasciano Val di Pesa, 1926), p. 217.

²⁴ Nicola Caetani to Onorato III Caetani di Sermoneta, 24 May, 29 and 30 July 1467. Archivio Caetani, 19918, 19919 & 19920.

²⁵ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 124^v.

²⁶ Stefania Zucchini, "Ruggiero Cane Ranieri", in Stefania Zucchini (ed.), *I capitani di ventura: Guerra e società nell'Italia centrale del Trecento* (Perugia, 2006), pp. 51-66.

his Bracceschi troops may have been an incentive, but it is also possible to discern the logic of creating ties to leading families from communes whose local government the Farnese had an interest in influencing.²⁷

These two groups, Roman barons and leading families of nearby communes comprised the largest contingent of marriages among Ranuccio's grandchildren and Bartolomeo's children. Marriages with the Orsini and Dell'Anguillara figure prominently, and the match between Angelo III's illegitimate daughter Sabetta and Gattuzo de' Gatti reveals that the Farnese were as interested in marrying into Viterbo's leading family as in marrying into that of Orvieto.

Two additional marriages continue this tradition of establishing ties with leading civic nobles, but stand out for their ambitiousness and their focus on Tuscany's two great city-states: Florence and Siena. Gabriele Francesco's daughter Agnese's wedding contract to Andrea Todeschini-Piccolomini was signed on 7 July 1474 in the presence of Cardinal Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius III, as well as the Farnese relatives Sinolfo degli'Ottieri and Francesco Colonna of Palestrina.²⁸ Andrea was a nephew of Pope Pius II and the prestige of being a papal family made the Piccolomini into the leading Siennese family during the second half of the Quattrocento. The Farnese had married into Siena's leading families in the Trecento, and generally maintained close political, social, and economic ties with that commune. Until the Petrucci coup d'état in 1487, which ousted the Piccolomini-led government, the Farnese's relations with Siena were especially close and cordial. Yet in the wake of Pius' pontificate the Piccolomini were more than just a Siennese family. Andrea's brother Antonio had been created Duke of Amalfi and had married an illegitimate daughter of King Ferrante of Naples. Agnese and Andrea's marriage therefore brought the Farnese invaluable ties to major powerbrokers not only in Siena, but also the Curia and at the Neapolitan court.

²⁷ Patrizia Chiatti, *La biografia del condottiero Angelo Tartaglia (ca. 1370–1421)* (Tuscania, 2011), p. 32.

²⁸ ASS, Consorteria Piccolomini 17, ff. 25^r-27^v.

Like her cousin Agnese, Geronima Farnese was married into a Tuscan patrician family: the Pucci of Florence.²⁹ In social terms, the Pucci marriage was something of a *mésalliance*. The Pucci were guildsmen that had only been ennobled when Puccio's eponymous grandfather Puccio d'Antonio Pucci received a knighthood in 1429.³⁰ Nevertheless, the Pucci had over the course of several generations become part of the Medici inner circle, and a tie to them provided the Farnese with a direct link to the Florentine government. By the time of Geronima's marriage, the Farnese had long maintained relations with the Medici and the communal regime, pursued military offices in the Florentine army, and had large business interests in Florence. Mediated access to the Florentine government and the Medici shadow regime that held real power were notable advantages that outweighed the inhibitions that the difference in status may have created. When marrying into urban noble families, the Farnese may have had more practical considerations in mind than when pursuing matches with baronial or princely dynasties.

Finally, as a last category that can be added to the matches with Roman barons and noble citizens, are those marriages that the Farnese concluded with local baronial families like the Castell'Ottieri and Sforza of Santa Fiora. The Counts of Castell'Ottiero and the Sforza of Santa Fiora were, like the Orsini of Pitigliano, in possession of small counties with imperial immediacy wedged in between the Republic of Siena and the Farnese patrimony in the Papal States and like the Farnese these families increasingly gravitated towards Rome and the papal Curia.³¹ In nature and status, these families differed little from the Roman barons and would have been recognisably part of Italy's class of military nobles. In the case of the Sforza of Santa Fiora, of course, the betrothal between Angelo III's daughter, Francesca, and Guido Sforza in 1457, was also, and perhaps foremost, perceived as the creation of a tie with Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan.³² As such, this marriage is indicative of the

²⁹ The betrothal was signed in November 1483. ASF, Notarile anticosimiano 3248, f. 26^{r-v}; ASF, Notarile anticosimiano 10191, f. 154^r; ASF, Riccardi 605, ff. 2^v-3^r, 26^v-28^v.

³⁰ Archivio Pucci, filza 1, fasciolo 5.

³¹ Teodoro Amayden, *La Storia delle Famiglie Romane* (Rome, 1979), vol. II, p. 119.

³² Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi I Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 18 August 1457 and Angelo III Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 19 August 1457. ASF, MAP, XII, 260^{r-v}, 261^{r-v}.

sideway glances that the Farnese increasingly cast in the direction of princely families as an option to target for marriage negotiations.

These new ambitions for marrying into the Italian peninsula's princely families came to fruition with the marriage between Ranuccio XVIII Farnese and Primavera da Varano, daughter of Rodolfo da Varano, Lord of Camerino.³³ Genealogists are mistaken in identifying Ippolita Pallavicini, daughter of Federico Pallavicini of Zibello and Clarice Malaspina of Fosdinovo, as Ranuccio's wife: considering their age difference, Ranuccio's illegitimate and eponymous son is a more likely candidate for Ippolita.³⁴ However, letters by Ranuccio and Primavera's hand leave little doubt as to her identity.³⁵ A match between the Farnese and Da Varano was not a directly obvious one, despite the Guelph tradition and condottiere credentials of both families; I address the importance of mediation by the Duke of Urbino in the achievement of this marriage at greater length below. The marriage's importance, for now, lies in its novelty for the Farnese, who married directly into a princely family for the first time. Though novel at the time, this was an example that was emulated when options for a marriage for Giulia Farnese's daughter, Laura Orsini, were explored. These negotiations were led by Alessandro Farnese, and Laura, exceptionally, seems to have been regarded more as a Farnese than an Orsini.³⁶ In first instance, Alessandro suggested a match between Laura and Astorre Manfredi, the young Lord of Faenza.³⁷ Convinced by his Pucci brothers-in-law that the Manfredi's position in Faenza was perennially insecure, they suggested that Laura might also be a candidate for betrothal to Giuliano de' Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent's second son. Giuliano's brother, Piero, certainly regarded this as an attractive match, and expressed his favour by indicating that although he was already related to the Orsini

³³ For the Da Varano, see John Law, "The Da Varano Lords of Camerino as *Condottiere* Princes", in John France (ed.), *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 89-103.

³⁴ Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri italiane* (Milan, 1819-83) [digitized by Bibliothèque Nationale de France. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84523589> [last accessed: 12-10-2020].

³⁵ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese wrote of "lo acerbo casu della infirmata et morte della mia cordialissima consorte et ad vostra S[ignoria] cara ziana mado[n]na Primavera." Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Ottaviano Manfredi, 20 February 1494. ASF, MAP, XIX, 472^{r-v}; Primavera signed her letters as Primavera Varanea de Farnesio. Primavera da Varano to Balìa of Siena, 30 November 1483. ASS, Balìa 515, 99.

³⁶ Giovanni Battista Picotti, "Nuovi studi e documenti intorno a Papa Alessandro VI", *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 5 (1951), pp. 169-262; Giovanni Battista Picotti, "Per le relazioni fra Alessandro VI e Piero de' Medici: un duplice trattato di matrimonio per Laura Orsini", *Archivio Storico Italiano* 73 (1915), pp. 37-100.

³⁷ In general, see Fausto Renzi, *I Manfredi: Signori di Faenza e Imola* (Cesena, 2010).

through his wife and mother, the match was worthwhile investigating for the tie that it would gain him to the Farnese.³⁸ Due to the young age of the prospective spouses, Piero, who was also exploring options for a marriage tie to the Lord of Piombino, prevaricated and negotiations were soon overtaken by political events when the French invasion of Italy in 1494 led to the expulsion of the Medici regime from Florence.³⁹ Nonetheless, these negotiations show that both the Farnese as well as members of Italy's princely families seriously considered such matches. That they did so was in no small measure the result of a development during the second half of the Quattrocento that saw an intensification of relations across nominal state boundaries in Italy, relations that were often formalised through intermarriage. By casting the net wider, whether by investigating matches with leading patrician families or Italy's princely dynasties, the Farnese sought to profit from this development, even if the fruits of these negotiations turned out to be a mixed bag of success and failure.

Negotiations between the Farnese and princely families were, as the case of the Medici shows, less likely to succeed than those negotiated with baronial peers. Even in the case of the latter, our view is skewed by the fact that, often, evidence only survives in the event of a successful outcome (e.g. marriage and betrothal contracts or a discharge of the debts incurred for a dowry); rarely do sources provide insight into failed negotiations, or how the negotiations themselves were conducted, or why negotiations had been entered into in the first place. Where they do, these sources cast further suspicion on the viability of a carefully planned marriage strategy pursued over the course of multiple generations. Even the successful negotiation of the Farnese-Caetani match was the result of a protracted process that took four years to complete. Letters by Angelo III Farnese and Lodovico Trevisan show that negotiations had been entered into seriously well before 6 October 1460.⁴⁰ The negotiations were certainly complicated by Jean of Anjou's invasion of the Kingdom of Naples. The Caetani's support for the Angevin cause contrasted with the Farnese's activities in the Aragonese

³⁸ Lorenzo Pucci to Giannozzo Pucci, 24 December 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, ff. 98^r-100^v.

³⁹ Piero Parenti, *Storia fiorentina*, ed. Andrea Matucci (Florence, 1994-2018), vol. II, p. 97.

⁴⁰ Angelo III Farnese to Cardinal Trevisan, 6 October 1460, and Cardinal Trevisan to Caterina Orsini Caetani, 8 October 1460 and 8 February 1461. Caetani, *Epistolarium*, p. 90.

armies – Angelo Farnese and Andrea Conti were active in the Campagna with their mercenary companies and even plundered the Caetani lordship of Norma early in 1461.⁴¹ Nevertheless, negotiations continued at a slow pace; in February 1461 representatives of each family were exchanged so that they might observe and report upon the future spouses, and in April 1462 the spouses themselves were introduced to each other.⁴² It was only on 30 March 1464 that Pier Luigi nominated a curator to conclude the marriage contract with the bride's father.⁴³ Both families seemed to appreciate the benefits of the prospective marriage, but neither seemed in a particular rush to conclude it, and certainly did not expect that a marriage would bring a sudden and hitherto untapped potential for collaboration and a complete change in political directions.

The negotiations for Ranuccio XVIII Farnese's marriage perhaps best illustrate the rather *ad hoc* nature and unpredictability that characterised the efforts of the Quattrocento Farnese patriarchs in concluding new dynastic ties. In 1469, when Ranuccio must have been a teenage boy, his father Gabriele Francesco conducted negotiations for his betrothal that had proceeded far beyond the exploratory phase. In fact, an official papal bull of dispensation had already been acquired that paved the way for Ranuccio's marriage to Livia Colonna suggesting that the betrothal was close to or had already been concluded.⁴⁴ As no further mention is made of Livia in any historical record, it is very likely that she died before the wedding ever took place. It cannot have been much later that negotiations were initiated between Gabriele Francesco Farnese and Ludovico Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. The marquis was the formal guardian of his deceased brother's daughters, and most likely he sought a match for Cecilia di Carlo Gonzaga of Sabionetta. Whatever the details may have been, the marquis' ambassador in Urbino reported that the negotiations had petered out and suggested the Duke of Montefeltro's son or Giuliano de' Medici instead.⁴⁵ It is possible that the benefit of the proposed tie

⁴¹ Cardinal Trevisan to Caterina Orsini Caetani, 13 January 1461. Archivio Caetani, 17714 & 119868.

⁴² Cardinal Trevisan to Caterina Orsini Caetani, 10 April 1462. Archivio Caetani, 17699; Caetani, *Epistolarium*, pp. 107-8, 187.

⁴³ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 126^r; Caetani, *Epistolarium*, p. 217.

⁴⁴ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 139^v.

⁴⁵ Francesco Prendilacqua to Ludovico Gonzaga, Urbino 2 July 1472, Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga, 844, published in Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, ed. Riccardo Fubini (Florence, 1977-), vol. I, p. 399.

was more apparent for the Gonzaga than for the Farnese. Gonzaga ambitions in Rome had grown after Francesco Gonzaga was created cardinal, but his entry in Roman life was characterised by the rather naïve move of renting an apartment in the Orsini palace at Montegiordano, unwittingly being drawn into the rivalry between Rome's factions.⁴⁶ In the fraught factional context of Rome and the Curia, a connection with the Farnese might have proved a useful asset for the Gonzaga, but the Farnese as yet seem to have had little interest in a northern Italian family whose marital policy also focused on France and the Holy Roman Empire, despite the status that a dynastic tie to the Marquis of Mantua would have brought.⁴⁷ Eventually Ranuccio did conclude a prestigious match with Primavera da Varano, but it is highly significant that, as if to illustrate the disjuncture between expectations and outcome in the conclusion of marriage alliances among noble families in Quattrocento Italy, I have found no evidence that this match resulted in any form of political collaboration between the Farnese and the lords of Camerino.

Evidently, biological accidents and unforeseeable political circumstances precluded any prospect of accurately predicting what marriage ties would bring in terms of political benefit, nor did these benefits always meet up to expectations in practice; such clairvoyance was simply out of the question for European royal and noble families. On the whole, therefore, Farnese marriage policy can be described as pragmatic, even conservative. Roughly two thirds of the Farnese's marriages were concluded with Roman or local baronial families – a percentage that increases even further if we were to include the landholding, castle owning, and titled nobility that nonetheless made up the civic nobility within this group. The identification with the baronial elite and with its societal level of status is further reflected by the level of Farnese dowries, which fluctuated between a low of 2,700 ducats and a high

⁴⁶ David Chambers, "The Housing Problems of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976), pp. 21-58.

⁴⁷ James, "The Diplomacy of Clara Gonzaga"; Christina Antenhofer, "From Local *Signori* to European High Nobility: The Gonzaga Family Networks in the Fifteenth Century", in Christopher Johnson, David Sabeau, Simon Teuscher & Francesco Trivellato (eds.), *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond: Experiences Since the Middle Ages* (New York, 2011), pp. 55-74.

of 5,000 ducats.⁴⁸ This is a range comparable to that found for the Caetani, Conti, Dell'Anguillara and Orsini, which fluctuated between 3,000 and 6,000 ducats.⁴⁹ Only on a few occasions did the Farnese pursue dynastic ties with less obvious and more high-risk, high-reward candidates such as the Ranieri, Da Varano, Piccolomini, or Pucci. Tellingly, the benefits these marriages brought were either negligible or of great importance to the Farnese's political ambitions. To be sure, the evidence certainly suggests that care was lavished on the choice of partner for Farnese scions. But the evidence also all seems to point in the same direction: that no master plan existed, or was even conceivable for Farnese marriage strategies. If then, we concede that a forcefully pursued dynasticism is ruled out as a cause of the Farnese's political and social success, the importance not of the formal nature of dynastic ties but the ways in which these were given shape through social interactions is brought into sharp relief. But before moving on to these social interactions, it is worthwhile addressing how wider kinship networks were drawn in at various stages of the marriage negotiations and festivities.

Mediators, Chaperons, Wedding Guests

It is important to recognise that marriage not only created a tie between two dynasties, but involved both parties' wider kinship networks. Members of these networks were drawn into the negotiations at various stages of the protracted process as mediators, chaperons, and witnesses to the signing of contracts, and were invited to join in celebration during the wedding festivities. These were events of seminal importance for creating the kind of affinity and trust on which collaboration rested. Furthermore, even if it is difficult to assess mediators' and chaperons' exact impact on the outcome of

⁴⁸ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 126^r-127^v, 139^v; ASF, Notarile anticosimiano 3248, f. 26^{r-v}; ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated; ASS, Gabella dei contratti 270, f. 16^v; Danilo Romei & Patrizia Rosini (eds.), *Regesto dei documenti di Giulia Farnese* (Milan, 2012), pp. 11-16.

⁴⁹ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.13,020, II.A.19,015; ASC, Archivi di Persone e Famiglie, Anguillara, Pergamene, credenzione 14, tomo 64, n. 8 & 9; ASC, Archivi di Persone e Famiglie, Anguillara, Pergamene, credenzione 14, tomo 66, n. 1; Archivio Caetani, 161790 & 186899; Archivio Caetani, Pergamene 830 & 2078; ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 840, filza 23; ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 842, filza 14; ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

negotiations, the regular recourse that the Farnese took to individuals of the utmost political and social significance in order to fulfil such duties suggests that they certainly carried some weight.

Two marriage negotiations around the middle of the century are particularly revealing of the role played by mediators: those for the betrothal of Francesca Farnese with Guido Sforza and those for a match between Pier Luigi Farnese and Giovannella Caetani. In the negotiations for the latter match, Cardinal Lodovico Trevisan fulfilled the role of a trustworthy and politically high-ranking intermediary who could guarantee that political differences were bridged and who had a personal stake in the future of both spouses.⁵⁰ Trevisan had been nominated as one of the guardians of Ranuccio XVII's children in the condottiere's will, but, as godfather to Giovannella's father Onorato, had an interest in the Caetani of Sermoneta's fortune as well. Despite the considerable political upheaval that raged during the negotiations, Trevisan was able to mediate and successfully broker the match, thus accruing honour to himself in the process. That the betrotheds' families also felt a sense of obligation towards mediators, is directly expressed in letters sent by Angelo, Gabriele Francesco, and Pier Luigi to thank Cosimo de' Medici after the conclusion of the Farnese-Sforza match. From these letters, it is clear that several parties were involved in brokering this match, most prominently Cosimo and Francesco Sforza's ambassador to Florence.⁵¹ Some two decades before, Cosimo had assented to becoming godfather to Pier Luigi Farnese, and clearly this act entailed a further sense of responsibility for Pier Luigi's wider Farnese kin.⁵² Such obligations could endure over the course of several generations, and it seems likely that Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo the Magnificent also had a hand in the marriage between Pier Luigi's daughter Geronima Farnese and Puccio Pucci. Historians have commented on Lorenzo's active involvement in brokering matches and his efforts at controlling the conclusion of marriages in Florence, and indeed both Lorenzo the Magnificent and his son Piero sponsored the wedding of Puccio's half-brother Roberto with Dionora Lenzi, while Lorenzo's lavish gift

⁵⁰ Angelo III Farnese to Cardinal Trevisan, 6 October 1460, and Cardinal Trevisan to Caterina Orsini Caetani, 8 October 1460 and 8 February 1461. Caetani, *Epistolarium*, pp. 90, 107-8.

⁵¹ Gabriele Francesco & Pier Luigi I Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 18 August 1457, and Angelo III Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 19 August 1457. ASF, MAP, XII, 260^r-261^v.

⁵² Mandatu[m] Cosme de Medicis ad suscipiendum filium Raynutij in Baptismum. BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 136^r.

of four Botticelli paintings for the occasion of Giannozzo Pucci and Lucrezia Bini's wedding suggests his involvement there too.⁵³ Especially when it came to arranging marriages between Florentine and non-Florentine baronial families, Lorenzo de' Medici was usually directly involved, and, taking into account his personal relations with the Farnese, it is very likely that he arranged the Pucci-Farnese match.

A more potent demonstration of the projected spouse's wider kinship network and its potential benefits was made in the choice of chaperon during the courting phase of marriage negotiations. This phase was an opportunity for the parents to observe their prospective daughter or son-in-law, assess their physical fitness or fertility, and the courtliness of their manners. Above all, it was turned into an occasion during which the groom could show off their political and dynastic relations. Thus, when Pier Luigi travelled to Sermoneta to make the acquaintance of Giovannella, he was escorted by his brother-in-law Napoleone Orsini of Bracciano, Captain-General of the Church, head of the Orsini family, and the most powerful baron of the Papal States.⁵⁴ The choice of Napoleone Orsini perhaps also suggested that, even if both parties found themselves on opposing sides in the war over the Kingdom of Naples, a rapprochement should be easily effected once the conflict was concluded. In any case, Napoleone's role as chaperon got across the message that the Farnese could count on powerful support among members of the Papal States' baronial elite.

Members of the Farnese also played the chaperon for their Orsini kin. Ranuccio XVIII escorted his cousin Gentile di Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano to Naples in 1487 as part of the negotiations to wed him to Caterina d'Arrigo d'Aragona, granddaughter of King Ferrante of Naples. Additionally, Ranuccio sought Gentile Virginio Orsini's support in securing his cousin a large dowry.⁵⁵ This projected wedding was intended to tie together more closely the alliance between the Sforza of Milan, the Medici in Florence, the Orsini in Rome, and the King of Naples, an alliance in which the Farnese were closely

⁵³ Puccio Pucci to Giannozzo Pucci, 24 December 1491. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 63; On the Medici's involvement in Pucci marriages, see Patricia Lee Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 238-50.

⁵⁴ Cardinal Trevisan to Caterina Orsini Caetani, 10 April 1462. Archivio Caetani, 17699.

⁵⁵ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 23 September 1487. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 70, parte 2, f. 254^r.

involved. Ranuccio's presence in Naples therefore made manifest the reservoir of prominent connections the Orsini of Pitigliano could rely on in the area on the border of Tuscany and the Papal States, and, as a close confidant of Nicola Orsini, Ranuccio could be relied upon to provide a trustworthy report of Caterina of Aragon and of Gentile's reception at the Neapolitan court. Such services of escorting relatives were striking performances of kinship specifically enacted for a public contemplating associating themselves with that very kinship network through marriage.

When all negotiations had successfully been concluded the festivities of the wedding served to create and strengthen personal affective bonds between the two kinship groups that performed their unity in the celebration. Invitations were extended even to distant relatives; Puccio Pucci was invited to the wedding of Guglielmo Caetani of Sermoneta and Francesca Conti of Valmontone by virtue of his wife Geronima Farnese.⁵⁶ Attending such events was of such paramount importance that the Otto di Pratica had to grant Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano leave from the army for attending his daughter Lella's wedding with Angelo IV Farnese on 11 May 1488, despite the imminent crisis and looming war in the Romagna after the murder of Girolamo Riario.⁵⁷ Representatives of Acquapendente and Viterbo also attended this wedding, each donating a silver cup, suggesting there was also room for such political affiliations to be expressed through gifts to the newlyweds.⁵⁸ Angelo himself, as one of the many heads of branches of baronial families attending, presented a gilded confectionary dish at the wedding of Guglielmo Caetani and Francesca Conti, and this occasion again underscores the centrality of gift-giving during wedding ceremonies.⁵⁹

Of the other festivities of Farnese weddings we know very little. Only one such celebration was recorded by a local chronicler, and these are the festivities held on the occasion of a match of which

⁵⁶ Guglielmo was Geronima's uncle and Francesca's grandmother Lucrezia Farnese was Geronima's aunt. Nicola Caetani to Puccio Pucci, 26 November 1489. Archivio Caetani, 198189.

⁵⁷ Otto di Pratica to Nicola Orsini, 4 May 1488. ASF, OP, LC 7, f. 24^v; Within a week of the wedding, two guests, Nicola Orsini and Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, were already in Pisa with their troops ready to be sent on to the Romagna. ASF, Dieci di Balìa to Pietro Alamanni, 18 May and 6 June 1488. ASF, DB, LC, 8, ff. 21^v, 28^v-29^v.

⁵⁸ Quaglieri, "Angelo Farnese", *DBI*.

⁵⁹ The other barons presenting gifts were Pietro Paolo Conti, Prospero Colonna, Fabrizio Colonna, Pietro Colonna, Ludovico Orsini, and Pietro Paolo Cesarini. Archivio Caetani, 155314.

little else is known at all, that between Pentasilea Farnese and Constantino Ranieri. A Perugian chronicler observed that,

On the fifth of February [1441] Constantino di Rugiero de Ranieri took as his wife the daughter of the lord Ranuccio Farnese, and a splendid wedding was held where over sixty ladies and gentlemen were invited. And so the ladies and the fiancée danced all the way to the Palace of the Priors, and subsequently they returned back home, once again dancing. And this was on Sunday; the same was done on Monday. On Tuesday, a joust was held where more than a hundred lances were broken, and the winner awarded 12 braccia of sky-blue velvet. Count Guido of Urbino attended.⁶⁰

In the chronicler's description the emphasis seems to be on the public character of the festivities, taking place in public spaces such as the streets of Perugia, the Palace of the Priors, and undoubtedly the square in front of the palace, thus for all the city to see. A large number of leading citizens attended the wedding as the Ranieri belonged to Perugia's ruling elite – Constantino's father Rugiero received a state burial with much pomp some months after the wedding and his son fulfilled public offices with great regularity.⁶¹ Moreover, as a manifestation of the chivalric culture that united the members of Italy's condottiere dynasties, the joust that was organised attracted many participants.⁶² Thus, the noble sociability that wedding celebrations gave rise to was intended to weld together the two spouses' kinship groups.

⁶⁰ "Adì de 5 febraio menò moglie Gostantino de Rugiere dei Raniere, quale era figliola del signor Ranuccio da Farnese; e fuor fatte assai belle nozze, dove ce fuoro invitate più de 60 donne e signori; et così andaro ballando le donne e la zita per fina lì al palazzo dei Priors, e poi se retornaro a casa pure ballando. Et questo fu la dominica: el simile fiero el lunedì; el martedì se fece una giostra, et davase a chi aveva lo onore braccia 12 de velluto cilestro, et ce fuoro rotte più de 100 lance: e vennece el conte Guido de Urbino." *Cronaca della città di Perugia dal 1309 al 1491, nota con nome del Diario del Graziani, secondo un codice appartenente ai conti Baglioni*, edited by Ariodante Fabretti, *Archivio storico italiano* 16 (1850) p. 467.

⁶¹ *Cronaca della città di Perugia*, 468; *Cronaca perugina inedita di Pietro Angelo di Giovanni*, ed. By Oscar Scalvanti, *Bollettino della Regia Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria* 4 (1898), pp. 72-136, 303-400 and *Bollettino della Regia Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria* 9 (1903), pp. 33-380.

⁶² Michael Mallett has illuminated the 'revival' of chivalry in late-medieval Italy, yet essentially regards it as antithetical to military professionalism in his "Condottieri and Captains in Renaissance Italy", in D.J.B. Trim (ed.), *Chivalric Ethos and the Development of Military Professionalism* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 67-88.

Although the evidence pertaining to the ceremonies and practices surrounding marriage negotiations and celebrations is sparse, it speaks more to the imagination than an enumeration of contract witnesses, while similarly providing crucial insight into the ways in which the Farnese drew in their wider kinship network in the all-important process of creating dynastic ties. For it provides a glimpse of insight into the rich life of Quattrocento noble sociability and its currencies of status, trust, honour, and feelings of affiliation and obligation. It is also evidence of the thick nexus of relations that the Farnese spun across the Italian peninsula. Within this nexus of relations, additional ties that were not rooted in blood kinship or officially sanctioned marriage but nevertheless show similar traits have already appeared, most prominently the connection between godparents and godchildren. Such ties show that yet another layer or web of relations connected Italy's elites that is perhaps best categorised as pseudo-kinship relations.

Pseudo-Kinship: Godfathers, Mistresses, and Patronage Relations

In Quattrocento Italy, like elsewhere in Latin Europe, parallel systems existed that created ties that were deemed not wholly dissimilar to those established by blood or marriage; most prominently the nomination of godparents or guardians, but also other forms of pseudo-kinship relations. William Deller, Guido Alfani, and Vincent Gourdon stress that in pre-Tridentine Europe, even if the Church insisted on the centrality of the creation of spiritual kinship ties through the ritual of baptism, it was the social ties that really mattered.⁶³ The impact of godparenthood and guardianship is notoriously difficult to trace as such relations were rarely explicitly articulated, but evidence in the context of the late-Quattrocento Sforza court in Milan suggests it was far from negligible.⁶⁴ Where it is possible to trace such connections for the fifteenth-century Farnese, the material suggests that godparents and guardians took over the responsibility for orphaned children, and even if one or both natural parents

⁶³ Guido Alfani & Vincent Gourdon, "Spiritual Kinship and Godparenthood: An Introduction", in Guido Alfani & Vincent Gourdon (eds.), *Spiritual Kinship in Europe, 1500-1900* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 1-43; William Deller, "The First Rite of Passage: Baptism in Medieval Memory", *Journal of Family History* 36/1 (2011), pp. 3-14; Guido Alfani, *Fathers and Godfathers: Spiritual Kinship in Early-Modern Italy* (Farnham, 2009).

⁶⁴ Gregory Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court: Milan under Galeazzo Maria Sforza* (Berkeley, 1994), pp. 223-6.

were alive, maintained bonds of affection with the children under their protection – bonds that often lasted well into adulthood. For this reason, godparents and guardians could be an invaluable asset as powerful protectors and even ensure dynastic survival. On one such occasion, Gabriele Francesco Farnese, Bruno Conti, Stefanello Colonna, and Domenico dell'Anguillara were appointed guardians over Francesco dell'Anguillara and Lucrezia Farnese's underage children by Paul II after their father had been imprisoned in Castel Sant'Angelo.⁶⁵ In this particular case, the intervention of an extensive kinship network ensured that the sins of the father were not visited upon the Anguillara sons during a period of fierce prosecution under the consecutive pontificates of Pius II and Paul II.

The relevance of pseudo-kinship ties lay in their ability to strengthen existing kinship connections or create additional bonds where no formal kinship yet existed. For example, Giannozzo Pucci requested in 1493 that his brother-in-law Cardinal Alessandro Farnese take his son into baptism. Alessandro obliged and in this instance his role as godparent served to reinforce a formal kinship tie, but in such a way that Alessandro was expected to be more closely involved with Giannozzo Pucci's offspring than would have been the case as a more distant uncle.⁶⁶ As Alessandro Farnese's example shows, godparenthood extended to members of the clergy who were thus able to create direct links as an alternative to additional kinship ties that were unavailable to them as a result of their vows of chastity. Indeed, precisely when traditional ties were lacking, additional pseudo-kinship relations became an especially potent means to secure the dynastic future. This is illustrated by the nomination of guardians in Ranuccio XVII's will for his sons, despite the fact that two of them had long been of age by 1450. The guardians nominated in this will were Cardinal Francesco Condulmer, Vice-Chancellor of the Church and Eugene IV's nephew, Cardinal Lodovico Trevisan, Cardinal Domenico Capranica, Cardinal Astorgio Agnesi, and Neri da Montegarullo, Bishop of Siena and Rector of the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia.⁶⁷ No fewer than four of the guardians were prominent members of the College of

⁶⁵ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.18,053; Michaelis Canensii, *De vita et pontificatu Pauli secundi P. M.*, RIS, tomo III, parte 16, p. 129.

⁶⁶ Geronima Farnese to Giannozzo Pucci, 21 December 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, f. 94^{r-v}.

⁶⁷ Lefevre, "Il Testamento".

Cardinals who as military cardinals had had a personal connection to Ranuccio, and in the case of Trevisan also to his son Angelo III. Taking into consideration all known pseudo-kinship connections concluded by Ranuccio, it thus becomes clear that he had sought to enlist support for his offspring among personal acquaintances, who, and this was essential, were leading members of the papal Curia in Rome, the Bishop of Siena, and Florence's informal ruler. These godparents and guardians therefore had the power to provide protection in those areas where the Farnese had their greatest interests. Cosimo de' Medici and Lodovico Trevisan's involvement with Ranuccio's descendants moreover shows that contemporaries attributed considerable weight to the importance of pseudo-kinship connections, and that they played a significant part in the Farnese's perpetuation of power over the course of multiple generations.

Where godparenthood was actively supported by the Church and guardianship a legally defined parental role, the relationship between noblemen and their mistresses was condoned neither legally nor spiritually. Nevertheless, the proliferation of illegitimate offspring among the Farnese and related families suggests mistresses were a common phenomenon. Unlike the Orsini, however, the Farnese generally retained a separation between legitimate and illegitimate offspring, and there is no evidence for efforts to legitimise bastard sons and endow them with any property beyond that which would secure them a basic income.⁶⁸ The identities of Farnese mistresses also remain shrouded in mystery, with the very notable exception of the singular case in which a Farnese herself was cast in that role. Then again, Pier Luigi's daughter, Giulia Farnese, renowned in her age for her beauty, was not a mistress to just anyone, she was the mistress of a pope.

We do not know exactly when Giulia became Rodrigo Borgia's mistress, but the source material suggests that she had certainly become so shortly after he acceded to the papal throne as Alexander VI (1492-1503), because she was an active participant at the papal court's festivities. Mistresses were an omnipresent and often very visible phenomenon at all Italian courts in the Quattrocento, including

⁶⁸ Shaw, *The Political Role*, pp. 75-6.

those of cardinals in Rome.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the mistress' natal kin often consented in such sexual liaisons as it created a quasi-familial tie and in return they could expect to benefit in the form of rewards, offices, and privileges.⁷⁰ Throughout the Middle Ages, rulers had taken recourse to their mistress' kin as an alternative but valuable political network.⁷¹ Even if Alexander and Giulia's affair was made unusually public in the context of a court populated nearly exclusively by male clerics, it must be remembered that Giulia was the only papal mistress during the Renaissance to have hailed from the baronial elite. As Helen Ettliger has argued, in Quattrocento Italy the mistress' visibility at court was directly linked to her status.⁷² Much of the moral outrage over which historians have fretted came from the Borgia's political opponents, as well as from strict reformers, but it seems inescapable that neither Farnese and Borgia, nor many of their contemporaries regarded the situation as anything out of the ordinary.⁷³ In fact, Lucrezia Borgia emphasised the quasi-kinship relation she felt she had with Giulia, writing to Alexander VI that she regarded Giulia as her sister (*ch[e] tengo in locho de sorella*), and both women shared the content of their letters with each other and even wrote letters together.⁷⁴ When the Pope was displeased by Giulia's departure to visit her dying brother in Capodimonte, Lucrezia retorted that if she herself were not also prohibited from leaving Pesaro, she would have followed Giulia's example, as she felt that she herself had lost a beloved brother.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the benefits

⁶⁹ On the noblewoman Girolama Tosti's relationship with Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville, see Anna Esposito, "Girolama e il cardinale: Le alterne fortune di una nobildonna del Rinascimento", *Roma nel Rinascimento* (2019), pp. 221-48.

⁷⁰ Helen Ettliger, "Visibilis et Invisibilis: The Mistress in Italian Renaissance Court Society", *Renaissance Quarterly* 47/4 (1994), pp. 770-92.

⁷¹ Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, pp. 159-65; Fernando Arias Guillén, "Family Matters: Marriage Strategy and the Strengthening of Royal Authority in Castile during the Reign of Alfonso XI (1312-1350)", *Viator* 47/1 (2016), pp. 293-311.

⁷² Ettliger, "Visibilis et Invisibilis", pp. 777-82.

⁷³ Luiten, "Sexuality, Agency, and Honor"; See however, Bryan Cussen, *Pope Paul III and the Cultural Politics of Reform: 1534-1549* (Amsterdam, 2020), pp. 48-55; Cesarina Casanova, "Vannozza Catanei et Giulia la Bella à la cour de Rodrigo Borgia – Alexandre VI", in Juliette Dor, Marie-Élisabeth Henneau & Alain Marchandisse (eds.), *Maîtresses et favorites dans les coulisses du pouvoir du Moyen Âge à l'Époque moderne* (Saint-Étienne, 2019), pp. 241-53.

⁷⁴ Adriana del Milà, Lucrezia Borgia & Giulia Farnese to Isabella d'Este, 15 June 1494. Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga, Affari Esteri, Urbino e Pesaro, busta 1065, f. 288^{r-v}. I kindly thank Diane Ghirardo for this reference; Lucrezia Borgia to Alexander VI, 25 June 1494. *Regesto dei documenti*, pp. 115-16.

⁷⁵ "se no[n] mi fosse stato prohibito anchor io era necessitata ad fargli compagnia (...) per la gran[de] perdita de uno tale s[igno]re el q[u]ale havea in loco de bon[issimo] fratello". Lucrezia Borgia to Alexander VI, 27 July 1494. *Regesto dei documenti*, pp. 140-2.

that accrued from Giulia's liaison extended beyond herself to her entire family. Geronima Farnese wrote without much circumspection to her husband Puccio Pucci about the favours bestowed on his brother Lorenzo through Giulia's intervention – favours for which the Pucci themselves had also implored Geronima to write to the pope.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the readiness with which Alexander engaged in the negotiations surrounding the betrothal of Laura Orsini with Giuliano de' Medici is perhaps the best proof of the quasi-kinship relations fostered by concubinage.⁷⁷

That Laura was Alexander's daughter is generally accepted on the basis of a letter written by Lorenzo Pucci to his brother Giannozzo, in which he relates of a conversation he had with Alessandro Farnese and because he himself feigned to recognise Alexander's resemblance in the little girl.⁷⁸ There are reasons to doubt Alessandro's sincerity about Laura being the pope's daughter. First of all, Alessandro was dangling an attractive marriage proposal in front of the Medici – and by extension the Pucci. Trying to raise the price of the fiancée, Alessandro exaggerated by hinting that Alexander might give three or four castles to her father Orsino that Laura would inherit later, and moreover that there was also a possibility that Laura inherit the possessions of their branch of the Farnese in case Angelo IV were to die heirless – a blatant lie in the light of the capitulation between Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi Farnese of 1470 which excluded women from inheriting. Secondly, the purported father, Alexander VI himself, was convinced that Orsino had sired Laura. When Giulia refused to return to Rome and instead expressed her desire to stay with her husband in late autumn 1494, Alexander wrote to Giulia that he suspected that “the only reason to do so was to be impregnated (*enprenyar*) again by the air/water of Bassanello.”⁷⁹ Whoever the father was, and it is possible nobody involved knew either, Alexander was nonetheless willing to keep up pretences as long as he was able to exploit his

⁷⁶ Geronima Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 21 & 29 October 1493, and Geronima Farnese to Alexander VI, October 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, ff. 22^r, 38^{r-v}, 46^r.

⁷⁷ Picotti, “Nuovi studi”; Picotti, “Per le relazioni fra Alessandro VI e Piero de' Medici”.

⁷⁸ “ut m[i]hi videtur est similis pon[tifici] adeo ut vere ex eius semine orta dici possit”. Lorenzo Pucci to Giannozzo Pucci, 24 December 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, ff. 98^r-101^r.

⁷⁹ There is debate among palaeographers regarding the crucial word, which can either be read as *ajra* [aria] or *aqua*. In either case the meaning of the euphemism remains the same (as if the air/water of Bassanello sufficed to become pregnant). Alexander VI to Giulia Farnese, 22 October 1494. *Regesto dei documenti*, pp. 169-70.

relationship with Giulia to establish a much-desired link to the Medici. The pseudo-kinship tie that existed between the Farnese and Borgia by virtue of Giulia Farnese's concubinage, thus had repercussions that played out at the highest political level.

Princely courts in general, and the Italian Renaissance court in particular, have been identified as loci where a myriad of pseudo-kinship relations other than that between mistresses and lovers were fostered.⁸⁰ The ruling prince and, if married, his spouse were expected to fulfil a paternal role towards the young noblemen and noblewomen entrusted to their care. A manuscript stemming from the ducal library indicates that Ranuccio XVIII and Angelo IV Farnese were educated at the court of Urbino.⁸¹ The court of Urbino was an aristocratic meeting place where the scions of baronial families from the Papal States and even Genoa and Lombardy mingled to be instructed in the courtly manners, humanist and chivalric culture, and military skills deemed essential for their upbringing.⁸² The negotiations for the Gonzaga-Farnese match took place in Urbino, suggesting that its court was a suitable space for the conclusion of such matches, and mediation provided an opportunity for the duke or duchess to profit from the prestige that came with arranging such matches. It is likely that Urbino was where Ranuccio's match with his wife Primavera da Varano was concluded, in lieu of evidence of connections between both families other than the presence of Ranuccio and Primavera's brothers, Pier Gentile and Annibale, at the Montefeltro court.⁸³ Mediation of the type provided at court by the prince or the personal ties that personal interactions during games, hunting, and military training fostered, may have paved the way for a match between the Farnese and the Da Varano. What is more, Ranuccio earned Federico da Montefeltro's favour during his upbringing at court, and apart from endeavouring to obtain a prominent match for his pupil, the duke made him a constable of his military company. It may therefore not be entirely coincidental that Ranuccio's second-born son was named Federico.

⁸⁰ Jeroen Duindam, "Royal Courts", in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750: Volume 2: Cultures and Power* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 440-77.

⁸¹ BAV, Urb. Lat. 829, f. 551^v.

⁸² Jennifer Webb, "All is Not Fun and Games: Conversation, Play, and Surveillance at the Montefeltro Court in Urbino", *Renaissance Studies* 26/3 (2012), pp. 417-40.

⁸³ BAV, Urb. Lat. 829, f. 551^{r-v}.

The 'court' of the Medici in Florence, for as much as we can speak of one, also functioned as an aristocratic space where young scions of prominent Italian families met. If the Medici court lacked the chivalric and military credentials of that in Urbino, it was nonetheless populated by famous teachers of the classical languages, of rhetoric, and of philosophy, and hence it attracted sons destined for careers in the Church. This was in fact the court where the young Alessandro Farnese was educated during his years away from Rome following the Neapolitan Barons' War. Apart from acquiring a proficiency in Latin and Greek as well as profound knowledge of neo-Platonic philosophy, Alessandro was able to strengthen his relations with his Pucci in-laws during his residence in Florence. More importantly, it gave Alessandro the opportunity to win Lorenzo de' Medici's support for his clerical career. The Florentine court also fostered horizontal ties between the adolescents who were taught together and who were encouraged to converse and write each other in Latin.⁸⁴ Alessandro initiated one such exchange of letters with Giovanni de' Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent's son.⁸⁵ The Farnese's relations with the Medici and their impact on the Farnese's political history during the Quattrocento are addressed further on; in the context of highlighting the endurance and potency of relations that were fostered among the members of courtly society, it is though relevant to point out that, except for the brief interlude of Adrian VI's (1522-1523) pontificate, three contemporaries at the Medici court, namely Giovanni de' Medici (Pope Leo X, reigned 1513-1521), Giulio de' Medici (Pope Clement VII, reigned 1523-1534), and Alessandro Farnese (Pope Paul III, reigned 1534-1549), dominated the papacy for nearly four decades.

Noble Sociability

I have indicated above that an existing kinship tie rarely provides an explanation for amity or enmity between two families. Indeed, a quick look at the Farnese family tree does not suffice to explain why

⁸⁴ Arsenio Frugoni, "Per uno studio sulla giovinezza di Paolo III", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, 9 (1940), pp. 202-10; Giovanni Battista Picotti, *La giovinezza di Leo X* (Milan, 1927).

⁸⁵ Alessandro Farnese to Giovanni de' Medici and Giovanni de' Medici to Alessandro Farnese, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 20, 22-3, 29.

the Farnese supported the Orsini of Bracciano in their conflict with the Dell'Anguillara in the 1460s; both families were related to the Farnese. By the same token, network analysis cannot explain why the Caetani of Sermoneta supported their Colonna relatives when they waged war on the Orsini in 1484, but followed the Orsini a decade later in opposing the Colonna.⁸⁶ A much better indication that allegiances were shifting are the letters that show an intensification in the exchange gifts and of mutual visits that took place between the Caetani and Orsini in the preceding period.⁸⁷ That historians up until now have not pursued these kind of inroads is partly due to the paucity of the letters that are preserved, which generally tend to touch upon political and military events, not aspects of social life. This problem is further exacerbated by the relatively small number of private letters that survive. The Farnese material, however, offers a wealth of information, and the abundance of insight that can be distilled from a relatively sparse amount of material suggests that we are only scraping the surface of a rich life of noble sociability.

Gifts were an excellent means of tying together kinship networks. It was once thought such exchanges created a social economy that held together archaic societies.⁸⁸ The current consensus is rather that gifts were a mode of communication. As gestural performances moreover, they communicated a bond of affection, but also allowed for more subliminal messages. Economic value in that respect was only one aspect that determined the gift's cultural value. Food gifts of low monetary but high cultural value (such as fresh fruit, live eels, or game) were much appreciated and frequently used by the Farnese and their kin, and were more readily available for the kind of regular exchange that tied together networks.⁸⁹ The Farnese had a penchant for gifts that also communicated the noble status of both donor and recipient. Ranuccio XVIII Farnese and Puccio Pucci, for example, both took an

⁸⁶ Stefano Infessura, *Diario della città di Roma di Stefano Infessura scribasenato*, ed. Oreste Tommasini (Rome, 1890), pp. 183-4; Caetani, *Domus Caietana*, vol. II, pp. 193-5.

⁸⁷ Nicola Caetani to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 26 August 1490. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 1, f. 205^r; Nicola Caetani to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 9 March & 2 June 1491. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, ff. 353^{r-v}, 505^r.

⁸⁸ The classic is Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London, 1969).

⁸⁹ Luiten, "Friends and Family, Fruit and Fish"; Felicity Heal, "Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England", *Past & Present* 199/1 (2008), pp. 41-70; in general on token gifts, see Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 31-59.

interest in horses, which they exchanged, and the latter at one point even requested to have a foal by one of Ranuccio's prized racehorses.⁹⁰ Indeed, Gentile Virginio Orsini and Nicola Caetani exchanged both dogs and horses, and the former ordered expensively decorated leashes and collars so that no one could be in doubt about the length he was willing to go in terms of expenses for attributes and animals pertaining to noble sports.⁹¹

Like gift and counter-gift, visits could be reciprocated and that nobles regularly visited their relatives is attested by the frequent mentions of planned visits and the many extended invitations in letters by and to the Farnese. There is little evidence that the Farnese co-habited castles, and in any case possessed enough not to be forced to do so, but that they co-authored letters or came to agreements witnessed by notaries suggests that the members of the family regularly met among each other as well. Furthermore, when the opportunity arose, visits were extended to relatives. When Alessandro Farnese travelled back to Rome after having followed the retinue of Alexander VI to Viterbo and Orvieto, he made a small detour via the Savelli stronghold of Rignano. In order to celebrate his recent nomination as cardinal, Luca and Giovanni Savelli decided to honour him with a lavish welcome. As Lorenzo Pucci, who travelled with Alessandro, wrote to his brother Giannozzo, in order to signal and honour their dynastic connections to the Farnese – Luca and Giovanni's mother was Alessandro's aunt Agnese Farnese – the Savelli had organised a torch procession and arranged for two hundred children holding olive branches to chant Alessandro's name, while the fortress cannons fired a salute. Lorenzo gloatingly added that the Savelli acknowledged him as their relative, too.⁹² Such a splendid entry was no doubt an exceptional event, but it was certainly expected that whenever an occasion for a visit arose, such efforts would be made. Ranuccio XVIII had to profusely apologise for being in such a

⁹⁰ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 29 August 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 145^r; Ranuccio sent two horses to compete in the Palio in Siena when he was captain-general of that republic and may have had an interest in breeding them. Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balia of Siena, 16 February 1486. ASS, Balia 529, 76.

⁹¹ Nicola Caetani to Virginio Orsini, 2 June 1491. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, f. 505^r; Bartolomeo da Bracciano to Virginio Orsini, 8 April 1492. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, f. 551^{r-v}.

⁹² "e me richogno bono p[er] pare[n]te e oferirono t[ut]te le cose loro". Lorenzo Pucci to Giannozzo Pucci, 24 December 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, ff. 98^r-101^v.

hurry on his way from Ravenna to Rome that he was unable to stop at Faenza to visit and embrace his relative Puccio Pucci.⁹³

Moreover, organising visits and showering hospitality seems to have been an area of noble sociability particularly suitable for feminine influence. For example, when Gabriele Francesco Farnese travelled to Rome for business in 1473, he lodged with his sister Lucrezia in the Palazzo dell'Anguillara.⁹⁴ The few attestations we have of Lella Orsini all revolve around her presence during family get-togethers or as host extending invitations to relatives. For instance, after congratulating her brother-in-law Puccio Pucci with his nomination as Florentine ambassador to the pope in January 1494, Lella exhorted him to stay for two or three days with her and her husband Angelo IV at their estates when he made his way to Rome; in fact, his wife Geronima was already staying with them.⁹⁵ In December 1493, Lella and Geronima stayed with Giovannella Caetani in Marta, after Geronima had first arrived in Capodimonte with Lorenzo Pucci where they also met Alessandro Farnese who visited from Rome and who was especially delighted to see his family.⁹⁶ Giovannella Caetani in particular seems to have been a central figure at Farnese family reunions. It was Giovannella who personally requested the presence of her daughter Geronima from the Pucci when Pope Alexander VI, Cesare Borgia, and his court came to dine in Capodimonte; a dinner also attended by Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano.⁹⁷ Likewise, Giovannella insisted on having Geronima stay with her in January 1494, too.⁹⁸ Giovannella Caetani was at the Farnese's Roman residence with her sons Angelo and Alessandro, and daughter-in-law Lella Orsini, when Lorenzo Pucci visited Rome with his younger brother Piero in January 1491. During that visit, Giulia and her mother-in-law Adriana del Milà also attended dinner and high politics was discussed at the table. The key point of discussion seems to have been Alessandro's reluctance to

⁹³ "ve haveria visto e abrazato volentierj ma per breuita de tempo no[n] ho potuto". Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 20 July 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 117^r.

⁹⁴ Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 11 April 1473. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

⁹⁵ Lella Orsini to Puccio Pucci, 30 January 1494. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, f. 140^{r-v}.

⁹⁶ Lorenzo Pucci to Giannozzo Pucci, December 1493 and Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 16 December 1493. Idem, ff. 92^{r-v}, 103^{r-v}.

⁹⁷ Giovannella Caetani to Lorenzo & Giannozzo Pucci 26 October 1493. Idem, f. 42^{r-v}.

⁹⁸ Giovannella Caetani to Lorenzo Pucci, 26 January 1494. Idem, f. 138^{r-v}.

pursue a clerical career together with Lorenzo Pucci, and it was Adriana del Milà – who was Rodrigo Borgia’s cousin – who had to convince him with the prospect of becoming a cardinal.⁹⁹ Thus, not only were such large-scale social meetings organised frequently, attended by, and presided over by women, they were occasions during which extensive kinship networks met to foster and define their relationship and discussed prospects for political collaboration. These meetings moreover attest to the mobility of Quattrocento Italian elites, and illuminate the gravitational pull of the Farnese, as well as other Italian families, towards Rome where the papal court now offered attractive options for social advancement and political influence.

Naturally, not all visits were primarily social occasions, and two types of visits made in circumstances of adversity – i.e. those related to poor health and death – nevertheless show how dynasty was a powerful concept of social identification in interesting ways. Inevitably death was part of life in Renaissance Italy, but deaths were frequently moments of dynastic crisis as well. We have seen above that Giulia Farnese, even ignoring papal prohibitions, left Pesaro for Capodimonte where her brother Angelo lay dying. Similarly, Alessandro Farnese asked the Pucci to escort Geronima to Capodimonte in all haste, hoping that “there will be benefit and communal consolation.”¹⁰⁰ When a few months later, Puccio Pucci died, like Angelo, of the plague, the now widowed Geronima was invited by Giulia and Alessandro to stay with them for a while in Rome.¹⁰¹ Precisely during moments of loss, therefore, the ties between close relatives provided emotional support, not least in the case of widows whose legal and social connection to their adoptive family changed drastically. But losses within the family were also occasions for communal mourning and display of rituals of remembrance that surrounded interment in the family mausoleum. Such social and ritualistic interactions also allowed for a smoother transition of power within the family following upon the demise of a Farnese patriarch and hence were pivotal moments in dynastic succession.

⁹⁹ Lorenzo Pucci to Puccio Pucci, 30 January 1491. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 37.

¹⁰⁰ “ne sequirà buon fructo et consolazione in comune.” Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 6 July 1494. Idem, A 10.

¹⁰¹ Giulia Farnese to Geronima Farnese, 24 October 1494. Idem, A 53.

A high number of visits were made precisely to avoid the threat of death and reclaim good health. On 21 April 1491 Nicola Caetani wrote to his cousin Geronima and her husband Puccio suggesting she come to regain her health in the territories of her natal family where Nicola himself also planned on staying. Nicola suggested that being in the place of her birth with its healthy air and local baths, and being able to spend time in the presence of her family would ensure a speedy recovery.¹⁰² Such a belief in the potential health benefits of staying with family in their place of birth seems to have been widespread among Roman barons. A few months later, Caetani sent his own wife Eleonora Orsini, escorted by his brother Guglielmo, to her birthplace in Tagliacozzo to lodge with her brother Gentile Virginio to recover from ill health.¹⁰³ When Geronima relapsed after her first visit, Angelo IV Farnese asked her husband in language that echoes that of Nicola Caetani, “whether it pleases you that Geronima arranges to come over here and relax with us in these places that have better air and where she was nourished; I am sure she will then remain in good health for much longer.”¹⁰⁴ The emphasis on recovering in the Farnese patrimony seems significant, as if that in itself had beneficial medical properties. It seems to suggest that Renaissance nobles were expected to have a special bond with their area of origin that affected the body’s well-being. If this is so, not only does that further indicate that female members of the Farnese who had married into another dynasty moved back and forth between their natal and adoptive kin with some frequency, it also suggests the presence of an additional layer of meaning in the connection between dynasty and patrimony.

The letters of female members of the Farnese family also provide glimpses into their parallel female networks. Maria Covini has argued that such female networks at the Renaissance Sforza court of Milan focused on different areas from those of their male counterparts, centring instead on

¹⁰² “perché mi pare sia più salutifera cosa se si conducesse da questa bandi sia per lo agio dove è nata como ancho per pigliar piacer in veder tutti noi altri e li fratelli.” Nicola Caetani to Geronima Farnese and Nicola Caetani to Puccio Pucci, 21 April 1491. Idem, A 52 & A13.

¹⁰³ Nicola Caetani to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 2 June 1491. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, f. 353^{r-v}.

¹⁰⁴ “a voi piacendo che Hieronima si dispona ad venire de qua et recrearse da noi in questi luoghi de bona aere dove è stata nutrita so certo ne rimarrà sana per longiter.” Angelo IV Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 8 July 1491. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 15.

emotions and emotive language, in the case of Duchess Bianca Maria Visconti particularly that of maternal care. Bianca Maria nevertheless built up an impressive patronage network that indirectly influenced ducal policy.¹⁰⁵ For the Farnese women and their relatives these parallel female networks centred on health, and particularly pre- and postnatal care.¹⁰⁶ Childbirth was essential to dynastic continuity and one of the areas in which it would have been difficult to exclude women. However, these periods involved great medical risks for mother and child, and pregnancies thus became a natural focus point for female solidarity, not least in the face of male pressure to provide their house with an heir. Such pressure was common, and Ranuccio XVIII Farnese's advice to Puccio Pucci that he force his wife Geronima to eat as many quinces as possible so that, as a result of their ascribed properties, she would give birth to a son, is illustrative of the subtle or not so subtle pressure that was exerted on pregnant noblewomen.¹⁰⁷ Thus, when complications arose during Geronima's pregnancy, Caterina Sforza saw an opportunity to intervene personally and assist Geronima. Caterina ordered her doctor to attend to Geronima Farnese for the honour of her husband Puccio Pucci with no less diligence than if it were herself who was under treatment.¹⁰⁸ In the end, the doctor was unable to prevent the death of Geronima's son in childbirth, and Geronima took weeks to recover from the complications that had arisen.¹⁰⁹ Amidst this tragedy, Caterina's gesture nonetheless allowed her to establish or strengthen her tie to Geronima, which in light of Puccio Pucci's role as Florentine agent in the Romagna may also have been politically valuable.

¹⁰⁵ Maria Covini, *Donne, emozioni e potere alla corte degli Sforza: Da Bianca Maria a Cecilia Gallerani* (Milan, 2012); Maria Covini, "Tra cure domestiche, sentimenti e politica: la corrispondenza di Bianca Maria Visconti (1450-1468)", *Reti Medievali* 10 (2009), pp. 315-49.

¹⁰⁶ A parallel can be found in the correspondence of Gonzaga women, for which, see Christina Antenhofer, "Medikalisierung ante litteram? Die Bedeutung des medizinischen Wissens für die Dynastie am Beispiel der Korrespondenz der Gonzaga mit den süddeutschen Fürstenhöfen", in Ellen Widder, Iris Holzward-Schäfer & Christian Heinemeyer (eds.), *Geboren, um zu herrschen? Gefährdete Dynastien in historisch-interdisziplinärer Perspektive* (Tübingen, 2018), pp. 95-127.

¹⁰⁷ "sforzatur ma[n]zar[e] tanto delle pere ghiacole, ch[e] vediate et farli far[e] un fiolo." Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Puccio Pucci 20 July 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 117^r.

¹⁰⁸ Caterina Sforza to Bartolomeo Lombardi, 22 September 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 157^{r-v}; On Caterina Sforza, see Joyce de Vries, *Caterina Sforza and the Art of Appearances: Gender, Art and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (London, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Geronima Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 12 & 16 October 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, ff. 11^r, 21^r; Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 23 September 1493. Idem, f. 158^{r-v}.

The women of Roman baronial families likewise maintained their mutual relations in channels parallel but separate from that of their husbands. Agnese Farnese and her sister-in-law Cristofora Colonna, wives of Andrea and Jacopo Todeschini-Piccolomini, wrote to Clarice Orsini in Florence on 5 March 1475, requesting her whether she was able “out of consideration for the kinship relation that exists between your magnificence and us” to obtain a license from her husband Lorenzo de’ Medici to return a doctor to Florentine territory.¹¹⁰ At that time, Agnese would have been in her second month of pregnancy of Giovanni Piccolomini, future Archbishop of Siena and Cardinal.¹¹¹ Agnese’s pregnancy seems to be the reason why the doctor had been ordered to Siena in the first place, which helps explain why Agnese Farnese and Cristofora Colonna had taken recourse to their kinship connection with Clarice, and not directly with her husband Lorenzo.

What this myriad of examples of Farnese social interactions shows, are the traces of the Quattrocento noble sociability that played such a prominent role in noble life. Kinship and pseudo-kinship ties were not only pursued and concluded, but the crux to understanding their centrality to political collaboration lies in the social interactions that they gave rise to and the affinity and trust that was established during such interactions. Particularly the role of women comes to the fore, who through their centrality as hosts during visits and dinners and through their mobility showed their capacity for tying together the dynasties of their natal and their adoptive kin. By participating in noble sociability the Farnese were able to display that they had the cultural capital of an ancient baronial family and affirm their social status in interaction with other noble and ruling dynasties. In this respect, the Farnese followed established practice, and the importance of their social contacts lies in the possibilities these created for political collaboration. When these collaborations are set out in the following chapters, it is important to remember the social level that underpinned them.

¹¹⁰ Agnese Farnese & Cristofora Colonna to Clarice Orsini, 4 March 1475. ASF, MAP, CVI, 27^{r-v}.

¹¹¹ Giovanni Crescenzo Piccolomini was baptised on 12 October 1475. ASS, Biccherna 1133, f. 412^r.

Representing Dynasty

Heraldry linked the members of a dynasty through a shared emblem that was transferred down the patrilineal hereditary line of the house. The language of heraldry is considered to have originated during the Crusades yet was influenced more by the pageantry of chivalric tournaments than battlefield dress. Hence the centrality of the shield, often topped by a wreath, lambrequin, crest, and at times a crown indicating nobility; the coat of arms on Pietro VII Farnese's funerary monument is a good example and especially the crest: a ball with feathers, typical tournament attire.¹¹² At the royal level, coats of arms became manifestations of dynastic rule and lordship in public spaces.¹¹³ Such practices were also common among the nobility, and during Ranuccio XVII's lifetime marble slabs with Farnese coat of arms were attached to the towers, gates, and facades of his castles and city palace in Viterbo.¹¹⁴ These slabs made visual Farnese rule, but also communicated a sense of unity between the recently united but loose amalgam of territories, physical buildings, and lordly jurisdictions.¹¹⁵

Particularly conspicuous was the use of heraldry through which the Farnese displayed their dynastic and political ties. Through material culture, dynastic connections were visually represented and their memory preserved. Such ties could be represented rather modestly on tableware and pottery, or given ostentatious proportion in stone carving and fresco decorations. At the Farnese castle in Valentano earthenware and fragments of pottery dating from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century have been found that are decorated with escutcheons; among the families represented are the Orsini of Pitigliano, the Piccolomini, and Petrucci of Siena. Another two slightly discoloured jugs survive, one containing the coats of arms of Alfonso Duke of Calabria and one that of the Carafa family.¹¹⁶ A majolica jar containing the Duke of Calabria's coat of arms in the Museo di Capodimonte

¹¹² For Pietro V Farnese's tomb monument, see Figures 4-7 in the Appendix.

¹¹³ Steven Thiry, *Matter(s) of State: Heraldic Display and Discourse in the Early Modern Monarchy (c. 1480-1650)* (Ostfildern, 2018).

¹¹⁴ Romualdo Luzi, "... e per impresa una vergine col liocorno", in Romualdo Luzi & Carmen Ravanelli Guidotti (eds.), *Nel segno di giglio: Ceramiche per i Farnese* (Viterbo, 1993), pp. 55-60.

¹¹⁵ See Figures 8-13 and 57 in the Appendix.

¹¹⁶ These are preserved in the Museo della Preistoria della Tuscia e della Rocca Farnese in Valentano. See Figures 38-41 in the Appendix.

links the production to Neapolitan courtly circles, whereas a jug very similar to the one in Valentano was found at the site of a former Orsini palace in Rome, which suggests that these were distributed among a network of relatives and allies around the period of the Neapolitan Barons' War.¹¹⁷ Thus, even without the additional written sources that provide insight into the Farnese's political collaboration with key figures in Siena and Naples, noble material culture contains clues as to the wide reach and political prominence of their network. Moreover, one can well imagine that visitors who were treated to hospitality at Farnese castles and invited to dine were able to recognise and appreciate their hosts' message conveying their dynastic and political relations.

Tableware could be presented or removed depending on the situation, but decorative elements of public spaces in castles, whether sculpted or painted, permanently and perpetually displayed the Farnese's dynastic ties. Valentano's frescos have been poorly preserved, but the surviving fragments and especially the tondo portraits show great similarity of style with contemporary decorations of the Orsini castle in Pitigliano – a contemporaneity further suggested by the painted wooden panelling and beams in Valentano that also show semblance to Pitigliano and Bracciano.¹¹⁸ The better state of preservation of Pitigliano's fresco programme executed under Nicola Orsini in the second half of the Quattrocento makes it one of the era's most eloquent, and may provide an appropriate point of comparison. Omnipresent throughout the castle's rooms are the Orsini roses, as well as his personal device and motto (*tempus ordo numerus et mensura*), and his wife Elena Conti's coat of arms can be found in frescos as well as on the painted beams of the ceiling. Furthermore, the lily recurs as a decorative element, and a frescoed Farnese coat of arms demonstrates that these lily devices were meant to convey the Orsini's links to the Farnese. It is imaginable that the courtesy thus paid by the Orsini was reciprocated in the now largely lost frescos at Valentano. This is further

¹¹⁷ The jug found in Rome is in the Museo Nazionale Romano in Palazzo Altemps. See Figure 42 in the Appendix. For the jar in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples:

http://www.culturaitalia.it/opencms/viewItem.jsp?language=it&id=oai%3Aculturaitalia.it%3Amuseiditalia-work_74501 (last visited 25-09-2020).

¹¹⁸ See Figures 43-55 in the Appendix.

supported by the fact that Valentano's castle courtyard does still evocatively celebrate the Farnese's dynastic ties with the Orsini.

The extraordinary efflorescent courtyard is bedecked with Farnese and Orsini coats of arms or imaginative variations of their rose and lily devices on the columns' capitals.¹¹⁹ Traditionally the construction of Valentano's courtyard and loggias is dated to the wedding between Pier Luigi II Farnese and Girolama Orsini of Pitigliano in 1519, yet there are reasons to assume it dates to the second half of the fifteenth century.¹²⁰ After all, the Farnese had married into the Orsini, and specifically those of Pitigliano, with great regularity during the Quattrocento. The presence in Valentano of a sarcophagus with a lily device flanked by the letters A and N suggest that Angelo IV may have had a hand in the decorative programme, as the latter had married Nicola Orsini and Elena Conti's daughter, Lella.¹²¹ Moreover, Gabriele Francesco (and presumably his wife Lella Orsini of Pitigliano) also regularly stayed at Valentano – Valentano had replaced Ischia as the Farnese's primary residence by the second half of the Quattrocento. More than the work of a single patron, the courtyard can perhaps best be understood as a dynastic project glorifying the proliferation of Farnese-Orsini dynastic ties.

There are stylistic arguments for pushing back the dating of Valentano's courtyard to the fifteenth century as well. The columns at Valentano also show similarities to those of the Orsini castle of Bracciano, which can securely be dated to the last quarter of the Quattrocento. The impostes of some of Valentano's arches also echo those at Pitigliano, those at Bracciano, and those of the castle of Palestrina, which was renovated by Stefanello Colonna, Eugenia Farnese's husband, all three of which are datable to the last quarter of the Quattrocento.¹²² What I deem most important here is not so much presenting an alternative dating of the courtyard of the castle of Valentano's construction, although it does serve to illustrate the Farnese's level of wealth before Alessandro Farnese's ascendancy to the cardinalate. It is also certainly interesting to bring out the parallels between

¹¹⁹ See Figures 16-25 in the Appendix.

¹²⁰ Romualdo Luzi, "Matrimoni tra le famiglie Farnese e Orsini e i lavori sulla rocca di Valentano", *I Quaderni di Gradoli* 7-8 (1990), pp. 141-50.

¹²¹ See Figure 26 in the Appendix.

¹²² See Figures 28-30, 33, 36-37 in the Appendix.

contemporary edifications of castles owned by baronial families who were related and are likely to have visited each other, and who, perhaps consciously, emulated each other. Above all, the Farnese's representation of dynasty and of dynastic ties ensured that the historical memory of the Farnese's ancestry was preserved and could be recognised and deciphered like a sort of family tree by those future guests who were treated to hospitality at the Farnese castles.

Pious Practice or Political Opportunity? Farnese Sons and Daughters in the Church

Despite the importance of dynastic continuity and the benefits that dynastic ties could bring, some Farnese were destined not for a life-in-arms or one administering the patrimony, but for the *vita contemplativa*. Because those who entered the clergy or the cloister renounced their claim to an inheritance or dowry – although it was not uncommon for those who took orders to renounce them in case of dynastic crisis – the Church has at times been portrayed as a useful alternative for excess offspring that allowed for a succession strategy that *de facto* tended towards primogeniture.¹²³ But this is overestimating the attraction of primogeniture for the European nobility, and somewhat overstates the role of the Church as a gambit in enabling such a strategy.¹²⁴ Additional married sons were not only crucial in enlarging the chances of successful procreation but especially in Italy could make a decent living as *condottieri*. For female offspring, the expenditure on dowries was often offset by those which male heirs could expect to inherit from their mother; such expenditure was further alleviated by cousin marriages between related families and these dowries were seldom paid in full.¹²⁵ Moreover, a not insignificant dowry was expected to be paid to the convent upon entering it. Other considerations played a much more important role for the Farnese in the decision to place daughters or sons in the Church and thus deny them and the dynasty as a whole the possibility of attracting a

¹²³ Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux & Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, "Family Transmission in Eurasian Perspective" *History of the Family* 10/3 (2005), pp. 183-93.

¹²⁴ Fabrizio d'Avenia, "Elites and Ecclesiastical Careers in Early Modern Sicily: Bishops, Abbots and Knights", *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 109/3-4 (2014), pp. 625-55.

¹²⁵ As late as five years after the wedding, Angelo IV and Alessandro Farnese only paid part of their sister Geronima's dowry. ASF, Riccardi 605, ff. 26^v-28^v.

potentially advantageous match. The Roman Curia had for centuries provided opportunities for advancement for male offspring of Roman baronial families and their clients, and for dynasties like the Farnese such opportunities became easier to acquire with every additional dynastic or political link to Rome.¹²⁶ As the move of the Farnese to invest in clerical careers for sons in Rome is closely linked to political developments in the Papal States, it is more extensively addressed further on. Here it is suggested that the conventual women of the Farnese dynasty had their own role to play, even if these were scarcely documented and less overtly public.

It is much more readily acknowledged for clerical men than for women that they were able to continue to play a political role as members of their dynasty. However, even if convents were secluded places, neither were they a quasi-penitential institution sequestered from the rest of society.¹²⁷ Having members within venerable monastic communities instilled dynasties with a sense of pride and piety, but these communities were also meeting places for women of aristocratic background and such communities frequently disposed of significant wealth and possessions and played a prominent role in the civic community's spiritual life. Convents harboured a rich spiritual but also a literary and artistic life.¹²⁸ Often, several or even a single family dominated monastic institutions or cathedral chapters, and Andreas Rehberg and Ivana Ait argue that the placement of daughters in Rome's convents was not merely an expression of piety or an economically attractive solution, but also a mode through which baronial families could strengthen and demarcate their influence deep into the fabric of civic society.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Giulia Barone, "Nobiltà romana e Chiesa nel Quattrocento", in Carocci, *La nobiltà romana nel Medioevo*, pp. 515-30; Andreas Rehberg, *Kirche und Macht im römischen Trecento: die Colonna und ihre Klientel auf den kurialen Pfründenmarkt (1278-1378)* (Tübingen, 1999); Andreas Rehberg, *Die Kanoniker von S. Giovanni in Laterano und S. Maria Maggiore im 14. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1999); Allegrezza, *Organizzazione del potere*.

¹²⁷ Sharon Strocchia, "Abbess Piera de' Medici and her Kin: Gender, Gifts, and Patronage in Renaissance Florence", *Renaissance Studies* 28/5 (2014), pp. 695-713; Sharon Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, 2009), pp. 152-90; Elizabeth Leffeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot, 2005); Kate Lowe, "Elections of Abbesses and Notions of Identity in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth Century Italy, with Special Reference to Venice", *Renaissance Quarterly* 54/2 (2001), pp. 389-429.

¹²⁸ Sherry Franks Johnson, *Monastic Women and Religious Orders in Late Medieval Bologna* (Cambridge, 2017); Bert Roest, *Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform* (Leiden, 2013); Rebecca Sigmon, "Reading Like a Nun: The Composition of Convent Libraries in Renaissance Europe", *Journal of Religious and Theological Information* 10/3-4 (2011), pp. 81-102.

¹²⁹ Andreas Rehberg, "Nobiltà e monasteri femminili nel Trecento romano: il caso dei conventi delle clarisse di San Silvestro in Capite e di San Lorenzo in Panisperna", *Reti Medievali* 19/1 (2018), pp. 403-35; Ivana Ait, "Il

A similar point is made by Anne Dunlop for the Dominican convent of Sant'Aurea in Rome, and significantly this convent was generously sponsored not only by the Orsini, but also by Agnese Farnese, widow of Pucciarello di Bove of the lords of Tolfa Veteris, through a bequest of 400 ducats that was mediated by Francesco dell'Anguillara.¹³⁰ It is therefore unsurprising that we find Farnese abbesses of convents located near their patrimony, like Margherita di Nino Farnese d'Ancarano, who was abbess of the convent of Santa Maria del Cavaglione of the Order of Poor Clares in Toscanella (Tuscania), a city in which the Farnese had long held possessions and political influence.¹³¹

Political considerations are likely to have played a role in the Farnese's designation of female offspring to convents throughout the Quattrocento. Ranuccio XVII's daughter Giulia was destined to become a Tertiary sister of the Order of St Francis in the aristocratic convent formerly known as Sant'Agnese, but dubbed San Bernardino shortly after the latter's death, in the city of Viterbo.¹³² As an illegitimate daughter prospects for a prestigious marriage were perhaps slimmer than for legitimate offspring, but her placement in Viterbo potentially brought considerable advantages. As a convent within the city walls, San Bernardino's sisters were regular participants in its spiritual life and rituals; because they consisted of members of the nobility of the countryside as well as the most prominent patrician lineages of Viterbo, their home was a place where these families met and interacted. The convent of San Bernardino was a foundation important enough for both Callixtus III and Sixtus IV to promulgate bulls securing its water supply.¹³³ It is likely Giulia was a prominent member of the convent, as Ranuccio had her legitimised in his will and designated her an additional grant of a thousand ducats, no doubt intended for the convent.¹³⁴ Keeping in mind that in these decades the Farnese obtained citizenship, bought and further renovated a magnificent palace close to the cathedral (and the

patrimonio delle clarisse di San Lorenzo in Panisperna tra XIV e XV secolo: prime indagini", *Reti Medievali* 19/1 (2018), pp. 453-72.

¹³⁰ Anne Dunlop, "The Dominicans and Cloistered Women: The Convent of Sant'Aurea in Rome", *Early Modern Women* 2 (2007), pp. 43-71; a copy of Pucciarello's will was kept in the Farnese archive. BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 128^r.

¹³¹ ASCOT, Fondo Diplomatico 176, published in Giontella & Santi, *Codice diplomatico*, pp. 380-4.

¹³² Enzo Bentivoglio & Simonetta Valtieri, *Viterbo nel Rinascimento* (Cesano Boscone, 2012), pp. 245-6.

¹³³ ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 14, ff. 273^v-274^r.

¹³⁴ Lefevre, "Il testamento", pp. 199-200.

convent), obtained other properties such as real estate and vineyards in and surrounding Viterbo, and married into its ruling patrician families, designating a daughter for one of its convents was a mere extension of the strategies adopted to secure lasting Farnese influence.¹³⁵ Giulia's niece, Beatrice, likewise became a nun at San Bernardino, handling the concession of a house with garden to the convent donated by Luciano di Petruccio de Bussi, scion of a banking dynasty closely affiliated with the Farnese, in 1480.¹³⁶ Beatrice would be elected to the position of abbess during which she oversaw considerable construction and decoration work. It seems no coincidence that her entry in the cloister took place around the same period her father Pier Luigi requested formal citizenship in Viterbo.¹³⁷ Potentially Beatrice was illegitimate as well, as she remains unmentioned in Pier Luigi's will, unlike Geronima and Giulia, who are designated as legitimate, although this may well be the case because in this passage Pier Luigi simply exhorts his male heirs to pay the outstanding debts for their sisters' dowries, as women were now formally excluded as heirs.¹³⁸ What is nonetheless apparent, is that, much like their male counterparts, female offspring destined for the Church could still have a valuable dynastic role, and there were convincing arguments in favour of the decision to impose vows on Farnese daughters rather than marry them off. Convents, monasteries, and friaries were permeable entities and dynastic ties reached over the walls into the world of lay people in various ways.

¹³⁵ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 125^r.

¹³⁶ ASVit, Archivio notarile distrettuale di Viterbo 325, f. 15^{r-v}; for the Bussi, see Angeli, *Famiglie Viterbesi*, pp. 75-89, 627-31.

¹³⁷ BCA, Riforme 21, f. 197^v.

¹³⁸ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano 2071, unfoliated.

Chapter Three

The Peninsula-Wide Scope for Political Action for the Farnese in Quattrocento Italy

During the Quattrocento, the entire Italian peninsula was a political playground for the Farnese. As early as 1419 Ranuccio XVII Farnese was active as a soldier and administrator in the Kingdom of Naples; his grandson Ranuccio XVIII was ravaged by Alpine snowstorms in his winter quarters in Venetian service in 1492.¹ For the Farnese, nominal state boundaries meant little. The family's leading *condottieri* took up service in the armies of virtually all larger polities across the peninsula. The Farnese obtained citizenship of numerous cities, some subsequently recognised as independent states such as Siena and Florence, others not, such as Rome, Viterbo, and Orvieto. The Farnese, who considered the Catholic Church and the pope as their natural overlord, co-owned castles with other, family-related dynasties that recognised the Holy Roman Emperor as their suzerain. Traditionally, fifteenth-century Italy is thought to have witnessed a gradual crystallisation of states and state boundaries, even if these processes are considered to have consisted of interactions between centre and periphery and depended as much on negotiation and association as on coercive force.² How, then, does the history of the Farnese complicate this narrative of state formation?³ How do we integrate the diplomatic activities of baronial dynasties into the politics of Quattrocento Italy? In what way do the diplomatic activities employed by the Farnese resemble or differ from those traditionally regarded as diplomacy? To tackle these questions my focus here is on the Farnese as a dynasty, as a collective entity consisting of individual members that are associated with each other and collaborate in their supralocal politics and with extensive territorial possessions that were employed in the service of others.

¹ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Paolo Ciose, 9 February 1492. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^r, 136^v.

² Gamberini & Lazzarini, "Introduction"; Watts, *The Making of Polities*, pp. 332-5, 373-6; Isabella Lazzarini, *Italia degli stati territoriali, secoli XIII-XV* (Rome, 2003).

³ For an oversight of the historiographical debates on the Renaissance state, see Humfrey Butters, "Historians and the Renaissance State", in Humfrey Butters & Gabriele Neher (eds.), *Warfare and Politics: Cities and Government in Renaissance Tuscany and Venice* (Amsterdam, 2020), pp. 27-59.

Dynasty as a lens with which to approach fifteenth-century political history has the advantage that it cannot be reduced to a non-state actor. As a dynasty, the Farnese collectively owned a material patrimony that consisted of an aggregation of land and jurisdictions known as lordships that collectively were regarded as the Farnese 'state' (*lo stato/status*).⁴ But the fifteenth-century understanding of such an aggregations of fiefs and the overarching political framework differed greatly from present conceptions of the state and sovereignty, which creates problems for considering attempts to enlarge or rule them by baronial and condottiere dynasties as state formation.⁵ The Farnese did not seek to emancipate themselves from formal papal overlordship, and in fact tended to actively support the extension of papal power within the Papal States as long as it was not at the expense of their own power and independence of action.⁶ Ultimately, by circumventing the constraints of the state formation paradigm the Farnese's Quattrocento diplomatic activities throughout Italy can be appreciated as a fully-fledged dynastic external politics, as it certainly was by their contemporaries.

Developments in diplomatic history in recent decades have changed the field from a relatively inward-looking conservative preoccupation with ambassadors and institutions into one that more readily engages with and adopts approaches from neighbouring fields.⁷ This has brought new methodologies to familiar topics and sources and Italian historians were ahead of the crowd in their receptiveness to new approaches for studying the language of diplomacy.⁸ Isabella Lazzarini's

⁴ Italian Quattrocento examples of such states, ranging from a few lordships to extended territories can be added in huge numbers. Blythe Raviola, "Small States in Early Modern Italy: Definitions, Examples, and Interactions", in Daniel Bornstein, Laura Gaffuri & Brian Maxson (eds.), *Languages of Power in Italy (1300-1600)* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 3-16; Excellent examples of the integration of such small powers into wider Italian and Mediterranean history can be found in David Abulafia, "Piombino between the Great Powers in the Late Fifteenth Century", in Paolo Guglielmotti, Isabella Lazzarini & Gian Maria Varanini (eds.), *Europa e Italia: Studi in onore di Giorgio Chittolini* (Florence, 2011), pp. 3-13; David Abulafia, "The Mouse and the Elephant: Relations between the Kings of Naples and the Lordship of Piombino in the Fifteenth Century", in John Law & Bernadette Paton (eds.), *Communes and Despots in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 145-60; Patrizia Meli, *Gabriele Malaspina marchese di Fosdinovo: condotte, politica e diplomazia nella Lunigiana del Rinascimento* (Florence, 2008).

⁵ Pierre Savy, *Seigneurs et condottières: les Dal Verme: appartenances sociales, constructions étatiques et pratiques politiques dans l'Italie de la Renaissance* (Rome, 2013).

⁶ For this, see Chapter 4.

⁷ Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*; John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 (2008), pp. 1-14.

⁸ Daniela Frigo (ed.), *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800* (Cambridge, 2000); Isabella Lazzarini, *Fra un principe e altri stati: Relazioni di potere e forme di servizio a*

Communication and Conflict summarises the scholarship of the last two decades in the area of Italian Renaissance diplomacy. Lazzarini addresses aspects as varied as agents, rituals, spaces, language and emotions, as well as the role of information, the institutions and actors creating diplomatic sources, and the various trajectories that gave rise to the phenomenon of Renaissance diplomacy. This chapter builds on all these insights, and above all on her not always heeded assertion that the diverse nature of politics on the Italian peninsula included a large variety in diplomatic actors aside from ambassadors and chanceries among which feature most prominently barons and *condottieri*.⁹ Christine Shaw's work on the political relations between the baronial Orsini and the Medici in Florence, and by extension the Florentine government, shows such an investigation proved valuable for a better understanding of Quattrocento politics.¹⁰

This chapter is divided in four parts that progress chronologically. These four parts represent four phases in the fifteenth-century history of the Farnese both in terms of internal family dynamics and the death and succession of new generations, as well as important political events that had consequences for the Farnese. The first two parts represent the generation in which Ranuccio XVII shaped his dynasty's political life. After his death in 1450 the third part is dominated by his first-born son Angelo III until the latter's untimely death in 1462 and his second son Gabriele Francesco until his death in 1475. In the fourth part, then, the condottiere Ranuccio XVIII is the main protagonist of the Farnese's military activities, his cousins often following his leadership or even serving under him. Yet Alessandro Farnese also actively fostered relations with his Florentine Pucci relatives, as well as with the younger scions of the Medici, reflecting both the diversification within the Farnese dynasty

Mantova nell'età di Ludovico Gonzaga (Rome, 1996); Paolo Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali: Le ambascerie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega Italica (1450-1455)* (Florence, 1992); Franca Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo dello stato: I 'famigli cavalcanti' di Francesco Sforza (1450-1466)* (Pisa, 1992).

⁹ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, pp. 6-7, 27-9; See also, Tracey Sowerby & Jan Hennings, "Introduction", in Tracey Sowerby & Jan Hennings (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (London, 2017), pp. 1-21; Serena Ferente, *La sfortuna di Jacopo Piccinino: storia dei bracceschi in Italia, 1423-1465* (Florence, 2005), pp. 7-13.

¹⁰ Shaw, *The Political Role*; Christine Shaw, "Lorenzo and Niccolò Orsini", in Gian Carlo Garfagnini (ed.), *Lorenzo de' Medici: Studi* (Florence, 1992), pp. 257-79; Christine Shaw, "Lorenzo de' Medici and Virginio Orsini", in Peter Denley & Caroline Elam (eds.), *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein* (London, 1988), pp. 33-41. See also, Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*.

themselves as well as the importance of the marriage of Alessandro's sister Gerolama with Puccio Pucci. These generations roughly coincide with those of three successive Medici generations – Cosimo, Piero the Gouty and his brother Giovanni, and subsequently Lorenzo. The Medici and consequently the Florentine Republic feature prominently in the Farnese's diplomacy. This chapter therefore also provides insight into how the Farnese-Medici relations gradually intensified over the course of successive generations, culminating in the negotiation of a marriage between Laura Orsini, Giulia Farnese's daughter, and Giuliano de' Medici in 1494. In each phase, moreover, I stress different aspects that were central to the Farnese's diplomacy with their neighbours and powers further afield. These aspects were often cumulative, so the centrality of credit and banking to the ability of the Farnese to wage war and serve as *condottieri* to Italian powers stressed in the first phase remained important during the entire century. The personal connections established with the Medici family during the second part, and more intensively fostered during the third, did not diminish the business transacted with their bank to maintain mercenary companies. Likewise, in the fourth and final period leading up to the outbreak of the Italian Wars, personal ties and interactions were the foundation for intensive political collaboration within an Italian system of alliances that included the Farnese and Medici.

War, Credit, and Trust: Early Connections before the Establishment of the Medici Pseudo-Signoria

Ties between the Farnese and the two most influential cities of Tuscany are attested as early as the thirteenth century when the Farnese were military captains of the Guelph League of Tuscany and lasted until the end of the Western Schism.¹¹ The Schism's end and Martin's election as pope were announced to Siena on 15 November 1417 by the College of Cardinals and its governing council duly forwarded the news to the Farnese.¹² Martin's election engendered a series of political developments in reaction to which the Farnese turned their gaze southwards towards Rome and Naples, speeding up a process of gradual estrangement between the Farnese and the Tuscan republics. This process was

¹¹ *Cronica Potestatum*, RIS, tomo XV, parte 5, vol. I, p. 161; Malavolti, *Historia*, II, f. 54^r.

¹² College of Cardinals to Council of Siena 11 November 1417 and Pietro X, Pietro Bertoldo I and Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 5 January 1418. ASS, Concistoro 1892, 1, 37.

aggravated by conflicts with Siena over arrears in payments and refusal of the Sienese commissioners to hand over the castle of Morrano as had been stipulated in the treaty of alliance for the recently concluded war against the Orsini of Pitigliano.¹³ The following decade and a half therefore represent a low-point in the relations that the Farnese maintained with the two Tuscan cities. The period nevertheless is illustrative of the types of interconnections and interactions that linked together the governments and elites of the Italian peninsula in a continuous conversation even in times of conflict or war.

The worlds of war, government, commerce, and finance were inextricably intertwined, linking creditors and *condottieri* in a system in which trust was the oil that kept the machinery running. As a result, military reputation and creditworthiness were directly linked, as Ranuccio XVII found out after being captured at the Battle of Zagarola among many other Florentine captains.¹⁴ Rumours spread among the Florentines that the defeat of their army was caused by betrayal among their own ranks, and some citizens openly questioned Ranuccio's loyalty, too.¹⁵ The next year, Ranuccio's Florentine creditors moved to have a defamatory painting hung in the Palazzo della Signoria. This was a common punishment for insolvent individuals that entailed a loss of honour, albeit normally closely scrutinised by the government to avoid any political repercussions when prominent citizens were targeted.¹⁶ The pope as well as Siena's government, both heavily indebted to the Farnese, intervened and demanded that the painting be removed from the palace, with which the government complied.¹⁷ Such links

¹³ The treaties are recorded in ASS, Capitoli 4, ff. 142^r-144^v and Capitoli 41, ff. 106^r-109^r; Pietro X and Pietro Bertoldo I Farnese to Council of Siena, 24 July 1418. ASS, Concistoro 1894, 51; Pietro X, Pietro Bertoldo I, and Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 12 August 1419. Concistoro 1895, 96; Ranuccio Farnese to Council of Siena 12 and 24 January 1422. Concistoro 1902, 31 & 39; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena 2, 6, 11 August and 24 November 1423. Concistoro 1904, 1, 5, 7, 70; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena 27 March 1424. Concistoro 1905, 2.

¹⁴ Captured were "Pandolfo Malatesta, l'Amoroso, el conte Ranuccio da Farnese, el conte Nicolò da Pitigliano e molti altri caporali." *Cronaca senese*, RIS, tomo XV, parte 6, p. 799.

¹⁵ Bartolomeo Valori asked in a council meeting: "Merita il Conte Rinuccio risposta da noi, che s'è lasciato rompere nel Campo nostro, perchè s'intendeva col Duca di Milano, e erasi acconcio a'suoi servigi?". Dieci di Balìa to Rinaldo degli Albizzi, 30 September 1424. Rinaldo degli Albizzi, *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il Comune di Firenze dal MCCCXCIX al MCCCCXXXIII* (Florence, 1867-1873), vol. II, pp. 201-2.

¹⁶ Gherardo Ortalli, "...pingatur in Palatio...": *La pittura infamante nei secoli XIII-XVI* (Rome, 1979), p. 79.

¹⁷ At the end of Martin V's pontificate, the Camera Apostolica owed Ranuccio XVII Farnese 11,900 florins. ASV, Reg. Vat. 370, ff. 153^v-154^r; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 130^r; Rinaldo degli Albizzi to Priors of Florence, 14

between *condottieri* and bankers were crucial for military organisation as credit was central to the system.¹⁸ Evidence from the Orsini archives suggest that throughout the Quattrocento a wide range of instruments was available with which landed property could be liquidated, pawned, and credit extended in order to raise troops.¹⁹ No such documents survive for the Farnese, although the short summary of the contents of the Farnese archive suggest similar constructions may have been used by the Farnese, too.²⁰ Importantly, business relations may have laid the foundation for the subsequent and more extensive patterns of political collaboration between Tuscan banking families and Roman baronial dynasties. After all, one of the creditors pestering Ranuccio was Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici.²¹ As things stood, the Medici bank handled large sums for the Farnese throughout the Quattrocento, which were the basis for intensified connections. This early stage of the Farnese's external relations in Tuscany therefore also provides insight into the origins of their connection to the Medici, a connection that more than any other became the backbone of the family's network of political relations.

War, Jurisdictions, and Shifting Affections: Ranuccio XVII Farnese and Cosimo de' Medici

The period between 1431 and 1450 was characterised by a series of regime changes that rearranged the political geography of Renaissance Italy and the role the Farnese saw for themselves within that system. The first of these was announced by Ranuccio himself, when one of his horsemen brought the news of Eugene IV's election to Siena.²² A few years later the Albizzi regime in Florence was toppled and the advent of the Medici proved unstoppable, and Alfonso of Aragon established his claim on the Kingdom of Naples. By the middle of the century Francesco Sforza had conquered Milan and was

October 1425, and Priors of Florence to Ranuccio XVII Farnese, 20 October 1425. Rinaldo degli Albizzi, *Commissioni*, II, pp. 422-3.

¹⁸ David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 40-6; For the connections between the Medici Bank and Colonna, see Rehberg, "*Etsi prudens*", pp. 268-70.

¹⁹ Ajello Mahler, "The Orsini Family Papers", pp. 297-322; Francesco Senatore, "Nella corte e nella vita di Orso Orsini conte di Nola e duca d'Ascoli", in Bruno Figliuolo, Rosalba Di Meglio & Antonella Ambrosio (eds.), *Ingenita Curiositas: studi sull'Italia medievale per Giovanni Vitolo* (Battipaglia, 2018), vol. III, pp. 1459-84.

²⁰ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 124^r-142^v.

²¹ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 25 January 1418. ASS, Concistoro 1894, 33.

²² *Cronaca senese*, RIS, tomo XV, parte 6, p. 827.

proclaimed its lord. Likewise, the pontificate of Eugene had given way to that of Nicholas V, followed shortly after by the demise of Ranuccio, which deprived his family of effective leadership and marked the end of a phase in the history of the Farnese dynasty in which Ranuccio XVII was at the centre of political developments on the Italian peninsula. These developments had long-lasting consequences. Most significantly for the history of the Farnese, Ranuccio increasingly looked to Florence for political support and protection. Relations with the Medici in Florence were magnified in two areas: business and personal. The Medici bank now also handled large sums of money for the Farnese and invested these in the Florentine public debt. Likewise, the period witnessed a gradual multiplication of contacts on the social level between one of the Papal States' leading baronial families and Florence's most prominent banking dynasty. Indeed, in 1434 the foundation was laid for a collaboration between the Farnese and Medici that lasted for over a century. The ways in which this new relationship was expressed were markedly different from those preceding this period. Linguistically, this resulted in added personal and emotional depth in the communication between Ranuccio and Cosimo de' Medici while gifts as gestures of goodwill further cemented ties. By contrast, relations with Siena soured and periods characterised by collaboration and communication in the area of criminal justice became interspersed by periods of conflict and contention. The biggest conflict revolved around jurisdictional superiority and provides insight into how baronial dynasties defended their independence. This conflict played out in the context of recent military strife.

One of the results of Eugene's election was the outbreak of war with his predecessor's family, the Colonna. Ranuccio played a central role in this war both as negotiator, and as military captain and administrator.²³ Inevitably, this local conflict became entangled with the wider wars raging on the Italian peninsula. The Colonna and their allies sought and found succour in Siena, which itself was allied to the Visconti of Milan who faced a coalition of Florence and Venice. As a result, an alliance between Florence and the Papacy was brokered. Florence and Eugene made Ranuccio Farnese captain of the army fighting on the borders with Siena, whereas Siena conscripted Niccolò Fortebraccio and Ludovico

²³ See Chapter 4.

Colonna.²⁴ The strategic location of the Farnese patrimony, situated between the lands of the Prefetti – old allies of the Colonna – and Siena, made it an important base. While the papal army was besieging the Prefetti's stronghold at Vetralla, the rector of the Patrimony and Ranuccio threatened reprisals if Siena were to interfere.²⁵ The resolution of the war did little to defrost the icy relations between Ranuccio and Siena.

Many subjects of both Siena and Ranuccio committed new thefts that left several persons wounded or even killed and led to further litigation.²⁶ Usually such conflicts between neighbouring communities were settled on a basis of equality: for example, the communal government of Siena would request Ranuccio, who held the *merum et mixtum imperium* in his territories, to pursue the offending party and extradite them or request repair payments for damages inflicted by his subjects. However, matters came to head when Siena suggested that some of the outstanding issues be resolved in the court of that commune. This was potentially a flagrant breach of Ranuccio's independence, as it would in effect amount to acknowledging Siena as his overlord. His response was furious. For good measure Ranuccio's response first reiterated all outstanding debts to him. Subsequently Ranuccio adduced, "I believe you are aware that solely the Holy Church and Our Lord are the sovereign of our house, and to him I owe obedience in war as in peace, and that is my court of recourse", to which he added that he considered this to be essential in order to be "be free and preserve my liberty."²⁷ In another letter Ranuccio summarised it more directly: "I am not a subject either to you, nor to anyone else in the world, but to the Holy Church, and the Holiness of Our Lord, and I will not budge an inch

²⁴ ASV, Reg. Vat. 365, ff. 3^v-4^r; *Cronaca di Viterbo*, p. 119; *Cronaca senese di Tommaso Fecini [1431-1479]*, RIS, tomo XV, parte 6, pp. 842-4.

²⁵ Astorgio Agnesi to Council of Siena, 27 June 1433, and Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 28 June 1433. ASS, Concistoro 1930, 17, 19; Astorgio Agnesi to Council of Siena, 5 March 1433. Concistoro 1931, 99.

²⁶ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 30 April, 10 June, 23 July, 3 August, 15 August & 15 September 1434. ASS, Concistoro 1932, 25, 44, 54, 63, 71 & 96; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 30 April & 19 May 1434. Concistoro 1953, 9, 16; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 20 August 1434. Concistoro 2008, 68; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 15 November 1445. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 111, f. 147^r.

²⁷ "penso sappiate a la casa mia S[an]c[t]a Chiesa a superiorita di N[ostro] S[ignore] ed ad epso debo essere ubediente a pace e a guerra, et aquella e corte mia del ricorso (...) essere libero e potere mantenermi la mia liberta." Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 17 June 1436. ASS, Concistoro 1940, 50.

[literally: divert a hair's breadth] in my obligations."²⁸ Ranuccio articulated what he perceived to be the status of the Farnese patrimony: an aggregation of lordships over which the Farnese retained jurisdictional rights with an external policy in which they negotiated on par with larger powers and with Farnese near-independence guaranteed by the distant and relatively weak papal rule.

Relations between the Farnese and Florence on the other hand intensified during this period and the advent of the Medici was central to this development. Becoming too powerful and therefore dangerous for Rinaldo degli Albizzi's liking, Cosimo de' Medici and many of his confidants, among whom Puccio d'Antonio Pucci was prominent, were exiled from Florence in 1433.²⁹ A year later, after a disastrous war against Lucca, the tables had turned and Cosimo returned to Florence, and now it was his opponents who were forced into exile. Riccardo Fubini summarises the extensive debates among historians about whether the advent of the Medici regime resulted in a change in Florence's governing institutions, or whether these changes were in fact minimal such that, apart from a closer scrutiny of the uses of the electoral purses, the only difference was the man at the helm.³⁰ For the informal connections and alliances that are the subject of this thesis, such debates are of less relevance than the fact Cosimo and his friends in Florence needed allies to support their tenuous hold on power. Eugene IV likewise needed support against his opponents, and collaboration between the two presented itself as the obvious solution.

As Peter Partner notes, the alliance between Cosimo and Eugene extended to the latter's *condottieri*.³¹ Ties between Florence and leading military commanders of the papal army such as

²⁸ "Io no[n] subdito ne ad voi, ne ad altri nel mondo, se non ad s[anc]ta chiesa, et a la S[anct]a di N[ostro] S[ignore] et per no[n] deviare un pelo dal mio debito." Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 6 June 1436. ASS, Concistoro 1940, 45.

²⁹ Benedetto Dei, *La Cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500*, ed. Roberto Barducci, (Florence, 1984), pp. 50-4.

³⁰ Andrea Zorzi, "Communal Traditions and Personal Power in Renaissance Florence: The Medici as Signori", in Black & Law, *The Medici*, pp. 39-49; Riccardo Fubini, "Le régime du Côme de Médicis au moment de son arrivée au pouvoir (1434)", *Revue Française de Science Politique* 64/6 (2014), pp. 1139-56; Riccardo Fubini, "Diplomazia e governo in Firenze all'avvento dei reggimenti oligarchici", in Riccardo Fubini, *Quattrocento fiorentino: Politica, diplomazia, cultura* (Pisa, 1996), pp. 11-98; John Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575* (Malden, 2006), pp. 250-306; See also, Arthur Field, *The Intellectual Struggle for Florence: Humanists and the Beginnings of the Medici Regime, 1420-1440* (Oxford, 2017).

³¹ Peter Partner, "Florence and the Papacy in the Earlier Fifteenth Century", in Nicolai Rubinstein (ed.), *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1968), pp. 381-402.

Francesco Sforza, Giovanni Vitelleschi, and Ludovico Trevisan have received some attention, but those with Ranuccio XVII Farnese have been overlooked.³² The means with which such ties were fostered were the same, however. For instance, Trevisan received Florentine citizenship in 1440 for himself and his relatives, whereas Vitelleschi received citizenship on 31 December 1434, with the added privilege of being allowed to invest into the *Monte Comune*.³³ Such privileges were occasionally extended to foreign dignitaries.³⁴ It is probable that Ranuccio received this privilege and his investment of 11,000 florins in Florence's public debt further cemented relations between Ranuccio and Cosimo.³⁵ Moreover, when his son Angelo III started his career as a condottiere, his payments were arranged through the Medici bank.³⁶

Crucially, business relations between Ranuccio and Cosimo were further augmented with personal ties. With his sons still underage, Ranuccio was looking for powerful protectors that could take on the responsibility of his children's tutelage in case of unforeseen adversity. As we have seen, Cosimo accepted this responsibility. Before Florentines became accustomed to marrying outside their city, such networks of godparents were one of the few ties modelled on kinship that extended beyond the Florentine Republic to include *condottieri*.³⁷ Moreover, Ranuccio's letters soon reflected this level of intimacy, now addressing Cosimo as *compater et frater* and asking him to pass on his personal regards to Contessina de' Bardi and Lorenzo di Bicci de' Medici, who apparently he knew. Furthermore, Ranuccio stressed "the ancient and new love of the members of my family for your people", and to express this affection also gifted a relic containing a fragment of the arm of John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint.³⁸ The contrast between the affective language used with the Medici and the heated

³² David Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals, and War: The Military Church in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2006).

³³ John Law, "Profile of a Renaissance Cardinal", in Giovanna Mencarelli (ed.), *I Vitelleschi: Fonti, realtà e mito* (Tarquinia, 1998), pp. 69-83; Pio Paschini, *Lodovico Cardinal Camerlengo: (†1465)* (Rome, 1939), p. 49.

³⁴ Richard Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, 2009), pp. 497-8.

³⁵ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 315, f. 83^r.

³⁶ Paschini, *Lodovico Cardinal Camerlengo*, p. 59.

³⁷ Ferdinand Schöningh, *Cosimo de' Medici: die Gesandten und die Condottieri: Diplomatie und Kriege der Republik Florenz im 15. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, 2009), pp. 377-8.

³⁸ "lo amore anticho e nuovo dj q[ue]llj della mia famelgla al v[ost]ro p[o]p[u]lo." Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 12 July 1439, ASF, MAP, XI, 303^{r-v}.

exchanges with the Sienese government reveal the shift that was taking place in the Farnese's system of alliances in Tuscany that had traditionally focused on Siena rather than Florence. This is further reflected by the fact that the envoys sent by Ranuccio to Cosimo were intimates who could be entrusted with sensitive matters, such as his cousins Casuccio Farnese and Giovanni de' Baschi.³⁹

Perhaps the best expression of what was presented as an old but in truth a much more recent affection for the Medici and Florence can be found in Ranuccio's will, because it laid down the political inheritance that he had envisaged for his heirs. Among the many clauses of his extensive will, one stipulates,

Likewise, he left his aforementioned sons and heirs under the protection of the Magnificent commune of Florence, as ancient mother and defender of the house of Farnese, ordering the same sons that they must remain devout and loyal to the aforementioned commune. And this for the honour and status of the most high pontiff and the Holy Mother Church.⁴⁰

The wording is important, as it was repeated nearly verbatim by Ranuccio's descendants in their letters to the Medici, which suggests that it was indeed felt to be a central element in their political inheritance. The conflation of loyalty towards Florence with the Guelph tradition of supporting the Church and the papacy is significant as well. This alliance between the Florentine Republic and the papacy hearkened back to the city's Guelph tradition. By the fifteenth century, however, it was no longer regarded as an ideological imperative – this also introduced the spectre of a situation in which Florence and the Papacy were no longer politically aligned and the Farnese would have to choose. Finally, Ranuccio made no clear distinction between his personal ties with Cosimo and a sense of

³⁹ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 10 April 1436 and 6 November, ASF, MAP, XI, 96^{r-v}, 575^{r-v}.

⁴⁰ "Item reliquit prefatos suos filios et heredes sub protectione defentione Magnifice comunitatis Florentie, tanquam antique matri et defensitrici domus de Farnesio, mandans eisdem suis filiis ut comitati predictae devoti et fidelis esse debeant. Et hoc ad honorem et statum Summorum pontificum et Sancte Matris ecclesie." Lefèvre, "Il testamento", p. 206.

obligation he expected his heirs to maintain towards the commune of Florence. The two overlapped and were potentially even indistinguishable.

Amicable Relations and Shared Good Tastes

Ranuccio XVII Farnese's death in 1450 occurred during an especially turbulent period in Italian history. According to traditional historiography, the initial volatility gave way to relative stability after the conclusion of several treaties that are collectively known as the Peace of Lodi, the creation of the Italian League, and the professionalisation of diplomacy between participating member states that gradually resulted in the exclusion of non-Italian states, smaller powers, and non-state actors.⁴¹ Some cracks have appeared in this grand narrative. René of Anjou was able to establish a wide-ranging cultural and political network before and during the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples in the years 1460-1462 that stretched across the peninsula, while plenty of conspiracies and attempts at overthrowing governments were concocted.⁴² The Quattrocento history of the Farnese does not conform to the narrative in place either. Rather than being excluded, new connections proliferated, and old ones were strengthened by the Farnese, and in turn they were considered an attractive partner. Moreover, both during the initial upheaval but especially after the conclusion of the Peace of Lodi the importance of personal and dynastic connections remained undiminished and endured for much longer than other connections of a more contractual nature. Indeed, the activities of the Farnese during this period that can be characterised as personal interactions seem, at least in the long run, to have outweighed in political importance those diplomatic practices more readily recognisable as such to us, like the signing of *condotta* contracts, *accomandigia* covenants, or the appearance among lists of *adhaerentes* or *raccomandi* of peace treaties. The nature of such contractual obligations was understood to be temporary; the length of *condotta* contracts rarely exceeded one year. Any attempt at reconstructing

⁴¹ Lazzarini, *Conflict & Communication*, pp. 29-30; Catherine Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 22.

⁴² Margolis, *The Politics of Culture*, pp. 21-67; Oren Margolis & Brian Maxson, "The 'Schemes' of Piero de' Pazzi and the Conflict with the Medici (1461-2)", *Journal of Medieval History* 41/4 (2015), pp. 484-503; Jane Black, "Medici and Sforza – Breeds Apart?", in Black & Law, *The Medici*, pp. 85-99.

political networks from single snapshots in time is therefore bound to be misleading, as Francesca Cengarle and Francesco Somaini argue.⁴³ This part of the chapter therefore focuses on the personal connections of the Farnese, above all with the Medici in Florence, but to some extent also with the Sforza of Milan and Piccolomini in Siena. It pays particular attention to the language with which these connections with the Medici were now expressed, as the generation consisting of Ranuccio XVII's heirs adopted their father's language. But the nature of Farnese-Medici relations was also expressed through gesture, ranging from exchanges of gifts, information, as well as mediation in the arrangement of marriages.

The periods before and shortly after the Peace of Lodi exemplify the volatility of nominal allegiances of the period. In 1450 Gabriele Francesco Farnese took up service as condottiere in the armies of Siena, and therefore on the side of the alliance between Alfonso of Aragon, the Republic of Venice, and the pope, which waged war against an alliance of Florence and Milan.⁴⁴ Gabriele's brother Angelo opted instead for papal service. In March 1452 Gabriele's uncle Bartolomeo concluded an *accomandigia* with Siena that also entailed a *condotta* with 50 lances.⁴⁵ However, less than a month after Bartolomeo's *accomandigia* Francesco Sforza's ambassador reported that he had been approached by Cardinal Orsini who had offered to "attract the count Aldobrando [Orsini of Pitigliano], the Farnese, and many other Roman barons firmly to our side for the entire autumn, provided that the Florentines would pay them 4,000 ducats", which would have meant a switch to the Florentine-Milanese camp.⁴⁶ Yet, in the text of the treaty itself the Farnese appeared among the *collegati* of Alfonso of Aragon, potentially because of their employment with Siena more than a direct link to the Neapolitan Crown.⁴⁷ Among Alfonso's *adhaerenti* also appeared the Farnese's in-laws, the Orsini of

⁴³ Cengarle & Somaini, "Geografie motivazionali", pp. 43-60.

⁴⁴ Claudio Rendina, *I capitani di ventura: Storia e segreti* (Rome, 1985), p. 375.

⁴⁵ ASS, Manoscritti A 135, f. 151^v.

⁴⁶ "tenere fermi da la nostra el conte Aldobrandino [Orsini of Pitigliano], quelli da Franese et molti altri baroni de Roma per tuta questa estate se Fiorentini gli dano 4^m ducati." Nicodemo Tranchedini to Francesco Sforza 8 April 1452. *Carteggio degli oratori sforzeschi alla corte pontificia I: Niccolò V*, ed. Gianluca Battioni (Rome, 2013), vol. II, pp. 842-3.

⁴⁷ Cengarle & Somaini, "Geografie motivazionali", p. 50.

Pitigliano, who had likewise fought in service of Siena.⁴⁸ However, within months of the conclusion of the Peace of Lodi, Siena and the Orsini of Pitigliano were at each other's throats. The Farnese first furtively and later openly supported their Orsini relatives, prompting Siena to conclude an alliance with Nicholas V, who spotted an opportunity to reduce the influence of the barons in the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia, especially that of the Orsini, Farnese, and Monaldeschi.⁴⁹ Ultimately, these attempts failed as the latter were supported by Francesco Sforza and Cosimo de' Medici, the two leaders of Florence and Milan the Farnese and their kin had shortly before been fighting against. Thus, within the timespan of a few years a snapshot at different moments in time on the basis of differing source material would reveal radically altered patterns of political allegiance. In a matter of months alliances lay in tatters and former companions-in-arms opposed each other. How do we explain this?

It is possible to reconstruct the potential interests of those involved. Nicholas V intended to extend his power within the Papal States, especially at the cost of the Farnese and their kin who had profited from the perennial financial shortfalls of the Apostolic Chamber under Eugene IV, whereas Siena had long sought to reduce the Orsini of Pitigliano to obedience. Cosimo de' Medici and Francesco Sforza had a certain interest in preventing their neighbours from thus strengthening their internal power and authority. Yet to think solely in terms of crude calculations of interest would be to miss the point of what constituted Quattrocento politics. Cardinal Orsini's suggestion that the Farnese and Orsini might switch sides when offered good terms can be read both as substantiating the assumption that interest was the prime motivator that guided the Farnese's choice of political action, or alternatively it can suggest the presence of interpersonal ties that made the Farnese receptive to such overtures. The chronicler Tartaglia, as a relative of the Farnese in the service of the general of the Siene-papal army sent to castigate them, was well-positioned to know the truth, and commented on the earlier collaboration between Francesco Sforza and the Farnese during the 1440s, arguing

⁴⁸ ASS, Manoscritti A 135, ff. 118^v-137^r.

⁴⁹ Francesco Contarini to Senate of Venice, 17 March 1455, in Ludwig Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Freiburg, 1886-1933), vol. II, pp. 682-3; Malavolti, *Historia*, III, ff. 22^r-44^v; Gaspare Broglio Tartaglia, *Cronaca malatestiana del secolo XV: (dalla cronaca universale)*, ed. Antonio Luciani (Rimini, 1982), pp. 189-96.

“those lords [the Farnese] have always been his friends the past few years.”⁵⁰ It is also significant that Angelo III Farnese, who was personally present at the negotiations in Lombardy in 1454, should report on their progress to Giovanni de’ Medici, despite being included among the *adhaerenti* of Florence’s enemies.⁵¹ For Angelo, Gabriele Francesco, and Pier Luigi’s generation, ties with the Medici were part of the political and social inheritance of their father Ranuccio, and therefore a given. Though ideally it ought to, military service did not necessarily align with dynastic ties.

Already during the wars leading up to Lodi, Angelo maintained connections to Piero de’ Medici, and especially his brother Giovanni, Cosimo’s sons. Despite the ongoing conflict, Angelo turned to Piero when he needed a good hunting dog (*sugucio*) in August 1451.⁵² A month later he sent his chancellor to Giovanni for further unspecified business and the two developed a lasting bond.⁵³ Giovanni was Angelo’s connection to Florence when he needed a *salvacondotta* to traverse Florentine territory, but more importantly, a useful expert and adviser when it came to fine fabrics when Angelo requested his aid in finding *dodici braccia* of silk.⁵⁴ Such exchanges continued after the Peace of Lodi. In 1457 and 1460 Angelo turned to Giovanni’s help for buying the best horses, and also when he was in need of quality brocade for a gambeson.⁵⁵ Exchanges of information functioned in a similar manner. The persistence of these connections in spite of coalitions that pitted the exchangers against each other suggests such gestures and the personal connections they fostered played an instrumental, albeit not always decisive role in the politics of the era and could at times of trouble nonetheless keep open channels of communication, strengthen mutual affection, and continue obligation.

One gesture stands out for its largesse. Cosimo’s mediation in the conclusion of a marriage between Francesca Farnese and Guido Sforza of Santa Fiora was a gesture with profound political consequences. It was also very much the culmination of the connections established before between

⁵⁰ “li quali Signiori erano stati sempre suoi amici per lo tempo passato.” Tartaglia, *Cronaca malatestiana*, p. 128.

⁵¹ Angelo III Farnese to Giovanni de’ Medici, 22 April 1454. ASF, MAP, IX, 17^{r-v}.

⁵² Angelo III Farnese to Piero de’ Medici, 31 August 1451. ASF, MAP, XVII, 88^{r-v}.

⁵³ Angelo III Farnese to Giovanni de’ Medici, 28 September 1451. ASF, MAP, VIII, 264^{r-v}.

⁵⁴ Angelo III Farnese to Giovanni de’ Medici, 11 March 1454. ASF, MAP, X, 485^{r-v}.

⁵⁵ Angelo III Farnese to Giovanni de’ Medici, 17 August 1457. ASF, MAP, XL, 125^{r-v}; Angelo III Farnese to Giovanni de’ Medici, 6 and 17 February 1460. ASF, MAP, VI, 451^{r-v}, 457^{r-v}.

the Farnese, Medici, and Sforza, as well as one that laid down the foundation for future collaboration. The positions of Cosimo de' Medici and Francesco Sforza in Florence and Milan were, as Jane Black argues, far from secure. As a result the banker and the condottiere had concluded a strategic alliance where one had the financial and the other the military clout to bolster each other's domestic rule.⁵⁶ Furthermore, to legitimise his dynasty's new-found rule over the Duchy of Milan, Sforza pursued a profitable marriage policy, among others concluding a double marriage with Alfonso of Aragon in 1455.⁵⁷ The Sforza branches of Francesco's brothers that had established themselves in Pesaro and Santa Fiora served as an extension of the main lineage. A war against one Sforza was considered a war against all Sforza; on 4 November 1467 Bosio Sforza of Santa Fiora received a letter telling him to sound the bells to announce the peace concluded between Milan and Savoy – hardly events in the vicinity of Santa Fiora.⁵⁸ The Farnese had long married into the ruling families of the neighbouring imperial counties, including the Sforza's Aldobrandeschi predecessors, but this marriage was specifically concluded for the sake of “a kinship connection with the most illustrious Lord the Duke”, as Angelo, Gabriele Francesco, and Pier Luigi Farnese wrote to Cosimo de' Medici.⁵⁹ In fact, negotiations on the Sforza side were conducted by Nicodemo Tranchedini da Pontremoli, who was Francesco Sforza's trusted chancellor and ambassador to Florence, where Nicodemo had gained the confidence of Cosimo.⁶⁰ It is therefore likely that Cosimo himself had a hand in the marriage that brought together his formal ally and the family of his godson. For the Sforza of Santa Fiora, this marriage integrated them into the baronial families of Central Italy, not an unwelcome prospect in light of recent conflicts with Siena.⁶¹ Above all, the wedding integrated the Farnese more fully into a network of *condottieri*, barons,

⁵⁶ Black, “Medici and Sforza – Breeds Apart?”; Vincent Ilardi, “The Banker-Statesman and the Condottiere-Prince: Cosimo de' Medici and Francesco Sforza (1450-1464)”, in Sergio Bertelli, Nicolai Rubinstein & Craig Smyth (eds.), *Florence and Milan: Comparisons and Relations* (Florence, 1989), vol. II, pp. 217-39.

⁵⁷ Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous: King of Aragon, Naples, and Sicily 1396-1458* (Oxford, 1990), p. 411.

⁵⁸ Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Bianca Maria Visconti to Bosio Sforza di Santa Fiora, 4 November 1467. ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 79, filza 13.

⁵⁹ “il parentado colla l[illusterrissimo] S[ignore] del ducha.” Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi I Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 18 August 1457, and Angelo III Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 19 August 1457. ASF, MAP, XII, 260^{r-v}, 261^{r-v}.

⁶⁰ Paola Sverzellati, “Per la biografia di Nicodemo Tranchedini da Pontremoli, ambasciatore sforzesco”, *Aevum* 72/2 (1998), pp. 485-557.

⁶¹ ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 841, filza 8.

and local powers that extended beyond the central axis formed by Cosimo de' Medici and Francesco Sforza which went back to the first half of the century.⁶²

The intensification of the ties between the Farnese and Medici in Florence in the 1450s and 1460s found its expression in the language utilised in letters in the 1470s after the untimely deaths of Angelo III Farnese and Giovanni de' Medici in 1462. In echoes of, and even direct reference to, the language of Ranuccio XVII's will in which he exhorted his heirs to remain loyal to Florence as the ancient mother and defender of the Farnese dynasty, the emphasis was on loyalty to that commune. This in itself was formulaic language. Gabriele Francesco could equally write to Siena that he was "remembering the ancient benevolence of our ancestors towards the aforementioned magnificent commune, which I am willing to preserve perpetually."⁶³ But it is the addition of the personal loyalty and connections with the Medici that is significant. Thus, Pietro Bertoldo II Farnese of Latera wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici on 11 March 1475 of "the ancient and modern devotion assiduously maintained by the house of Farnese to the Illustrious Signoria of Florence, as well as to the magnificent house of Your Magnificence."⁶⁴ Gabriele Francesco Farnese was even more explicit. He wrote to Lorenzo stressing "the ancient servitude of my house towards the aforementioned Illustrious Signoria and the obligations left to us by our father", directly referencing his father's will written more than two decades earlier. Moreover, Gabriele Francesco emphasised, "the perfect friendship that we had especially with the most excellent Cosimo and Piero, of good memory, ancestors of Your Magnificence, which seems to me to be a thing that is still overabundant."⁶⁵ Thus, by the 1470s Farnese from various branches perceived their sense of loyalty towards Florence and the Medici to be part of their dynastic identity.

⁶² It may not at all be insignificant that Angelo III Farnese had named his first (illegitimate) son Sforza. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 351, ff. 130^r-132^v.

⁶³ "ricordandomi dell'antiqua benivolentia delli n[ost]ri an[ti]ciessori c[on] testa m[agnifi]ca co[mun]ita volerlo c[on]tinuo p[re]servar[e]." Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Council of Siena 26 March 1465. ASS, Concistoro 2010, 4.

⁶⁴ "antiqua e moderna devotione ossiduamente atenuta casa da Farnixe colla Ill[ustrissim]a S[ignoria] de Fiorenza q[ue] anq[ue] con m[agnifica] casa de V[ostra] M[agnificentia]." Pietro Bertoldo II Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 11 March 1475. ASF, MAP, XXXII, 78^{r-v}.

⁶⁵ "s[er]vitu antiquata di casa mia a testa Ill[ustrissim]a S[ignoria] et la obligation[e] laxatici p[er] n[ost]ro p[at]re (...) la p[er]fecta amicitia havuta in sp[eci]ali[ter] colla buona memoria dello ec[cellentie] d[e] Cosmo et Piero genitor[i] d[e] V[ostra] M[agnificentia] mi pare cosa sup[er]flua." Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 16 March 1472. ASF, MAP, XXIII, 430^{r-v}.

Moreover, the mutual tie with the Medici, initially forged in person between Ranuccio and Cosimo, passed on to Cosimo's heirs as much as to Ranuccio's. In fact, these ties were passed on for another generation. But before moving on to the last quarter of the century it is worthwhile addressing the Farnese's connections with Siena, not least because these had important consequences for the wider politics of Italy, and for the connections between the Farnese and Medici in particular.

The Republic of Siena in this period underwent political developments that resulted in much closer connections between the Farnese and that commune than in the preceding period. Several developments gave rise to this change. Gradually, the Neapolitan influence in Tuscany waned due to the unstable domestic situation in the kingdom during and after the Angevin invasions of 1460-1462.⁶⁶ Relatively isolated as a result, Siena was forced to maintain better relations with its neighbours. To be sure, the Farnese had never severed ties with Siena. After all, they owned real estate there and Gabriele Francesco remained interested in the relative balance within the government between the various *Monti*.⁶⁷ During this period access to government was, albeit half-heartedly, granted to nobles, the *Monte dei Gentiluomini*, a group with which the Farnese traditionally retained ties. The prime mover behind these developments was Pius II, a Siennese native. It was due to Pius' pressure that the popular government reluctantly opened its ranks to the nobility, that is to say, allowed members of the Piccolomini kinship group to become members of government bodies.⁶⁸ It was with this group that the Farnese forged connections. Such relations were probably established during Pius' pontificate, when the Farnese supported him against his enemies. It was probably then that Cardinal Jacopo Ammannati-Piccolomini, one of Pius' intimates adopted into his family, became godfather to one of Gabriele Francesco's children.⁶⁹ Such relations endured after Pius' pontificate, and Cardinal Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini and Gabriele Francesco Farnese signed a wedding contract on 7 July 1474

⁶⁶ David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms 1200-1500: The Struggle for Dominion* (London, 1997), pp. 223-45.

⁶⁷ Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Council of Siena, 26 March 1465. ASS, Concistoro 2010, 4; ASS, Lira 57, f. 4^v and Lira 61, f. 92^v.

⁶⁸ Christine Shaw, *Popular Government and Oligarchy in Renaissance Italy* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 39-56.

⁶⁹ Jacopo Ammannati-Piccolomini to Lorenzo de' Medici, 4 January 1475. ASF, MAP, XLVI, 378^{r-v}.

betrothing Gabriele's daughter Agnese to Francesco's brother Andrea.⁷⁰ This Piccolomini connection added another influential family in yet another polity to the Farnese's network, and increasingly such networks spanning several polities came together to work to the Farnese's advantage.

The negotiations of Ranuccio XVIII Farnese's first *condotta* illustrate how dense the network of ties of kinship, pseudo-kinship, and political affiliation that connected the various Italian states in the third quarter of the Quattrocento was. They show how deeply embedded the Farnese were within the political geography of the Italian peninsula. Moreover, they also reflect the Farnese's intergenerational strategies, and how their extended network was utilised. No doubt Ranuccio's education in Urbino had gained him support when searching for employment with Federico da Montefeltro's allies, such as Lorenzo de' Medici. Gabriele Francesco Farnese sent his chancellor on several trips to Florence to speak to Lorenzo in person.⁷¹ Although the letters do not mention anything about these negotiations, we can infer that they dealt with Ranuccio's employment under Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano, who was already in Florentine service.⁷² Moreover, Ranuccio obtained support from Siense circles when Cardinal Ammannati-Piccolomini personally recommended him to Lorenzo:

Magnificent man: our most beloved brother after our salutations. The lord Gabriele Farnese our godfather desires greatly to place his son Ranuccio Farnese in the army of your magnificent commune. Until now he has fought in the company of the most illustrious Duke of Urbino. Your lordship being as affectionate to us as he is, we cannot refrain from interceding for the sake of your satisfaction. Therefore, we would wish to pray your magnificence, that you see to it that these gentlemen be consoled in their desires, more out of goodwill than for the respect of our recommendation, as doing so shall be a great pleasure to you.⁷³

⁷⁰ ASS, Consorteria Piccolomini 17, ff. 25^r-27^v; the dowry contract is recorded in ASS, Gabella dei Contratti 270 on 7 January 1475.

⁷¹ Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 20 August 1474 and 10 January 1475. ASF, MAP, XXX, 38^r-v, 764^{r-v}.

⁷² Shaw, "Lorenzo and Niccolò Orsini", pp. 257-9.

⁷³ "Mag[nific]e vir: fr[at]er n[oste]r car[issi]mo [post] sal[u]t[em]. El Signore Gabriele da Farnese n[ost]ro compare desydera grandem[en]te collocare app[re]sso la V[ostra] M[agnific]a Co[mun]ita el Signor Ranuccio suo figluolo, ne lo exercitio dellarme. Nelquale se, è, ex[er]citato infino qui collo Ill[ustrissimo] Duca de Urbino.

Lorenzo's positive answer reached Ranuccio at his uncle's castle at Pitigliano, and, significantly, the *condotta* was accompanied by a personal gift as Lorenzo paid for the material with which Ranuccio's men were outfitted.⁷⁴ As a result, the ties between the Farnese and Medici were further cemented now their personal affinities and financial and political interests aligned. This would remain the central focus point for the Farnese's wider political considerations for the next two decades.

The Farnese's relations with neighbouring Florence and Siena thus built upon existing relations from the first half of the Quattrocento. Transactions were still conducted through the Medici bank and a constant flow of communication about border issues with Siena continued to lead to exchanges of prisoners and repair payments, but such conflicts were increasingly offset by trade, especially in grain, and an exchange of agents, artisans, and horses.⁷⁵ On top of that came the connections the Farnese now maintained with the leading families of Florence and Siena who exercised much influence over their respective governments. Especially in the connections between the Farnese and the Medici there is a clear surge in the personal nature of these ties. These new and stronger bonds were expressed through different types of gesture, both small exchanges as well as grand gestures such as mediating in the negotiations for prestigious matches. It founds its expression in a much more pronounced language of affection and loyalty, and more tellingly, was considered to transfer down hereditary line – from father to son, and in the case of Angelo III and Gabriele Francesco from elder brother to younger. Moreover, the Medici-Farnese link became integrated into a wider network that included the Piccolomini in Siena, the Sforza of Milan, and the Orsini in the Papal States. In the light of these

Sendoci la S[ignoria] sua affectionata chome, è, no[n] possemo recusare de no[n] intercedere p[er] questo suo contento. Pertanto volemo p[re]gare la M[agnificentia] V[ostra] ch[e] vedendo di possemo consolare questi Gentilhomini, ne lor desyderi, le sia depiacer farlo tanto di miglior voglia, p[er] respecto de la n[ost]ra co[m]mendatione.”

Jacopo Ammannati-Piccolomini to Lorenzo de' Medici, 4 January 1475. ASF, MAP, XLVI, 378^{r-v}.

⁷⁴ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 17 March 1475. ASF, MAP, XXIV, 89^{r-v}.

⁷⁵ Pietro Bertoldo II, Gabriele Francesco, Angelo III & Pier Luigi I Farnese to Cosimo de' Medici, 20 March 1457. ASF, MAP, VI, 220^{r-v}; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 125^v; Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Council of Siena, 25 July 1464. ASS Concistoro 2008; Gabriele Francesco Farnese to Council of Siena, 20 & 28 June 1465. ASS, Concistoro 2011, 4, 25; Violante Monaldeschi to Council of Siena, 12 and 20 March 1465. ASS, Concistoro 2010, 71, 80; Violante Monaldeschi to Council of Siena, 22 September 1468. ASS, Concistoro 2020, 18.

connections and potential motivations behind their creation, the Medici's marriage link with the Orsini in 1469, albeit a distinct break with traditional Florentine endogamy, followed a strategy that took on shape long before its formal conclusion. To some extent, as Lucrezia Tornabuoni explicitly mentioned to her husband Piero de' Medici, connections to Orsini clerics were an attractive prospect for a banking dynasty that had firm roots in the papal Curia. But likewise, such a family tie could provide ready access to a supply of military force, not wholly unlike that which the Sforza and Farnese could dispose of, for the Florentine army as much as for quelling revolts against Medici rule.⁷⁶ These conclusions also have a wider impact on the historiography of Quattrocento politics.

Isabella Lazzarini and Catherine Fletcher summarise the scholarship on the period after the Peace of Lodi when they characterise it as one of relative peace during which the five larger powers of the Italian peninsula increasingly excluded the smaller potentates from engaging in diplomatic activities.⁷⁷ Although it is true that some political actors were effectively excluded from the existing order, the case of the Farnese directly contradicts this argument.⁷⁸ Below the surface of official diplomacy, and hence diplomatic correspondence that happens to survive in the archives of state chanceries, political networks were spun that connected actors across the peninsula. This increasingly interconnected web consisted of leagues, contracts, factional allegiances, kinship and pseudo-kinship ties, and by no means negligible notions of vassalage, regional and communal identities, clientele and patronage, citizenship, and a myriad of other interpersonal connections.⁷⁹ These observations have

⁷⁶ Lucrezia Tornabuoni to Piero de' Medici, 28 March 1467. Lucrezia Tornabuoni, *Lettere* (Florence, 1993), pp. 62-3.

⁷⁷ Lazzarini, *Conflict & Communication*, pp. 29-30; Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, p. 22; Carocci, "The Papal State", p. 72; Michael Mallett, "Diplomacy and War in Later Fifteenth-Century Italy", in Garfagnini, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, pp. 233-56.

⁷⁸ Antonio Gatward Cevizli, "Mehmed II, Malatesta and Matteo de' Pasti: A Match of Mutual Benefit between the 'Terrible Turk' and a 'Citizen of Hell'", *Renaissance Studies* 31/1 (2017), pp. 43-65; Ferente, *La sfortuna di Jacopo Piccinino*, pp. 45-64; Philip Jones, *The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State: A Political History* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 211-39.

⁷⁹ Luciano Piffanelli, "Nelle parti di Romagna: The Role and Influence of the Apennine Lords in Italian Renaissance Politics", in Nicholas Baker & Brian Maxson (eds.), *Florence in the Early Modern World: New Perspectives* (London, 2020), pp. 117-35; Margolis, *The Politics of Culture*, pp. 186-93; Serena Ferente, "Guelphs! Factions, Liberty and Sovereignty: Inquiries about the Quattrocento", *History of Political Thought* 28/4 (2007), pp. 571-98; Carocci, *Vassalli del papa*, pp. 104-59; see also, the various essays in Marco Gentile (ed.), *Guelfi e ghibellini nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Rome, 2005).

consequences for the idea of a political equilibrium that was supposed to have been the result of a balance of power between Italy's largest states. As a result of the increasingly interconnected political world, the system became increasingly unstable and the last quarter of the century was characterised by discord rather than concord.

Kings and Bears Often Worry Their Keepers

In the Quattrocento's final quarter the Farnese and the Medici became part of an alliance that stretched from Milan to Naples, and to a large extent dictated the logic of political events in Italy. This alliance was the direct result of the collapse of the Italian League and saw the Sforza of Milan, the Medici of Florence, and the King of Naples thrown together in an uneasy alliance and partial league.⁸⁰ This league was always unstable. It saw members plotting against each other and none of the participating powers were undisputedly in power in their own states. Ferrante of Naples, Sixtus IV, and Federico da Montefeltro supported the Pazzi Conspiracy that plotted to murder Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, and from which the former barely escaped alive.⁸¹ The Orsini fought against the Florence of their Medici relatives at various times, especially under Sixtus when their links to Girolamo Riario seemed more beneficial than their Medici connections.⁸² Galeazzo Maria Sforza flirted with the King of France in reaction to the Neapolitan refusal to drop their claim to Milan. In the Romagna and in Genoa the nominal allies vied to extend their control at each other's expense, not seldom through underhand tactics. Yet, surprisingly, the league largely held until the invasion of the French in 1494 when external pressure shattered the network of alliances and interpersonal connections fostered between the Italian potentates. A possible explanation is that, even if most of the actors mistrusted each other, the league functioned relatively well as a safeguard against internal opposition and in

⁸⁰ Ricardo Fubini, "The Italian League and the Policy of the Balance of Power at the Accession of Lorenzo de' Medici", *The Journal of Modern History* 67/Suppl. (1995), pp. S166-99.

⁸¹ Marcello Simonetta, *L'enigma Montefeltro: Arte e intrighi della congiura dei Pazzi alla Cappella Sistina* (Milan, 2008); Lauro Martines, *April Blood: Florence and the Plot against the Medici* (Oxford, 2003); Cecil Clough, "Federico da Montefeltro and the Kings of Naples: A Study in Fifteenth-Century Survival", *Renaissance Studies* 6/2 (1992), pp. 113-72.

⁸² Shaw, *The Political Role*, pp. 171-4.

neutralising the threat of the excluded powers: Venice, Genoa, and apart from some years in Innocent VIII's and Alexander VI's pontificates, the papacy.⁸³ As a result of the league's effectiveness, it has often been argued that Lorenzo de' Medici's political machinations progressively reduced the number of participants in the diplomatic conversations that discussed the future of Italy and he managed to establish a (relatively) peaceful equilibrium between Italy's great powers.⁸⁴

However, the reliance of Lorenzo on political actors of different backgrounds – including the baronial Farnese – and his penchant for the use of military force against excluded powers like Genoa and the papacy undermines this narrative. Sixtus and Innocent in particular felt threatened by the influence of this partial league that extended its influence deep into the Papal States, into the social fabric of the city of Rome, and among the hierarchy of curial elites.⁸⁵ Unsurprisingly, various alliances between the excluded powers were formed, and, in order to destabilize their opponents, exile communities or disenfranchised barons were employed and various plots hatched for overthrowing the Medici in Florence, the regime in Siena, or the King of Naples.⁸⁶ Indeed, the large number of exile communities in Italy reveals the ubiquitous presence of political opponents of ruling regimes and the latter's often unsuccessful attempts to stamp out resistance. Thus, the Pazzi conspiracy was masterminded and executed by long-standing Florentine Medici rivals, and Galeazzo Maria Sforza was assassinated by a noble cabal of political and ideological opponents who were at the heart of the Sforza's inner circles at court.⁸⁷ The Neapolitan Barons' War during which Ferrante of Naples barely clung onto power when several of his most powerful vassals revolted is further proof that in Quattrocento Italy the divisions that ran through states and the alliances between groups that

⁸³ See, for example, the critique of Lorenzo de' Medici as "eorum urbis tyranno & Apostolice Sedis hoste immanissimo" by a prominent Neapolitan courtier in Ioannis Albini, *De gestis regum neapo. ab Aragonia* (Naples 1589), p. 7.

⁸⁴ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, pp. 110-11.

⁸⁵ Maurizio Gattoni, *Sisto IV, Innocenzo VIII e la geopolitica dello Stato pontificio, 1471-1492* (Rome, 2010).

⁸⁶ Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*; Humfrey Butters, "The Politics of Protection in Late Fifteenth-Century Italy: Florence and the Failed Siennese Exiles' Plot of May 1485", in David Abulafia (ed.), *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy 1494-1495: Antecedents and Effects* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 137-49; Christine Shaw, "Rome as a Centre for Italian Political Exiles in the Later Quattrocento", in Gensini, *Roma capitale*, pp. 275-88.

⁸⁷ Black, "Medici and Sforza – Breeds Apart?"; Margolis & Maxson, "The 'Schemes' of Piero de' Pazzi".

stretched across state borders were at times much more important to the political dynamics of the peninsula than developments within states.⁸⁸ This was the unstable world in which the Farnese chose nevertheless to commit themselves to the partial league, dictated, as was the case for the other members, by their interests and kinship connections, most prominently those to the Orsini and Medici. In turn, the league regarded the Farnese as an important player because of the size and strategic location of their patrimony as well as their own place in the extensive kinship network.

The political considerations of the participating members varied greatly. The Sforza, Medici, and King of Naples were all interested in the military resources that baronial families such as the Orsini and Farnese could muster.⁸⁹ For Lorenzo de' Medici, Lodovico Sforza, and Ferrante of Naples, their league also allowed them to maintain pressure on the pope and extend their influence in the papal Curia. During this period, all three of them moved to have one of their relatives created cardinal.⁹⁰ The papacy and Naples were perennially caught in a mutual strangle-hold, Naples being the militarily stronger neighbour with ties to many of the baronial families of the Papal States, yet the investiture of the Crown of Naples was a papal prerogative and a series of illegitimate successions threatened the kingdom's dynastic continuity. Furthermore, there was always the possibility of transferring the Neapolitan dominions to the House of Anjou, who could rely on substantial support among the Neapolitan nobility. The Orsini's primary objective was two-fold. As participants in the partial league the Orsini could isolate their Colonna rivals and prevent them from taking up *condotte* with Milan, Florence or Naples, while they themselves secured access to military office, a steady flow of income,

⁸⁸ Humfrey Butters, "Politics and Diplomacy in Late Quattrocento Italy: the Case of the Barons' War (1485-1486)", in Peter Denley & Caroline Elam (eds.), *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein* (London, 1988), pp. 13-31; The argument against seeing polities as unitary entities has recently been made for cities and 'city-states'. Michael Martocchio, "Renaissance States of Mind", in John Brooke, Julia Strauss & Greg Anderson (eds.), *State Formations: Global Histories and Cultures of Statehood* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 108-23; Patrick Lantschner, "Fragmented Cities in the Later Middle Ages: Italy and the Near East Compared", *The English Historical Review* 130/544 (2015), pp. 546-82.

⁸⁹ Shaw, "The Roman Barons and the Security", pp. 315-23.

⁹⁰ Stella Fletcher, "Cardinals and the War of Ferrara", *Royal Studies Journal* 4/2 (2017), pp. 64-77; David Chambers, "A Cardinal in Rome: Florentine and Medici Ambitions", in Black & Law, *The Medici*, pp. 205-17; Marco Pellegrini, *Ascanio Maria Sforza: la parabola politica di un cardinale-principe del Rinascimento* (Rome, 2002).

and fiefs in Naples for their most important *condottieri*.⁹¹ Nonetheless, whenever opportunities arose to bring benefit in Rome for Orsini cardinals, or for lay family members through collaboration with or the use coercive force against papal nephews, they would fight against their nominal allies as happened in the War of Ferrara (1482-1484). For the Farnese *condottieri*, most prominently Ranuccio XVIII but also his cousins Angelo IV and Pietro Bertoldo II, stable employment in times of war and in times of peace provided a strong incentive to foster their relations with the league. Moreover, the Farnese's long-standing ties to both Medici and Orsini made them more readily inclined to support the league, and such connections only intensified through new marriages as well as frequent interactions.

When Ranuccio XVIII Farnese entered Florentine service thanks to his relatives' warm recommendations and after receiving the personal gift of his company's outfit he was heir to his father's, uncle's, and grandfather's ties with Florence's leading family. Ranuccio not only received armour and weapons, but also a copy of a note that is currently filed away in a box containing letters to Francesco di Luigi Albizzi, treasurer of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, between the years 1519 and 1532. The note contained an extensive cipher that Ranuccio could utilise for secret correspondence with Lorenzo. Among the other recipients of such ciphers were agents and relatives such as Paolo Antonio Soderini, Giovanni Tornabuoni, and Lorenzo's son Piero de' Medici, Italian princes such as Lodovico Sforza, Constanzo Sforza, Alfonso Duke of Calabria, and Federico da Montefeltro, as well as spies around the peninsula. Conspicuously, the cipher headed "*Cum S[ignor] Ranucio,*" was among the most extensive.⁹² Judging from the various individuals for whom codes were created, the cipher must have had 1473 as *terminus post quem*, the year that Girolamo Riario was created count of Imola, and January 1477 as *terminus ante quem*, when the last Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold met his end at the Battle of Nancy.⁹³ In all likelihood, therefore, the cipher dates from the period Ranuccio took up service

⁹¹ Vicino Orsini to Cardinal Giovanni Battista Orsini, 27 March 1485. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Corrispondenza, Serie I, busta 101, f. 31'; Bartolomeo da Bracciano to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 10 May 1490. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 1, f. 187^{r-v}; Bartolomeo da Bracciano to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 2 May 1490. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, f. 294^{r-v}.

⁹² Confusingly, Florentine correspondence used 'signor Ranuccio' for Ranuccio XVIII Farnese and 'conte Ranuccio' for Ranuccio Count of Marsciano.

⁹³ ASF, MAP, CXIX, 127^{r-v}.

with Florence in 1475. This is further supported by the presence of symbols for Nicola Sandonnini, Bishop of Modena, and Branda da Castiglione, Bishop of Como, who were sent to France in 1475 as apostolic legate and agent of Galeazzo Maria Sforza respectively to broker a peace between Louis XI of France and Charles the Bold. Lorenzo de' Medici and Ranuccio Farnese must have extensively discussed European affairs, for there were symbols for Emperor Frederick III, Sultan Mehmed II, the Kings of Hungary, Poland, Aragon, France, and the Duke of Burgundy. That a banker-prince from Tuscany and a nobleman from Tuscia had such an interest in French affairs is a strong reminder that throughout the Quattrocento the affairs of France, where King and Princes of the Blood were jostling for power, had a direct impact on the situation in Italy.⁹⁴ Likewise, the potential effects of the war between Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, and Casimir IV, King of Poland, over the succession in Bohemia had repercussions for stability around the Adriatic.⁹⁵ In Italy the detail was far greater. Aside from all the princes, there were symbols for many of the prominent courtiers and secretaries at Italy's courts.⁹⁶ The detail reveals something of the extensive political discussions that would have made up the secret exchange between Lorenzo and Ranuccio, and it is unfortunate that the cipher is all that remains. It is certainly testament to the fact that the history of the Farnese and the history of Quattrocento politics are vulnerable to archival bias; the source material that happened to survive in the chanceries is allocated a prominence by historians that is probably greater than would have been perceived by a fifteenth-century contemporary. Indeed, most of the protagonists of the Farnese's network of alliances met on a regular basis, were wont to send agents rather than letters, and exchanged letters in cipher that no longer survive, as many allusions in the extant letters attest, leaving

⁹⁴ Riccardo Fubini, "I rapporti diplomatici tra Milano e Borgogna con particolare riguardo all'alleanza del 1475-1476", in Jean-Marie Cauchies & Giorgio Chittolini (eds.), *Milano e Borgogna: Due stati principeschi tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Rome, 1990), pp. 95-114; Richard Walsh, *Charles the Bold and Italy 1467-1477: Politics and Personnel* (Liverpool, 2005), pp. 35-92.

⁹⁵ Lothar Höbelt, *Böhmen: eine Geschichte* (Vienna, 2012), pp. 71-2.

⁹⁶ Among them: Giovanni Mauruzzi da Tolentino and Leonardo Botta in Milan, Giovanni Pietro Arrivabene in Mantua, Agostino Maffei in Rome, and Diomede and Achile Carafa in Naples. For the connection between Lorenzo de' Medici and Diomede Carafa, see Leah Clark, "Collecting, Exchange, and Sociability in the Renaissance *Studiolo*", *Journal of the History of Collections* 25/2 (2013), pp. 171-84.

historians a picture that is inevitably skewed.⁹⁷ What the cipher above all illustrates is the level of trust Lorenzo placed in Ranuccio Farnese – still only in his late teens in 1475 – after several generations of close relations between the two families.

With the Farnese firmly entrenched in the Italian political system it was inevitable that interests conflicted. The biggest shock to the system of alliances was the Pazzi Conspiracy. In the war that followed the plot the Farnese were forced to make a choice whom to adhere to, as they had retained their close links to the Montefeltro, who were involved in the Pazzi Conspiracy and fought against Florence. Both Ranuccio and Pietro Bertoldo served under Antonio da Montefeltro a month before the conspiracy.⁹⁸ However, so did Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano, and he opted to support the Medici and fought against his own Orsini relatives in papal service.⁹⁹ Perhaps the best indication we have is a remark of Lorenzo de' Medici made to a Milanese ambassador. Lorenzo remarked that Nicola Orsini had a dozen or so relatives in the opposing camp, providing a hint that Nicola's Farnese kin were to be found there as well.¹⁰⁰ The fact that Ranuccio was still in service with Federico da Montefeltro in 1482 would also support this thesis. With the help of Diomede Carafa and Ippolita Sforza, Duchess of Calabria, Lorenzo de' Medici nevertheless managed to broker a peace with Ferrante of Naples.¹⁰¹ The new, if uneasy and partial league required that the Sforza of Milan, Medici of Florence, and the King of Naples should collaborate for the time being and effectively excluded Venice and Sixtus IV. For the Farnese this realignment resolved their predicament whom to adhere to, and the partial league seemed particularly well-suited for their ambitions.

War in Italy resumed in 1482 with the so-called War of Ferrara. Sixtus, with whom the Farnese had maintained good relations so far, greatly desired the Farnese and Savelli in his service as a

⁹⁷ Baccio Ugolini to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 6 May 1485. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 101, f. 93^r; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 5 September 1485. ASF, MAP, XXXIX, 428^{r-v}; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balia of Siena, 21 September 1485. ASS, Balia 525, 15.

⁹⁸ ASS, Manoscritti A 135, ff. 233^v, 237^r; BCA, MS. L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^v.

⁹⁹ Shaw, "Lorenzo and Niccolò Orsini", pp. 257-9.

¹⁰⁰ Filippo Sacramoro to Alfonso Duke of Calabria and Federico da Montefeltro, 23 October 1478. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, III, pp. 259-60.

¹⁰¹ Judith Bryce, "Between Friends? Two Letters of Ippolita Sforza to Lorenzo de' Medici", *Renaissance Studies* 21/3 (2007), pp. 340-65.

counterbalance to the factional fighting between Orsini and Colonna partisans that engulfed Rome.¹⁰² Moreover, Sixtus had allied with Venice, which was increasingly under the influence of a faction in favour of war to consolidate the *terraferma* and to fight against Duke Ercole I of Ferrara, the latest adherent to the partial league.¹⁰³ Siena, following the line supported by Cardinal Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini, remained neutral, whereas Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano entered papal service, angling for an advantageous wedding into Sixtus' family.¹⁰⁴ In the midst of all this positioning, Ranuccio acquired the leadership over the mercenary company of the recently deceased Federico da Montefeltro. Florence and Lorenzo de' Medici were adamant about keeping the experienced Feltreschi in their service and focused their efforts on attracting Ranuccio with the promise of a sizeable personal stipend.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, it was probably in this period that negotiations were initiated for a marriage between Geronima Farnese and Puccio Pucci that was to be successfully concluded in November 1483. This marriage played an important role in strengthening Farnese-Medici relations. No doubt the personal connection between Lorenzo and Ranuccio prompted the latter as well as the former to conclude and periodically renew the *condotta*. In fact, when the contract had to be renewed after six months, Lorenzo was among the most vocal supporters of Ranuccio's request for a larger personal stipend and managed to get Sixtus, who had recently switched sides, on board as well.¹⁰⁶ The Farnese had assisted in drawing Sixtus across to the opposite side. Large shipments of grain from the Farnese's lands had relieved the famine in Rome even before the pope's change of heart, and would supply the city for the

¹⁰² Pier Filippo Pandolfini to Lorenzo de' Medici, 7 April 1482. ASF, MAP, LI, 109^{r-v}; Lorenzo de' Medici to Pier Filippo Pandolfini, 10 April 1482. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, VI, p. 336; Sigismondo de' Conti, *Le Storie de' suoi tempi dal 1475 al 1510* (Rome, 1883), vol. I, pp. 132-8.

¹⁰³ Michael Mallett, "Venice and the War of Ferrara, 1482-84", in David Chambers, Cecil Clough & Michael Mallett (eds.), *War, Culture and Society in Renaissance Venice: Essays in Honour of John Hale* (London, 1993), pp. 57-72; Michael Mallett, "Lorenzo de' Medici and the War of Ferrara", in Bernard Toscani (ed.), *Lorenzo de' Medici: New Perspectives* (New York, 1993), pp. 249-61.

¹⁰⁴ Sixtus IV to Andrea Todeschini-Piccolomini, 28 March 1483. ASS, Arm. XXXIX, 15, f. 453^r; Sixtus IV to Nicola Orsini, 6 September 1483. ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 16, f. 11^v.

¹⁰⁵ Dieci di Balìa to Bongigianni Gianfigliuzzi, 10 October 1482, and Dieci di Balìa to Guidantonio Vespucci, 6 November 1482. ASF, DB, LC, 5, ff. 80^v-82^v, 449^r-450^v; Dieci di Balìa to Jacopo Guicciardini, 11 October 1482. ASF, DB, Missive, 14, ff. 68^r-69^v.

¹⁰⁶ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 20 and 25 April 1482. ASF, MAP, XXXIX, 16^{r-v}, 18^{r-v}, 26^{r-v}; Jacopo Guicciardini to Lorenzo de' Medici, 23 April 1483. ASF, MAP, XLVIII, 314^{r-v}; Lorenzo de' Medici to Jacopo Guicciardini, 16, 25 and 29 April 1483. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, VII, pp. 230-3, 253-9; The contract is in ASF, DB, Deliberazioni, Condotte e Stanziamenti 26, f. 56^r.

remainder of the war.¹⁰⁷ What raised his profile was that Ranuccio's sister had married into the Piccolomini of Siena, because his troops were forced to cross that neutral republic's territory at various occasions, for which permission was usually granted without much ado.¹⁰⁸ Lorenzo's desire to attract Ranuccio into Florentine service is illuminating of the political and military importance adduced by contemporaries to a dynasty like the Farnese. Farnese scions from an early age inherited a vast network of kin and clients throughout Italy. For Ranuccio, this earned him Lorenzo's confidence and the ability to discuss European political affairs in secret with this powerful patron; in turn, Lorenzo was willing to bid to attract Ranuccio into Florentine service with an added personal stipend. Moreover, his valour and bearing had earned Ranuccio the admiration of Federico da Montefeltro and his company of experienced veterans, leading first to his promotion to constable and subsequently, when only in his mid-twenties, the Feltreschi troops' endorsement as their commander.

Ranuccio and his uncle Nicola Orsini remained prominent *condottieri* of Florence, being present at the negotiations for the conclusion of the Peace of Bagnolo in 1484 and subsequently commanding the army sent to conquer Sarzana.¹⁰⁹ Florence had been granted permission by her allies in Milan, Ferrara, Rome, and Naples to wage war on Genoa even after the Peace of Bagnolo.¹¹⁰ To this end, the Florentines had concluded an alliance with Lucca.¹¹¹ Along with the army were sent a host of Florentine commissioners overseeing the operations, and it seems no accident that among the nominees was Dionigi Pucci, Ranuccio's relative.¹¹² During the assault, Ranuccio was wounded in the

¹⁰⁷ Sixtus IV to Ludovico Margani and Commune of Farnese, 1 November 1482. Arm. XXXIX, 15, ff. 85^v-86^r; Sixtus IV to Pier Luigi I and Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 15 March, 26 August, and 30 November 1483. ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 15, f. 423^r; ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 16, ff. 3^v, 80^v.

¹⁰⁸ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 14 and 18 August 1483. ASS, Balìa 513, 77, 93; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 8 October 1483. ASS, Balìa 515, 11 and ASS, Concistoro 2053, 59.

¹⁰⁹ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Dieci di Balìa, 19 July 1484. ASF, DB, Responsive, 31, f. 449^r; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, Nicola Orsini & Ranuccio da Marsciano to Dieci di Balìa, 11 August 1484. ASF, DB, Responsive, 32, f. 24^{r-v}; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese and Nicola Orsini to Dieci di Balìa, 23, 27 and 30 December 1484. ASF, DB, Responsive, 33, ff. 79^{r-v}, 109^r, 126^r; Lorenzo de' Medici to Dieci di Balìa, 9 November 1484. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, VIII, p. 45.

¹¹⁰ Bernardo Bongiolami & Jacopo Guicciardini to Dieci di Balìa, 23 January 1484. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 12, ff. 12^v-15^v.

¹¹¹ ASL, Capitoli 39, ff. 135-151.

¹¹² Dionigi Pucci to Dieci di Balìa, 10 December 1484. ASF, DB, Responsive 33, f. 31^{r-v}; Archivio Pucci, filza 1, fasc. 5.

leg and brought to Lucchese territory to be taken care of in Camaioire.¹¹³ That his uncle Nicola Orsini expressed his gratitude and warmly recommended the Prior of Camaioire to the Lucchese regime illustrates the close bond that existed between the two *condottieri*.¹¹⁴ The Sarzana campaign headed by Nicola Orsini and Ranuccio Farnese had major consequences for the political situation in Italy. The newly-elected pope, Innocent VIII, was Genoese after all, and had little sympathy for Florentine claims or their allies among the baronial elite of the Papal States. Innocent's initial attempts at attracting Gentile Virginio Orsini from Neapolitan into papal service had faltered, and following venerable practice he turned to the Colonna instead. Unrelated to these events but further aggravating Innocent, Nicola Orsini and Ranuccio openly declared their support for their relative Giovanni Savelli who was embroiled in a dispute with the pope. These were only the starting shots for a series of events that played out in various states but were all connected to Innocent's opposition to the partial league of Milan, Florence, and Naples, which so prominently included the Farnese and Orsini.¹¹⁵

Papal Plots and Nobles in Revolt: The Farnese and the Neapolitan Barons' War

The Sieneese exiles' plot and the outbreak of the Neapolitan Barons' War in 1485 illustrate the increasing entanglement of local politics with the wider geography as the century progressed. Furthermore, subdivisions within states and realms fully came to the fore as discontented and exiled communities now sought and acquired support from Innocent VIII, who saw in them a means of weakening the hold of the partial league on the Papal States.¹¹⁶ The events surrounding the Sieneese exiles' plot and the Neapolitan Barons' War show the extent to which the Farnese were integrated into

¹¹³ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Anziani of Lucca, 5 October 1484. ASL, Anziani 533, Registro 35, f. 97^r; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Anziani of Lucca, 20 October 1484, and Anziani of Lucca to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 20 October 1484. ASL, Anziani 533, Registro 38, ff. 87^{r-v}, 88^v.

¹¹⁴ "Et p[er]ch[e] il dicto M[esser] Mich[e]le e cosa del s[igno]re Ranuccio mio nipote et in q[ue]sto suo mal[etudine] ne ha ricevuto molti beneficij p[er] liq[ua]li io et tutta la casa n[ost]ra gli ne haverò a restar[e] in p[er]petuo obligati[i]ssi[mo]." Nicola Orsini to Anziani of Lucca, 5 November 1484. ASL, Anziani 533, Registro 38, f. 88^v.

¹¹⁵ Dieci di Balìa to Nicola Orsini, 7 March 1485, and Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Dieci di Balìa, 12 March 1485. ASF, DB, Missive 24, ff. 35^v-36^r, 52^r-53^r; Shaw, "Lorenzo and Niccolò Orsini", p. 263.

¹¹⁶ Butters, "Politics and Diplomacy".

this peninsula-wide system, and through the problems that arose from the temporary absence of Farnese *condottieri* in the camp of the league also their indispensability for the military strategy of the partial league. The first stage of events played out in Siena. Siena had traditionally served as a strategic counter-weight to Florentine ambitions in Tuscany, but with the ascendancy of the Piccolomini it had taken on a neutral-leaning or even benign attitude towards Florence as the transfer of Ranuccio's troops through Siennese territory in the preceding years attested. Lorenzo de' Medici and Florentine ambassadors singled out Andrea Todeschini-Piccolomini, Agnese Farnese's husband, and Cardinal Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini as some of the staunchest Medici allies in Siena.¹¹⁷ Innocent's support for the Siennese exiles was thus perceived as a threat to Florentine influence, and the possibility of an experienced condottiere leading their army a constant worry for the Florentine officials. One of their fears was that Roberto Sanseverino, the Venetian condottiere covertly allowed to transfer to papal service and by now, like his Sanseverino kin, declared a rebel in Naples, where the first stages of the Barons' War had begun, would use the Siennese exiles to capture Siena while making his way from Milan to Naples.¹¹⁸ As it turned out, the real danger came from within the ranks of Florence's allies, and on 3 May it was reported Gentile Virginio Orsini and Giulio Orsini of Monterotondo were in contact with the Siennese exiles.¹¹⁹ Gentile Virginio resolutely refused to back anything that would be to the detriment of Lorenzo de' Medici or Ferrante of Naples, but Giulio Orsini and his brother Cardinal Giovanni Battista disagreed.¹²⁰ Giulio and Giovanni Battista Orsini might have been prompted by the recent attempt by Ferrante of Naples to get his hands on the Orsini Duchy of Ascoli, and it was only after severe pressure from Gentile Virginio that Giulio changed his mind and fled the exiles' camp at Bolsena.¹²¹ In the end the plot in which the involvement of Innocent and Cardinal Orsini was

¹¹⁷ Lorenzo de' Medici to Piero de' Medici, 26 November 1484. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, VIII, pp. 56-79; Guidantonio Vespucci to Dieci di Balìa, 29 July 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 34, ff. 285^r-286^r.

¹¹⁸ Guidantonio Vespucci to Dieci di Balìa, 22 April 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 34, ff. 48^r-54^r.

¹¹⁹ Guidantonio Vespucci to Dieci di Balìa, 3 May 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 34, ff. 82^r-83^v.

¹²⁰ Antonio Sinibaldi to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 7 May 1485. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 101, f. 74^{r-v}.

¹²¹ Vicino Orsini to Giovanni Battista Orsini, 27 March 1485. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 101, f. 31^{r-v}; Guidantonio Vespucci to Dieci di Balìa, 8 & 22 May 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 34, ff. 93^r-94^r, 106^{r-v}.

abundantly clear was foiled because the Florentine ambassador managed to forewarn Cardinal Todeschini-Piccolomini and the army of exiles was roundly defeated even before Florentine reinforcements headed by Ranuccio XVIII Farnese arrived to secure the city.¹²²

That it was Ranuccio who had been entrusted with the Florentine army sent to Siena shows again his utility to Lorenzo de' Medici's politics. Due to his long-standing relationship with Lorenzo he could be entrusted with this difficult task. Ranuccio again spearheaded the Feltreschi company, but this time his own extensive kinship network in Siena was probably also a decisive factor.¹²³ In fact, Florence decided to lend Siena their condottiere, further cementing the ties between the two republics and ensuring their continued collaboration now that war with Innocent became unavoidable. Siena thus made Ranuccio captain-general of the army, whereas Florence nominated Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano, while also engaging Gentile Virginio and the other Orsini in a shared *condotta* with Naples.¹²⁴ This odd construction allowed Siena to publicly assume neutrality, which in light of its long history of enmity with Florence was already quite an achievement for the partial league, while in practice it looked away when Florentine and Neapolitan troops crossed its territory, about which Ranuccio kept the government and Lorenzo de' Medici well-informed.¹²⁵ Moreover, it allowed Ranuccio to function as a spider in a web of information channels stretching from the Tyrrhenian to the Adriatic coast, sending his spies to Camerino, Urbino, Perugia, Rimini, and Cesena to acquire information.¹²⁶

¹²² Giovanni Lanfredini to Dieci di Balìa, 11 May 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 34, f. 108^r; Dieci di Balìa to Pope Innocent VIII and Ferrante of Aragon, 16 May 1485. Idem, ff. 118^r, 120^r; On Giovanni Lanfredini, see Elisabetta Scarton, *Giovanni Lanfredini: Uomo d'affari e diplomatico nell'Italia del Quattrocento* (Florence, 2007).

¹²³ Pietro Nasi to Dieci di Balìa, 6 May 1485. ASF, DB, Missive 23, ff. 105^r-106^v.

¹²⁴ ASS, Manoscritti A 135, f. 258^r; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 22 July & 1 August 1485. ASS, Balìa 524, 52, 67; Antonio Balistarius to Balìa of Siena, 4 August 1485. ASS, Balìa 524, 52; Dieci di Balìa to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 3 November 1485. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 101, f. 91^{r-v}; Gentile Virginio Orsini to Dieci di Balìa, 7 November 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 35, ff. 123^{r-v}; Gentile Virginio Orsini to Dieci di Balìa, 28 May 1485, and Guidantonio Vespucci to Dieci di Balìa, 8 June 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 34, ff. 144^r, 162^{r-v}.

¹²⁵ Otto di Pratica to Balìa of Siena, 3 January 1486. ASF, OP, LC 4, ff. 89^v-90^r; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 18 January 1486. ASS, Balìa 529, 48; "Per le lettere di Vostre Signorie con le copie del Signore Rinuccio ho inteso lo avviso del passare del Signore duca di Calabria." Lorenzo de' Medici to Balìa of Siena, 17 January 1486. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, IX, p. 131.

¹²⁶ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 2 September and 20 & 27 October 1485. ASS, Balìa 525, 3, 61, 74.

Unsurprisingly, this information was forwarded to Lorenzo.¹²⁷ Even so, Ranuccio XVIII also obtained news from Rome and Naples.¹²⁸ Indeed, Ranuccio managed to get information from Giulio and Giovanni Battista Orsini in the league's military camp to reach Florence quicker than it did through their own system. Soon letters in opposite direction, such as instructions to the Milanese general Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, were simply sent via Ranuccio.¹²⁹ The Dieci di Balìa even told their commissioner to keep open the channel of information that ran via him at all possible costs.¹³⁰ In such a position, Ranuccio was of service to the powers of the league while retaining his well-paid job at the head of an army of a neutral power. The only military action Ranuccio was involved in was when he moved close to his own possessions and threatened to join up with the league's army under Nicola Orsini to protect his own territories against Sanseverino, who during the spring of 1486 had encamped his entire army in the heart of the Farnese patrimony.¹³¹

The fact that Sanseverino deemed the Farnese's patrimony of such paramount strategic importance reflects the wider struggles in Italy that had turned the Kingdom of Naples and the Papal States into a battlefield. The exiles' attempt to overthrow the Sienese government was intricately connected to the unrest that was brewing among the barons of Naples. Ferrante of Naples had alienated large part of his realm's powerful barons by persecuting and expropriating several prominent members and installing his own kin instead.¹³² From an early stage, Innocent, as overlord of the King of Naples, had taken an active part in fomenting rebellion and the barons in revolt raised the pontifical

¹²⁷ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 5 September 1485. ASF, MAP, XXXIX, 428^{r-v}; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 11 & 21 September 1485. ASS, Balìa 525, 10, 15.

¹²⁸ Innocent VIII to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 31 March 1486. ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 19, f. 274^v; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 15 September 1485. ASS, Balìa 525, 14.

¹²⁹ Pietro Capponi to Dieci di Balìa, 15 February 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 33, f. 340^{r-v}.

¹³⁰ "et ogni volta ch[e] in questa op[er]a ti bisognassi spendere qualch[e] danari: siamo co[n]tenti lo facci ch[e] tutto ti fareno buono." Dieci di Balìa to Andrea Cambini, 8 July 1486. ASF, DB, LC 7, f. 68^{r-v}.

¹³¹ Pietro Capponi to Lorenzo de' Medici, 30 March 1486. ASF, MAP, XLIII, 3^{r-6v}; Duke of Calabria to Dieci di Balìa, 28 March 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 35, f. 407^{r-v}; Dieci di Balìa to Pietro Vettori & Pietro Capponi, 26 May 1486. ASF, DB, LC 7, ff. 41^{r-45r}.

¹³² Alessio Russo, "Principi-baroni nel Regno aragonese di Napoli: il caso di Federico d'Aragona, principe di Squillace e di Taranto (1482-1487)", *Reti Medievali* 19/2 (2018), pp. 247-59; Elisabetta Scarton, "La congiura dei baroni del 1485-1487 e la sorte dei ribelli", in Francesco Senatore & Francesco Storti (eds.), *Poteri, relazioni, guerra nel Regno di Ferrante d'Aragona: Studi sulle corrispondenze diplomatiche* (Naples, 2011), pp. 213-90.

banner on the cities and castles under their control.¹³³ Like his predecessor, Innocent was well-aware that he needed many Roman barons in his service to stand the remotest chance of keeping order within the Papal States. With the Orsini attached to the league and their Florentine and Neapolitan allies, Innocent had to turn elsewhere. Orsini spies in Rome were well-informed and reported that Innocent had enlisted virtually the entire Colonna faction.¹³⁴ For the Colonna this proved an opportunity to reconquer several counties in the Abruzzi that were disputed with the Orsini – local feuds remained intrinsically linked to the wider politics of the peninsula.¹³⁵ Crucially, and this turned out to be one of the major strategic errors of the partial league, Innocent had been able to attract Pier Luigi I, Angelo IV and Pietro Bertoldo II Farnese, although not Ranuccio XVIII, into his service and used Paolo Farnese, his chamberlain, as well as threats of excommunication (*sub pena rebellionis*) to ensure their loyalty.¹³⁶ As Innocent was indignant over the Orsini's decision to adhere to the league, Gentile Virginio expected, and rightly as it turned out, that the Orsini territories north of Rome would bear the brunt of the military manoeuvres of the papal army.¹³⁷ After all, the Orsini stronghold at Bracciano was a mere thirty miles from Rome and a perennial threat to the security of the pope. Because they could now rely on the use of Siennese territory, the league had built its own strategy around the crucial road from Florence via Pitigliano to Bracciano, roughly the ancient Roman Via Clodia.¹³⁸ This was where the Duke of Calabria had brought a large contingent of Neapolitan forces, despite his father's embattled position in Naples, and where a Milanese army under Trivulzio took part in the fight. The Orsini *condottieri*, their men, and their fortresses were all located in the area, but a piece of the puzzle was missing: the Farnese. Their patrimony lay right in the middle between Pitigliano and Bracciano; the road ran straight through Farnese and Ischia. Moreover, no supplies could be obtained, as the Florentine condottiere

¹³³ Gattoni, *Sisto IV, Innocenzo VIII*, pp. 147-54.

¹³⁴ A list of the papal *condottieri* in May 1485 is preserved in ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 400, parte 1, f. 3^{r-v}; Bartolomeo da Bracciano to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 20 November 1485. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 101, f. 75^r; Giovanni Lanfredini to Dieci di Balìa, 14 May 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 34, f. 112^{r-v}.

¹³⁵ Prospero Colonna to Antonello Sanseverino, 24 February 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 35, f. 395^{r-v}.

¹³⁶ Innocent VIII to Pier Luigi I Farnese, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese and Gentile Virginio Orsini, 4 March 1485. ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 18, f. 137^r; Innocent VIII to Pier Luigi I Farnese, 25 November 1485. ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 19, f. 71^r.

¹³⁷ Gentile Virginio Orsini to Dieci di Balìa, 23 November 1485. ASF, DB, Responsive 35, f. 186^{r-v}.

¹³⁸ Nicola Orsini to Dieci di Balìa, 28 February 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 35, f. 396^{r-v}.

Giovanfrancesco Sanseverino found out when the gate of the castle of Latera remained closed to him and the lady of the castle, Battista dell'Anguillara, was adamant in her refusal to sell him fodder despite the threat of a band of armed men in town – Giovanfrancesco acquiesced in her decision, declining to extort what could not be obtained through purchase.¹³⁹ Thus, due to the strategic location of their patrimony, both the military service of key Farnese *condottieri* as well as control of their lands and castles became central to the northern front of the Neapolitan Barons' War.

The spring campaign of 1486 quickly revealed just how important it was for the league to have the Farnese not only as kin but also as *condottieri*. Supplies, gunpowder, and ammunition to the army in Bracciano had to be transported by sea, a costly and slow method that left the supply chain dangerously exposed.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, it was difficult to obtain galleys for transporting large bombards, nor could the army safely retreat to Pitigliano through the Farnese's patrimony.¹⁴¹ Shortages of water, bread, other supplies, and cannons soon immobilised the army in Bracciano, and not even letters could be delivered effectively.¹⁴² Perhaps, these shortages and the poor results in the field of the league's army had induced Cardinal Orsini and his brother Giulio of Monterotondo to seek a separate accommodation with Innocent, which was a great loss for the league, and especially for Lorenzo de' Medici himself as their direct relative.¹⁴³ Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano and Gentile Virginio Orsini of Bracciano remained loyal, but it was clear the situation required a drastic solution. The solution supported by all involved, including the corpus of Florentine commissioners, the Duke of Calabria, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio and Lorenzo de' Medici was that Angelo IV, Pietro Bertoldo II, and, if possible, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese be convinced to betray their current employer and enter the service of the

¹³⁹ Giovanfrancesco Sanseverino to Dieci di Balìa, 3 February 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 35, f. 390^{r-v}.

¹⁴⁰ Otto di Pratica to Pietro Capponi, 4 March 1486. ASF, OP, LC 4, ff. 126^r-128^r.

¹⁴¹ "Non ci pare sia al p[rese]nte da fare instantia per le bombarde grosse non sendo a proposito obligarse con epse ad alchuna impresa, cum sit ch[e] ogni disegno si volga allo andar[e] adirittura a ritrovarsi li Orsinj senza perdere altrim[en]ti tempo potendosi fare come non si dubita: Et quando pure volessimo mandarvi artiglierie grosse, non veggiamo come poterlo fare, non havendo comodita delle galee senza molta difficulta, et interpositione di tempo. Se pure si facesse preda alchuna per cotesto exercito non potendo ritenerla in luogo sicuro insulle terre di quelli s^{ri} da farnese, o, di pitigliano." Otto di Pratica to Pietro Capponi, 17 March 1486. ASF, OP, LC 4, ff. 141^r-142^v.

¹⁴² Pietro Capponi to Dieci di Balìa, 17 February 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 33, ff. 345^r-348^r.

¹⁴³ Shaw, *The Political Role of the Orsini Family*, pp. 92-3, 176.

league, or else, Pietro Capponi added with a sense for drama, the only solution would be to besiege the Farnese castles.¹⁴⁴

It was at this point that the political, diplomatic, and dynastic connections fostered by the Farnese became the decisive factor in determining the action of the Farnese *condottieri*. Naturally, and despite repeated attempts by the league to attract him to their service, Ranuccio was content to stay in neutral service of Siena and duly signed for another year, sending two horses to compete in the traditional horse race there to signal his commitment.¹⁴⁵ In any case, he was useful there to the league, who even gave him an extra cohort of twenty men-at-arms, illustrating how in military respects, Florence and Siena remained intertwined through sharing *condottieri*.¹⁴⁶ Both Pietro Bertoldo and Angelo, however, signalled their willingness to join the league. Negotiations unfolded and as is clear from the many letters to and from the Florentine commissioner, Pietro Bertoldo and Angelo were aware of their strong bargaining position, using the inclusion of the use of their state as a bargaining chip in exchange for a sizeable *condotta* and personal stipend, for which it was expected Milan and Naples would contribute.¹⁴⁷ Such shared *condotte* became increasingly frequent in late Quattrocento Italy and became one of the primary instruments with which the baronial families of the Papal States not only acquired a role as a hired men-at-arms, but as a binding force between allies.¹⁴⁸

Apart from these large financial incentives, it is testimony to the prominence that the Farnese attached to their dynastic and diplomatic connections – their *antiqua et moderna devotio* – with the Medici that they were willing to align themselves with and contribute to the political objectives of the

¹⁴⁴ Jacopo Guicciardini, Pietro Vettori, Sforza Bettini and Pietro Capponi to Dieci di Balìa, 4, 10, 17, 18, 22 & 23 February 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 33, ff. 345^r-348^r, 354^r-355^v, 384^r-387^v, 394^{r-v}.

¹⁴⁵ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balìa of Siena, 16 February 1486. ASS, Balìa 529, 76; ASS, Manoscritti A 135, ff. 260^r, 262^r.

¹⁴⁶ Otto di Pratica to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 18 February 1486. ASF, OP, LC 4, f. 109^{r-v}.

¹⁴⁷ Otto di Pratica to Pietro Capponi, 18 & 24 March and 14 April 1486. ASF, OP, LC 4, ff. 141^r-142^v, 142^v-143^v, 151^r-152^r, 176^r-177^v; Pietro Capponi to Dieci di Balìa, 11 & 12 April and 10, 11, 13 & 22 May 1486. ASF, DB, Responsive 36, ff. 61^r-62^v, 67^r-68^v; 276^r-277^r, 284^{r-v}, 296^r-298^v, 346^r-348^r, 352^r-353^r; BCA, Riforme 23, f. 28^r.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Dover, "Coalition Warfare in Renaissance Italy, 1455-1503", in Niels Bo Poulsen, Kjeld Hald Galdster & Søren Nørby (eds.), *Coalition Warfare: An Anthology of Scholarly Presentations at the Conference on Coalition Warfare at the Royal Danish Defence College, 2011* (Newcastle, 2013), pp. 51-69; Humfrey Butters, "Florence, Milan and the Barons' War (1485-1486)", in Garfagnini, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, pp. 281-308.

league. After all, they were not simply changing employer but were also betraying their natural overlord, the pope, and in all likelihood entertained some misgivings about the inevitable reprisals. Innocent certainly made efforts to retain and attract Ranuccio, Angelo and Pietro Bertoldo in his service, recognising the danger of their defection, and likewise made overtures to the Farnese's kin and clients, but in vain.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, the Farnese were declared rebels, and as Roberto Zapperi argues, his family's defection was the direct cause of the imprisonment of Alessandro Farnese in Castel Sant'Angelo.¹⁵⁰ It is plausible that Roberto Sanseverino's decision to encamp his army in the Farnese patrimony was in part a punitive expedition, although it also made sense from a strategic point of view because of the centrality of the Farnese lands to the league's supply chain. In the end, after the conclusion of the Farnese *condotte* the league's army roundly defeated Sanseverino at the Battle of Montorio on 7 May 1486, and the troops in Bracciano were able to retreat to Pitigliano "*per via de Marta*" and unite with the forces of the Duke of Calabria.¹⁵¹ From Pitigliano incursions into the Papal States could be made through the Farnese patrimony. Above all, because Nicola Orsini and Ranuccio knew each other so well, they could collaborate in the event Sanseverino wanted to use the Siennese exiles for another assault on Siena.¹⁵² In the end, the struggle over the Farnese *condottieri* and patrimony turned into a decisive victory for the league with the Farnese *condottieri* in their service. The temporary ceasefire that was signed on 10 June 1486 specifically included their patrimony, although it could still be traversed by the league's army.¹⁵³ Threatened in Rome due to the renewed efforts of the league, now with their supply chain secure through Farnese territory, with Hungarian troops allied to Naples in the Marche, and the rebellious barons of Naples in ever more dire straits, Innocent was forced to sue for peace.

¹⁴⁹ Innocent VIII to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, Pier Luigi I Farnese & Angelo IV Farnese, 13 February 1486. ASF, Arm. XXXIX, 19, ff. 193^r, 205^v.

¹⁵⁰ Roberto Zapperi, *La legenda del Papa Paolo III: Arte e censura nella Roma pontificia* (Turin, 1998), pp. 38-48.

¹⁵¹ Dieci di Balìa to Jacopo Guicciardini, 18 May 1486. ASF, DB, LC 6, ff. 52^v-54^r.

¹⁵² Dieci di Balìa to Pietro Vettori & Pietro Capponi, 26 May 1486. ASF, DB, LC 7, ff. 41^v-45^r; Lorenzo de' Medici to Pietro Vettori & Pietro Capponi, 24 May 1486. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, IX, pp. 303-4.

¹⁵³ Dieci di Balìa to Bartolomeo Ugolini, 10 June 1486, and Dieci di Balìa to Pietro Capponi, 21 June 1486. ASF, DB, LC 7, ff. 51^v-52^r, 60^v-61^v.

The original decision to lend Ranuccio to Siena, even if based on good grounds, as well as allowing Angelo and Pietro Bertoldo to enter papal service, had almost cost the Milanese-Florentine-Neapolitan league the war. After a series of disastrous defeats, with half of their army trapped in Bracciano and bereft of supplies, the other half in retreat to Pitigliano, and with the defection of the Orsini of Monterotondo, the generals and commissioners involved realised that the outcome of the war was going to revolve around the Farnese's patrimony. The decision-making process behind the volte-face of the Farnese *condottieri* is difficult to reconstruct, since no justifications from the protagonists survive, but can be explained on the basis of the political and dynastic attachment of the Farnese to the partial league through their long-standing ties with the Medici and Orsini. It was a decision for which not only the Farnese clerics but also their vassals suffered, yet it did turn around the war in the league's favour.

During and after the Neapolitan Barons' War, the members of the league were further integrated, tying the leading families of the various Italian principalities ever closer together. As all the protagonists of the league realised, the Farnese were a vital resource for allowing the league and the Orsini to place pressure on Rome and the Papal States. Even though hostilities were over, it was deemed crucial that the Farnese remain in the partial league's camp, and the traditional methods of dynastic ties and military service were utilised to bring this about. Lorenzo de' Medici expressed these considerations with force in a letter to his ambassador in Milan:

The Lord Ranuccio Farnese finishes his contract with the Sieneze within a short time, and he does not want to renew his contract with them alone. Naturally, he would like [to sign] with the league, but if he were not to be offered a deal here, I have no doubts that he will take up service with the Pope alone, or with the Pope and the Sieneze together, which would be very bad for us, and the state of these [lords] of Farnese is of such paramount importance to the League, as we witnessed through experience in the past year; because when they were with us, we could always without much difficulty come to the support of the Orsini. If the Lord Lodovico [Sforza] concurs, I believe it would not be a great expense, which I believe would in total not amount to much more than ten thousand. I would like for you to bring

this up with His Excellency, and for you to reply to me as soon as possible about this matter, because this thing cannot be left unresolved. I have written about it to Naples, and we imagine that they will agree there, and the King will have nothing to complain about, above all now the Pope has made this league with the Venetians, because if this were to be, we would buy ourselves this comfort without spending too large sums; and [remember to] respond as fast as you can.¹⁵⁴

The answer from Naples arrived soon when Lorenzo's agent and brother-in-law Bernardo Rucellai wrote a few letters than were meant to mislead unwarranted readers by exchanging the Farnese for the Colonna and making extensive use of a cipher. Nonetheless, Rucellai related how he had spoken to Ferrante of Naples, who insisted on including all three Farnese *condottieri* in the *condotta* and emphasised that it should include the use of their state. If that were the case, he was willing to contribute his share of ten thousand ducats. Moreover, Rucellai had spoken to Ferrante's leading military captains, Alfonso of Calabria, Diomede Carafa – the two of the pottery in Valentano discussed in the previous chapter – as well as Gentile Virginio Orsini, who were all in agreement with Lorenzo and the King.¹⁵⁵ After his service in Siena was over, Ranuccio XVIII was duly given his *condotta*, and much like the Orsini, the Farnese's shared service in Milanese, Florentine, and Neapolitan pay strengthened the collaboration between the members of the league.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ "El Signor Renuccio da Farnese finisce la ferma sua con Sanesi di qui a poco tempo, et con loro soli non si vuole rafferma. Volentieri verrebbe con la Lega, et se non truova partito di qua, dubito non lo pigli o col Papa solo, o col Papa et Sanesi insieme, che verrebbe molto male a proposito nostro, et lo stato di questi da Farnese è de importantia assai alla Lega, come vedémo per esperienza l'anno passato, perché quando fussi con noi, senza molta difficoltà potremo sempre soccorrere gl'Orsini. Se al Signor Lodovico paressi di concorrere, crederei fussi utile spesa et non molto grande, che non credo in tucti passassi ducati dieci mila. Vorrei ne facessi instantia con Sua Excellentia et che presto me ne rispondessi, perché non può state la cosa molto in ponte. Io ne ho scripto a Napoli, et stimo che concorrendosi costì, el Re non habbi a manchare, maxime havendo 'l Papa fatto questa lega con Venitiani, perché potrebbe anchora essere comperremo questa commodità [con] molto più somma di danari che non ci costerebbe; et respondi più presto che puoi." Lorenzo de' Medici to Pietro Alamanni, 20 January 1487. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, X, pp. 121-2.

¹⁵⁵ Bernardo Rucellai to Lorenzo de' Medici, 28 January & 2 February 1487. ASF, MAP, XLIX, ff. 135^r-136^v, 137^{r-v}, 147^{r-v}.

¹⁵⁶ Giovanni Lanfredini to Lorenzo de' Medici, 12 & 14 July 1487. ASF, MAP, XL, docs. 96 & 98; Lorenzo de' Medici to Giovanni Lanfredini, 7 July 1487. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, X, p. 403.

Soldiers of Fortune, Keepers of Peace

The semblance of peace and tranquillity between 1487 and 1494 has been explained through the framework of a balance of powers. Exhausted by virtually continuous war for a decade and reaching the conclusion that shifting alliances would prevent a single power from becoming dominant, Milan, Venice, Florence, the Papacy, and Naples instead opted for a policy of *détente*.¹⁵⁷ A central role was attributed to Lorenzo de' Medici, and the equilibrium maintained between the great powers was considered as the coming to fruition of his personal strategy.¹⁵⁸ However, these interpretations rest on several misconceptions. Firstly, no such balance existed. The Milanese-Florentine-Neapolitan league that included the Farnese was the dominant factor in Italian politics, a situation not even the successful coup in Siena in 1487 of the Noveschi exiles altered.¹⁵⁹ Secondly, the late-fifteenth-century channels of communication simply did not allow for such close-knit collaboration. Apart from the inevitable delay involved in writing, it was extraordinarily difficult to sift rumour from reality in a world characterised by vast flows of (dis-)information and in which the main protagonists were always exploring multiple options.¹⁶⁰ The growing importance of formal and resident ambassadors during the late Quattrocento is undisputed. Yet, it is easy to overestimate their importance compared to secret yet often unpreserved correspondence and above all face-to-face interactions.¹⁶¹ The regularity with which some of the main protagonists like Lorenzo de' Medici, Gentile Virginio Orsini, Nicola Orsini, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, and Alfonso of Calabria met, and the importance attributed to such meetings

¹⁵⁷ Michael Mallett, "Diplomacy and War in Later Fifteenth-Century Italy", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 67 (1981), pp. 267-88.

¹⁵⁸ Temistocle Franceschi, *La 'politica dell'equilibrio' di Lorenzo de' Medici: nel carteggio degli oratori fiorentini alle corti di Roma, Napoli e Milano (1486-1489)* (Rome, 2015); Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, pp. 110-11; Marco Pellegrini, *Congiure di Romagna: Lorenzo de' Medici e il duplice tirannicidio a Forlì e a Faenza nel 1488* (Florence, 1999), pp. 7-13.

¹⁵⁹ Maurizio Gattoni, *La titanomachia: l'età dei Nove e dei Petrucci a Siena e le guerre d'Italia, 1477-1524* (Siena, 2010).

¹⁶⁰ Alison Brown, *Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici and the Crisis of Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 72-4; Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, pp. 69-85; Senatore, *Uno mundo de carta*, pp. 295-319.

¹⁶¹ Marcus Holmes, *Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Social Neuroscience and International Relations* (Cambridge, 2018).

by contemporaries strengthens this argument.¹⁶² Resolving conflicts in the final years of Innocent's pontificate therefore took place in those areas convulsed by factional strife rather than in Italy's capitals, and negotiations were led by the *condottieri* Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano – under whom Angelo and Pietro Bertoldo Farnese served – and Ranuccio Farnese in close collaboration with both agents of the larger powers as well as those locally involved. Thirdly, and most importantly, behind the scenes many of the local conflicts were the creation of the great powers who jostled for influence in border areas like Genoa, the Romagna, and Umbria. Local rivals sought recourse to violence to attain greater local political control because they felt themselves protected by one of the major powers through their ties of alliance. As two sides of the same medallion, the thick web of relations connecting the Italian states could both drag all of Italy into open conflict, as well as prevent local conflicts from escalating through effective mediation. It is within this context that the Farnese, and most prominently Ranuccio, played a role, somewhat paradoxically, as mercenary-captain and mediating diplomat. Dynasties like the Farnese connected local politics to the wider political geography of Quattrocento Italy and as such remained invaluable assets to their employers and key players in their own right.

Especially in 1488 and 1489 Ranuccio and Nicola Orsini were sent to cities across the Papal States to prevent local conflicts from escalating. Two of these, Faenza and Perugia, certainly had the potential to have a substantial impact on the political geography of Italy. It would be outside of the scope of this thesis to reconstruct the complicated dynastic successions and contested wills of the ruling Manfredi family of Faenza and link them to the various other powers in the Romagna and wider Italy through their consorts or other personal ties, or to disentangle the numerous divisions and shifts in alliances between Perugia's various factions. However, both in Faenza and in Perugia local violence

¹⁶² Nicola Orsini to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 3 August 1487. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 400, parte 1, f. 12^r; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 23 September 1487. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 70, parte 2, f. 254^{r-v}; Gentile Virginio Orsini to Dieci di Balìa, December 1488. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 101, f. 236^{r-v}; "Adì ultimo de febraio [1488] venne la nuova come el magnifico Lorenzo de Cosmo [sic] de' Medici da Fiorenza era venuto in Arezo, et che li aspettava certi signori; et di poi li ce venne in Arezo el conte da Pitigliano e il signor Ranuccio da Farnese per parlare al dicto Lorenzo de' Medici. Se stima che essi vogliono fare qualche guerra. Et adì 3 de marzo passò per lo nostro contado el signor Virgilio de casa Orsina." *Cronaca perugina*, p. 294.

threatened a regime change. As a result of the interconnections of the leading families with the wider political sphere, several nominally allied yet competing actors had conflicting interests in the outcome of events in both cities. The despatch of Ranuccio Farnese and Nicola Orsini provided some military muscle that could serve as a warning against further violence. But it was above all their personal and dynastic connections with the local actors as well as the various commissioners and papal legates that made them such effective mediators. In the case of Faenza, the Florentine government even suggested that Ranuccio lead negotiations with Ottaviano Manfredi, one of the contenders for the succession to the lordship of that city.¹⁶³ Ottaviano was Ranuccio's nephew by virtue of his wife, and it certainly helped in preventing the conflict from escalating that the papal legate in the area was his cousin.¹⁶⁴ In Perugia the dynamics were similar. When factional strife turned violent Florence despatched Ranuccio and Nicola Orsini several times throughout 1489 and 1490 to ensure that the allied Baglioni regime remained in place. Because of their connections to the Baglioni's rivals, above all the Degli Oddi and Ranieri, Nicola and Ranuccio "were honoured and well regarded by that commune" when they arrived in Perugia, as it was expected that through their ties to all parties involved in the conflict they would be relatively impartial arbiters.¹⁶⁵ Again, their success largely hinged on the fact that the Farnese and Orsini had a large following of relatives and clients in Perugia, and Ranuccio was able to collaborate effectively with the papal legate and commissioner, who were both his brother-in-law.¹⁶⁶ After several interventions Perugia was pacified, and Ranuccio himself reported multiple interactions with the Degli

¹⁶³ Otto di Pratica to Giovanni Baptista Ridolfi, 27 June 1488. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 35^{r-v}.

¹⁶⁴ The papal commissioner was Bernardino Savelli of Rignano, who through his mother Agnese Farnese was Ranuccio XVIII's first cousin; Ottaviano's mother Costanza da Varano was the sister of Primavera.

¹⁶⁵ "foro onorate e ben viste da questa comunità." *Cronaca perugina*, pp. 317-18.

¹⁶⁶ Lella Orsini, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese's mother and Nicola Orsini's sister, considered the Degli Oddi as clients to her family. Lella Orsini to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 2 March [1470]. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Pompeo degli Oddi served as condottiere under Ranuccio XVIII Farnese and Nicola Orsini of Pitigliano in 1485, both of whom requested and obtained his release from Lucca after he killed one of his personal enemies. Ranuccio XVIII Farnese & Nicola Orsini to Anziani of Lucca, 16 January 1485, and the response of 27 January 1485. ASL, Anziani 533, registro 38, ff. 33^v-34^r; A Perugian chronicler noted the enmity between the Baglioni and Bernardino Ranieri, who was Ranuccio XVIII's cousin by virtue of his mother, Pentasilea Farnese, arguing "che intra loro nel segreto ce era poco amore, e che un dì se sariano amazzate insieme, maxime intra li Baglione e Berardino dei Raniere." *Cronaca perugina*, p. 193; The papal legate was Cardinal Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini, whereas the commissioner was Sinolfo degli Ottieri, apostolic protonotary.

Oddi and the papal legate, after which a truce was brokered that confirmed Baglioni dominance of the Perugian government but also assured a benign treatment for their expelled adversaries, who were allowed to retreat to their castles and estates in the countryside.¹⁶⁷ As in Faenza, the ability to bridge the divide by virtue of their political connections, to combine in one person various roles and interests as both representatives of the Florentine regime and actors in their own right, and to collaborate closely with papal representatives as a result of the interpersonal trust existing between kin, Ranuccio Farnese and Nicola Orsini brought the threat of violence under control and maintain the peace. Only once the potential for escalation had been contained, could the key players in Italian politics start negotiating their respective sphere of influence.

Ranuccio's interventions in Faenza and Perugia formed the high mark of the partial league's momentum and ability to dominate the politics of Italy. Yet manifestations of mutual mistrust signalled the advent of more serious future ruptures. Reflecting the gradual unravelling of long-established ties and the continued commitment of some of its leading participants, members of the Farnese dynasty moved in both directions. One manifestation of this appeared when Florence's allies in Tuscia, the closely intermarried Farnese, Orsini of Pitigliano, and Sforza of Santa Fiora, were now a source of concern for the new regime of the Republic of Siena that feared being encircled.¹⁶⁸ The Orsini and Sforza had dispute after dispute with Siena over castles and cattle, necessitating Ranuccio to intervene, albeit not entirely as an impartial arbiter. While he stressed that he intervened for "the friendship that our houses have always maintained with your most excellent republic, and moreover no less for our personal interest", Ranuccio also emphasised that, "in turn your most excellent lords should consider

¹⁶⁷ Giovanni Lanfredini to Lorenzo de' Medici, 16 November 1488. ASF, MAP, LIX, doc. 52; Dieci di Balìa to Pietro Alamanni, 20 January 1489. ASF, DB, LC 8, ff. 66^r-67^v; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 4 February 1489. ASF, MAP, XL, 202^{r-v}; Otto di Pratica to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 4, 5, 10, 16, 19 March and 2 April 1489. ASF, OP, LC, 7, ff. 125^{r-v}, 125^v-126^r, 133^v-134^r, 140^r-141^r, 141^{r-v}, 145^v-146^r; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici, 8, 17 & 30 March 1489. ASF, MAP, XLI, 77^{r-v}, 86^{r-v}, 94^{r-v}; Ranuccio XVIII seems to have been on speaking terms with Guido Baglioni. Guido Baglioni to Ranuccio XVIII Farnese, 24 April 1488. ASF, MAP, LXVIII, 202^{r-v}.

¹⁶⁸ Vespasiano Felice to Guido II Sforza di Santa Fiora, 26 February 1488. ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, Serie I, busta 79, unfoliated; Lorenzo de' Medici to Giovanni Lanfredini, 10 April 1488. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, XII, pp. 180-94.

the place that we are based in, it being much more preferable to you that they are inhabited by us nobles than by anyone else.”¹⁶⁹ Behind the scenes, Ranuccio fully supported his relatives in Florence, and it must have been a considerable disappointment that Lorenzo de’ Medici instead chose to support Siena to avoid a conflict, forcing Ranuccio to step back in line and instead convince Nicola Orsini to return a castle his vassals had occupied.¹⁷⁰ Together with the ever present threat of the Florentine Republic reducing its military expenditure in times of peace, these events made Ranuccio feel less well esteemed, as he lamented in an open-hearted letter to Gentile Virginio Orsini.¹⁷¹ The rupture was effected when neither Nicola Orsini nor Ranuccio renewed their contract.¹⁷² After having unsuccessfully negotiated with Ferrante of Naples, Ranuccio entered Venetian service.¹⁷³ Traditionally, Venice kept somewhat aloof from establishing cross-border connections outside of its direct sphere of influence. But increasingly Venice tempted Roman barons to enter their service by offering more attractive terms for a *condotta* such as stipends for sons and dowries for daughters, which were indeed given to Ranuccio’s heirs after his death.¹⁷⁴ To be sure, the change of employer must not be interpreted as a defection from the Farnese’s traditional alliances and dynastic ties. The fact that Ranuccio kept Gentile Virginio well-informed about the details of the negotiations for his employment should warn against such hasty interpretations.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Ranuccio remained in close contact with his Orsini,

¹⁶⁹ “Ia amicitia & benivolentia sempre ha havuta le case nostre cum testa Excellente republica, ma anche non mancho p[er] nostro proprio interesse, & e converso V[ostre] S[igno]rie Excellente debbano considerare el sito dove noi siam posti, esser meglio & piu a lor proposito sij habitato p[er] noi gentilhomini, che p[er] altri.” Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balia of Siena, 28 September 1488. ASS, Balia 535, 94; See also, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balia of Siena, 24 September 1488, and Nicola Orsini to Balia of Siena, 27 September 1488. ASS, Balia 535, 87, 92; Nicola Orsini & Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Balia of Siena, 3 October 1488. ASS, Balia 536, 3.

¹⁷⁰ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 4 February 1489. ASF, MAP, XL, 202^{r-v}; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 8 March 1488 and April 1488. ASF, MAP, XLI, 77^{r-v}, 299^{r-v}.

¹⁷¹ Ranuccio XVIII to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 14 April 1489. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 1, f. 53^{r-v}.

¹⁷² Otto di Pratica to Giovanni Lanfredini, 7 May 1489. ASF, OP, LC 7, f. 151^v; Dionigi Pucci to Dieci di Balìa, 13 May 1489. ASF, DB, LC 9, f. 73^{r-v}. The Dieci di Balìa already admitted that, despite wanting both, they could not afford hiring and Nicola Orsini and Ranuccio XVIII Farnese. Dieci di Balìa to Pietro Alamanni, 5 February 1489. ASF, DB, LC 8, ff. 70^v-71^v.

¹⁷³ Pierfilippo Pandolfini to Otto di Pratica, 4 December 1490. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 23, ff. 171^v-172^r; Lorenzo de’ Medici to Giovanni Lanfredini, 21 June 1489. Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, XV, pp. 282-5; Ermolao Barbaro to Alessandro Farnese, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, p. 59.

¹⁷⁴ Pietro Bembo, *History of Venice*, ed. and trans. Robert Ulery (Cambridge MA, 2007-), vol. I, pp. 144-5, 152-3.

¹⁷⁵ Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 17 December 1490. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 1, f. 148^{r-v}; Alessandro Farnese likewise kept the Pucci informed: “Ego v[ero]

Medici, Pucci, and Piccolomini relatives discussing military matters and exchanging gifts.¹⁷⁶ In turn, Lorenzo de' Medici continued to express his support for Ranuccio, writing to his ambassadors in Rome,

I very much enjoyed that which you have written to me concerning the Lord Ranuccio Farnese, to whom you may respond for his rhymes, firmly assuring his Lordship of the benevolence that I have always felt and feel more than ever for him; and work warmly with Our Lord [the Pope] for him, because I could not possibly desire anything more than his exaltation.¹⁷⁷

Yet, Ranuccio's switch to the Venetians did end an almost uninterrupted spell during which his dynastic ties and military service coincided, a spell that had started with a gift from Lorenzo's outfitting his company and the privilege of a personal cipher for secret correspondence when he was still an adolescent. Politically, it reoriented him away from the league's interests in Central Italy. Consequently, the Farnese dynasty as a collective lost some sense of unity of purpose.

By contrast, Ranuccio's cousins from a different branch, that is to say Angelo, Alessandro, Giulia, and Geronima Farnese were committed to and intimately involved in keeping together the remnants of the partial league. The death of Lorenzo de' Medici and Innocent VIII in 1492 only enlarged the need for and thus the role of the Farnese as mediators between Florence and Rome. After Lorenzo's death, Angelo and Alessandro were quick to stress that Piero de' Medici inherited their "ancient and renewed servitude" in language that again echoed that of their own father and

dum haec scribo ad Farnesios nostros prope[ro] ad componendas res nostras cum publicas tum privatas, instante presertim Ranutii protectione ad Venetos." Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 60-1.

¹⁷⁶ Ranuccio XVIII to Piero de' Medici, 16 April 1492. ASF, MAP, XV, 45^{r-v}; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Piero de' Medici, 20 February 1494. ASF, MAP, XIX, 473^{r-v}; Hercolano de' Gatti to Puccio Pucci, 26 July 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, MR 15, f. 125^{r-v}.

¹⁷⁷ "Molto mi è piaciuto quello che mi scrivete del Signor Renuccio da Farnese, al quale potete rispondere per le rime, certificando molto Sua Signoria dell'animo buono che ho havuto sempre et ho più che mai verso di lui; et voi operate con Nostro Signore per lui caldissimamente, ché più non potrei desiderare ogni exaltatione sua." Lorenzo de' Medici to Nicollò Michelozzi and Giovanni Antonio d'Arezzo, 20 February 1490. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, XVI, pp. 377-83.

grandfather.¹⁷⁸ Lorenzo's death also resulted in greater political influence of the Pucci family in Florence now the young Piero was in need of support he could trust.¹⁷⁹ The Pucci marriage tie to the Farnese provided an important link between Florence and Rome. Moreover, the election of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia as pope, who acceded to the pontifical throne as Alexander VI raised the influence of the Farnese in Rome when Giulia Farnese became his mistress, and her brother Alessandro one of Borgia's favourites. Alessandro carefully maintained his Florentine connections, as is confirmed by a letter to Piero de' Medici in which he indicated having visited the Florentine ambassador to Rome and having been shown their instructions from Piero.¹⁸⁰ In another letter to his brother-in-law Giannozzo Pucci, Alessandro likewise states having met with the ambassador, and it can be further surmised that he was collaborating closely with him in order to advance the clerical career of Lorenzo Pucci.¹⁸¹ Here, the ambitions of Piero de' Medici for the Pucci were effected through Farnese mediation of Alessandro, Geronima, and Giulia, who were all involved in convincing Alexander VI of the benefits of granting benefices to Lorenzo Pucci.¹⁸² In fact, Alessandro Farnese saw himself, or at least presented himself,

¹⁷⁸ "Mag[nif]ice perre b[e]nefactor praecipue & hon[orande]. Serria impossibile, o per l[ette]re o presentialmente significar[e] alla M[agnificen]tia V[ost]ra lo acerbo et grand[e] dolore havemo sentito della morte di q[ue]lla felica memoria d[e]l M[agnif]ico Lorenzo v[ost]ro p[at]re si p[er] el publico damno della iactura de una ta[n]to huomo, si etia[m] p[er] el n[ost]ro privato, et della casa n[ost]ra, la quale ab antiquo e p[re]severata sotto la p[ro]tection[e] di cotesta gloriosa citta, et della v[ost]ra Ill[ustrissima] casa si como d[e] antiqua matre et cussi intende p[er]severar[e] p[er] ladvenir[e] ad omn[e] honor[e] & stato della V[ost]ra M[agnificentia] co[n] la qual[e] ci condoliamo d[e]lla p[er]dita d[e] uno tale & tanto patre ch[e] in verita tanto i[n] vita sua ci ha obligati ch[e] de esserne privati ci pare molto duro et di et nocte havemo da pensar[e] de far cosa ch[e] sia grata ad qualla felice anima. Resta adunq[ue] ch[e] la M[agnificentia] V[ost]ra sia herede di questa n[ost]ra servitu antiqua & renovata & la usi felicement[e] appr[es]so degli altri sui beni ch[e] piu grata cosa q[ue]lla no[n] ci potria far[e], la quale etia[m] dolore victo co[n]fortiamo ad haver[e] patie[n]tia de tanto perdita & ampliar[e] la gloria di tanto p[at]re c[on] le op[er]e di V[ost]ra M[agnificentia] del quale habia ad esser vero herede no[n] dubitiamo. Romae xi april[is] 1492."

Angelo & Alessandro Farnese to Piero de' Medici, 11 April 1492. ASF, MAP, CXXXVII, 521^{r-v}.

¹⁷⁹ Alison Brown, "Piero in Power, 1492-1494: A Balance Sheet for Four Generations of Medici Control", in Black & Law, *The Medici*, pp. 238-50.

¹⁸⁰ "Alli di proximi passati retrovandome col vostro ambasciator[e], inter alia multa. Cognobi V[ost]ra M[agnificentia] esser[e] recordervole delli affectionati soi legendo una clausala de vostre l[ette]re date allo ambasciator[e]." Alessandro Farnese to Piero de' Medici, 10 September 1492. ASF, MAP, XIX, 129^{r-v}.

¹⁸¹ Alessandro Farnese to Giannozzo Pucci, 15 July 1493. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 58. A copy of this letter is preserved in ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 110^{r-v}. The Florentine ambassador Filippo Vettori wrote that Alessandro Farnese led him into the Apostolic Palace and to the Pope. Filippo Vettori to Giannozzo Pucci, 17 July 1493. Idem, f. 114^{r-v}. Likely to be related is a letter from Piero de' Medici to Alessandro Farnese "pe Pucci" recorded as sent on 22 July 1493. ASF, MAP, LXIV, f. 62^r.

¹⁸² Bernardino Bini to Puccio Pucci, 10 & 12 October 1493. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 340, ff. 7^{r-v}, 10^{r-v}; Piero de' Medici to Niccolò Castagnini, 17 October 1493. Idem, f. 19^{r-v}; Geronima Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 12 &

as a vessel through which Medici interests could be secured at the papal court. After his elevation to the cardinalate, Alessandro wrote to Piero,

Magnificent man who is to be honoured greatly after my commendations. We remain obliged to your magnificence for the benefice that Our Lord has bestowed on us, because we regard it as if we had received it from your magnificence himself and even if according to God it may be regarded a small thing, nonetheless in those we gauge the benign disposition that we hope may be similar or greater in those things greater towards us, and this we consider to be just and done well, careful that we may be sure that there has not been any shortage of demonstrations that we have made with regards to your affairs and furthermore anywhere where we may have taken into consideration even the smallest comfort for the House of Medici and the affairs of your magnificence, who with deserved merits never ceases to oblige his friends. We heard that our brother-in-law will be ambassador to Rome, in which we recognise part of the ornaments pertaining to us of the love that your magnificence bears us, and thus we extend our thanks for it to you to whom we offer ourselves in as much as is within our ability and knowledge here and everywhere.¹⁸³

Even if the rhetoric is intentionally effusive and Piero given more credit than was entirely his due for Alessandro's promotion, the letter was an acknowledgement of the support from the Medici that Alessandro had received for his clerical career. Furthermore, the letter articulated the intention to continue his collaboration with the Medici, a willingness which was reciprocated by Piero de' Medici

16 October 1493. Idem, ff. 12^{r-v}, 21^{r-v}; Geronima Farnese to Alexander VI, undated. Idem, f. 22^{r-v}; Lorenzo Pucci to Puccio Pucci, 30 October 1493. Idem, f. 13^{r-v}.

¹⁸³ "Magnifice vir maior hon[orande] post comm[endationem]. R[e]stamo obligati ad V[ost]ra M[agnificentia] in nello n[ost]ro beneficio concesso da N[ost]ro Signor[e] imperoche non manco reputamo haverlo hauto da epsa V[ost]ra M[agnificentia] et avenga dio la cosa sia piccola tamen in quella mesuramo la bona volunta ch[e] speramo serria state simile et maggior[e] in nelle cose grandi in v[er]so de noi, et questo reputamo esser[e] iusto et benefacto, attento ch[e] siamo certi no[n] mancho demonstration[e] farremora noi circa le cose vostro et[iam] dove considerasemo un minimo commodo de casa de medici et inspetie de V[ost]ra M[agnificentia] laquale con iusti meriti no[n] cessa de continuo obligarse li amici soi. Sentemo ch[e] misser[e] n[ost]ro cognato verra ambasciator[e] ad Roma, in questo cognoscemo parte dello ornam[en]to n[ost]ro partinetto dal vostro amor[e] ch[e] V[ost]ra M[agnificentia] ci porta, et cosi ne rengratiamo quella allaquale ne offeremo per quanto sia el posser[e] et sapere n[ost]ro hic et ubiq[ue]."

Alessandro Farnese to Piero de' Medici, 5 February 1494. ASF, MAP, CXXXIX, 187^{r-v}.

when he supported the nomination of Alessandro's brother-in-law, Puccio Pucci, as Florentine ambassador to Rome.

The Farnese's Pucci in-laws had become central to Piero de' Medici's external policy. Dionigi Pucci was ambassador in Naples, Puccio Pucci in Rome, Lorenzo Pucci was seeking a career in the Curia, and Giannozzo Pucci remained Piero's *alter ego* and close friend in Florence.¹⁸⁴ Puccio's main concern as ambassador in Rome was to keep together and where possible strengthen the alliance between Florence, Naples, and Alexander VI, an alliance in which according to Puccio's letters Gentile Virginio Orsini was the key actor in bridging Neapolitan, Florentine, and papal interests and organising the combined armed forces.¹⁸⁵ These efforts to reinvigorate the partial league now a French invasion of Italy assisted by Lodovico Sforza was no longer a distant prospect were in the end overtaken by precisely the sort of convulsion it had sought to protect against. The French invasion of Italy of 1494 led to the implosion of the system of alliances between Italy's powers.¹⁸⁶ But even before the French had crossed the Alps, the plague had first carried off Angelo IV Farnese, and subsequently also Puccio Pucci.¹⁸⁷ Ranuccio remained aloof, away in Venetian service until he too met his end in battle against the French. Without its most influential *condottieri* and their military and financial leverage, their loss of key allies in important positions, the future of the Farnese dynasty was insecure, and its central role in Italian politics over for the time being. Yet until the dramatic political transformation brought about by the French invasion, and until the family lost its leading influential lay figures, the Farnese had created, maintained, and renewed ties across vastly different polities, exploiting the opportunities that came with the greater integration of Italy's political sphere.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, *Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici*, pp. 116-17.

¹⁸⁵ Puccio Pucci to Piero de' Medici 6-20 June 1494. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 65, ff. 28^r-56^v.

¹⁸⁶ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁸⁷ Puccio Pucci's will was made on 29 August 1494. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated. Lucrezia Borgia to Alexander VI, 25 June and 27 July 1494. *Regesto dei documenti*, pp. 115-16, 140-2.

The Farnese and Politics in Quattrocento Italy

The present chapter has shown the Farnese's presence and often active role in many of the central political events of Quattrocento Italy. The parallel causes and course of some of these events, such as the Pazzi Conspiracy, noble resistance against centralisation in Milan, and the Neapolitan Barons' War, have not escaped attention.¹⁸⁸ Yet, even if it is granted that they are the result of similar underlying developments, they remain essentially interpreted as internal events occurring in isolated states. This has led to an underappreciation of their wider external causes and repercussions. From a dissenting perspective, Humfrey Butters contended as early as 1988 that in Quattrocento Italy domestic rule on one hand, diplomacy and foreign policy on the other, were so intimately connected that it difficult to draw a clear distinction.¹⁸⁹ Shifting the focus from central governments to a baronial dynasty like the Farnese that often served as a hinge between political actors vindicates his underappreciated argument. Moreover, the importance of cross-border connections in Italy grew as the fifteenth century progressed; certainly, this was the case for the Farnese. Indeed, Maria Antonietta Visceglia and Christine Shaw have suggested that the factional divisions within the Papal States, in which the Farnese were major actors, extended outwards far beyond the Papal States, and with the outbreak of the Italian Wars, further into France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁹⁰ As a result, state formation processes within the separate Italian states, and one could add the internal organisation of the Farnese's patrimony, cannot fully be explained solely from the point of view of their internal developments. In a sense, this approach to Quattrocento Italian history borrows its methodology from connected or entangled histories more frequently utilised on the global scale.¹⁹¹ After all, the presence of Aragonese, Angevin, French, Hungarian, Ottoman, and Imperial interests are an important reminder of the myriad ways in which the peninsula was connected to the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean.

¹⁸⁸ Riccardo Fubini, "Lorenzo the Magnificent's Regime: Aims, Image, and Constitutional Framework", in Black & Law, *The Medici*, pp. 61-84.

¹⁸⁹ Butters, "Politics and Diplomacy", p. 17.

¹⁹⁰ Visceglia, "Factions in Rome", pp. 82-103; Christine Shaw, "The Roman Barons and the Guelph and Ghibelline Factions", in Gentile, *Guelfi e ghibellini*, pp. 475-93.

¹⁹¹ Michael Werner & Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity", *History & Theory* 45/1 (2006), pp. 30-50.

Quattrocento Italy was a political world in which a banker-*signore* from Tuscany and a condottiere from Tuscia needed to communicate about the key figures in the government of the peninsula's other powers as well as about events in Bohemia, Burgundy, and on the Bosphorus. Being at the centre of the maelstrom, the Farnese's political horizon stretched far beyond the slopes of the volcanic terrain that was their own patrimony, far beyond the borders of the Papal States, connected as they were to it through their extensive diplomatic and dynastic network.

The Farnese used this network to influence political decision making in republican governments, court circles, and the informal negotiations that surrounded them. Although dispatching agents that personally represented the Farnese was an essential element of their diplomatic interactions, many other forms of political action are less readily recognisable as diplomacy unless a narrow, formalised framework of what constituted diplomatic interactions is abandoned. Personal meetings, exchanges of valuable gifts, as well as personal or secret letters – if these survive – were of equal political relevance. Moreover, their peninsula-wide network was transferred down hereditary line over the course of three generations and was considered part of the Farnese's political legacy. Their network gained the Farnese access to military offices that generated a steady flow of income complementing the yields of their patrimony. In turn, the income generated by military employment was utilised to acquire estates and castles and enlarge the already extensive Farnese possessions. Part of the income was also spent on artistic patronage, refurbishment of castles' interior and exterior, as well as sponsoring of humanist endeavours, all in order to preserve the Farnese's dynastic memory. Of crucial importance to both the history of the Farnese and the Catholic Church, the Farnese were increasingly able to cast their eyes on the papal Curia and purchase clerical offices for their sons, secure in the knowledge that such aspirations now had the support of allies both within the College of Cardinals as well as among Italy's rulers. This new phase in the Farnese's history is more fully addressed in the following chapter, but can only be fully understood in the light of the Farnese's successful political, diplomatic, and dynastic action on the peninsular scale.

Chapter Four

In Support of Pontifical Power: Farnese Politics at the Papal Court

Magnificent lords of ours. With the greatest joy and jubilation, we received and read Your Magnificences' letters on the creation of the most high pontiff, whom God through his mercy may always exalt, and who is of great need for [the well-being of] our spirits and also of our bodies. We, your sons and servants, take great comfort in this union of the Holy Church, and we consider how, commensurate with our lowly status, our predecessors, and also we ourselves, have always greatly been loved and favoured by the popes, and aspire to be again by virtue of the works of our [ancestors] in the past, and those that we intend to do for his return, and as the most loyal servants of the Holy Church, which God may restore to its proper rank through his vicar.¹

With this letter to Siena's government the Farnese expressed their reaction to hearing the news of Oddone Colonna's election as Pope Martin V, an event that ended the tumultuous period in European history known as the Western Schism (1378-1417).² The reverberations of Martin's election were felt throughout Europe, but nowhere more so than the Papal States. Hopes that the papacy would return to its ancient seat in Rome, like those expressed by the Farnese, were soon followed up by actual military and organisational preparations. As the starting point for an exploration of the history of the Farnese's relations with the papacy during the Quattrocento, the letter written to Siena is programmatic, almost prophetic. Martin and his retinue of Colonna kin enlisted the Farnese's aid in

¹ "Magnifici signori nostri. Con su[m]mo gaudio e dalegrezza recepemo, e, vedemo le letere dele V[ostr]i S[ignori] sopra la creacione del su[m]mo pontifice, la quale dio p[er] sua misericordia exalti sempre, e, bisogno, e, a li anime e dancho a li corpi. Noi vostri figliuoli e servitori piglamo di questa unione di Sancta Chiesa grande conforto, e, noy inmerito p[er] che secondo el nostro picholo grado li predecesori nostri, e noi anque siamo stato sempre de li Apostolici pasati amati e careciati asay e cusi speramo dessere p[er] li opere pasate di nostri, e p[er] quele che inte[n]diamo fare per la venire e come fidelissimi servitori di sancta chiesa, la quale dio p[er] sua preta restituischa a suo grado." Pietro X, Pietro Bertoldo I & Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Council of Siena, 6 January 1418. ASS, Concistoro 1892, 37.

² In general, see Joëlle Rollo-Koster & Thomas Izbicki (eds.), *A Companion to the Great Western Schism (1378-1417)* (Leiden, 2009).

preparing his return, and rewarded them with favours; in doing so, they paved the way for nearly a century of Farnese-papal collaboration. That such collaboration characterised the relations between the Farnese and the papacy was by no means a given, however. In contrast to other fifteenth-century European principalities, very few legal and institutional ties connected nobility and prince in the Papal States.³ The papacy derived its authority from its claim to Apostolic Succession and every conclave was, in theory at least, decided through direct interference of the Holy Spirit guiding the cardinals' choice.⁴ Conversely, the baronial nobility seldom held fiefs from the pope, acknowledged him no feudal dues nor exhibited the natural servitude expected to shape vassals' behaviour towards their lord.⁵ Their status as a distinct class had been inherited since times immemorial. To complicate matters, few options for using the court and court offices in creating lasting ties between the pope and the lay nobility were available, although such options were of such seminal importance in the government of secular monarchies.⁶

The historiography of the Papal States reflects this perceived aloofness between the papacy and nobility, often considering their mutual relationship characterised by opposition, if not outright antagonism.⁷ In this view, the nobility, the great *condottieri*, and the tyrants of the Papal States' cities (groups not always precisely differentiated in the literature), were forces that the papal monarchy had to overcome in order to re-establish itself in the wake of the Western Schism.⁸ This view is not entirely without foundation. During the Quattrocento many protagonists behind the republican assassination plots that were hatched in order to overthrow papal rule benefitted from protection by Roman

³ The rules for conclaves that were laid down during eleventh-century reforms specifically intended to exclude the nobility from a vote in papal elections. Sandro Carocci, "Nobiltà romana e nobiltà italiana nel Medioevo centrale: parallelismi e contrasti", in Carocci, *La nobiltà romana nel Medioevo*, pp. 15-42.

⁴ Pattenden, *Electing the Pope*, pp. 59-61.

⁵ Carocci, *Baroni di Roma*, pp. 17-66; Shaw, "The Roman Barons and the Popes", pp. 101-24; Shaw, "The Roman Barons and the Security of the Papal States", pp. 311-25.

⁶ Jeroen Duindam, "Towards a Comparative Understanding of Rulership: Discourses, Practices, Patterns", in Jeroen Duindam & Sabine Dabringhaus (ed.), *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents and Interactions* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 225-32; Shaw, "The Roman barons and the popes", pp. 101-24.

⁷ Jones, *The Malatesta of Rimini*, pp. 176-261.

⁸ Pellegrini, *Il papato*, pp. 69-80; Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*; Prodi, *Lo sviluppo dell'assolutismo*; Partner, *The Lands of St Peter*.

barons.⁹ Rome itself was occasionally thrown into turmoil when it revolted against Eugene IV and Pius II at the instigation of the Colonna and Savelli, and when war broke out between the Orsini and Colonna during Sixtus IV's pontificate.¹⁰ Only at the very end of the Quattrocento, during the pontificate of Alexander VI, and through decidedly unorthodox measures, did the papacy acquire a semblance of primacy.¹¹ Efforts to comprehend these developments have focused primarily on the centre – the papacy, the papal Curia, and Rome – and for the Quattrocento less on the periphery of the Papal States. First and foremost, historical investigation tended to focus on the expansion of the papal bureaucratic apparatus, the largest and most advanced of Europe.¹² The subjugation of independent political actors in the Papal States, in this view, ran parallel with a growth in papal bureaucracy. The ability to levy taxes in hitherto unruly parts of the papal dominions was a driving force behind bureaucratic expansion and in turn fed into further military endeavours, a development accelerated by the papacy's growing dependence on income from the Papal States.¹³ Efforts at strengthening the government of the papal temporal dominions were matched by innovations in the representation of papal authority in the arts,

⁹ Myriam Chiabò, Maurizio Gargano, Anna Modigliani & Patricia Osmon (eds.), *Congiure e conflitti. L'affermazione della signoria pontificia su Roma nel Rinascimento: Politica, economia, cultura* (Rome, 2014); Anna Modigliani, *Congiure all'antica: Stefano Porcari, Niccolò V, Roma 1453* (Rome, 2013); Anthony D'Elia, *A Sudden Terror: The Plot to Murder the Pope in Renaissance Rome* (Cambridge MA, 2009), pp. 40-76; Arjo Vanderjagt, "Civic Humanism in Practice: The Case of Stefano Porcari and the Christian Tradition", *Antiquity Renewed* 4 (2003), pp. 63-78.

¹⁰ Emily O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II (1458-1464) and the Crisis of the Fifteenth-Century Papacy* (Toronto, 2015), pp. 86-112; Anna Modigliani, "Pio II e Roma", in Arturo Calzona, Francesco Paolo Fiore, Alberto Tenenti & Cesaro Vasoli (eds.), *Il sogno di Pio II e il viaggio da Roma a Mantova: Atti del Convegno internazionale, Mantova, 13-15 aprile 2000* (Florence, 2003), pp. 77-108; Paola Farenga, "'I romani sono pericoloso populo...': Roma nei carteggi diplomatici", in Gensini, *Roma capitale*, pp. 289-315.

¹¹ Marco Pellegrini, "A Turning-Point in the History of the Factional System in the Sacred College: The Power of Pope and Cardinals in the Age of Alexander VI", in Gianvittorio Signorotto & Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds.), *Court and Politics in Papal Rome 1492-1700* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 8-30; Franca Allegrezza, "Alessandro VI e le famiglie romane" and Andreas Rehberg, "Alessandro VI e i Colonna: motivazioni e strategie nel conflitto fra il papa Borgia e il baronato romano", in M. Chiabò, S. Maddalo, M. Miglio, & A.M. Oliva (eds.), *Roma di fronte all'Europa al tempo di Alessandro VI: Atti del convegno (Città del Vaticano-Roma, 1-4 dicembre 1999)* (Rome, 2001), vol. I, pp. 331-86.

¹² Partner, *The Pope's Men*; Frenz, *Die Kanzlei*.

¹³ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven, 1997), pp. 151-76; Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals and War*, pp. 38-52; Partner, "Papal Financial Policy"; Peter Partner, *The Papal State under Martin V: The Administration and Government of the Temporal Power in the Early Fifteenth Century* (London, 1958), pp. 131-58; Caravale & Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio*, pp. 3-138; On the papacy's concordats with lay princes that reduced the papacy's income from outside the Papal States, see Marco Pellegrini, "Il Rinascimento come stagione della politica concordataria", in Maria Antonietta Visceglia (ed.), *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna* (Rome, 2013), pp. 63-102.

architecture and even coinage, as well as a greater sophistication in the performance of papal power through ceremony or gesture.¹⁴ But whether historians have taken the view that the nobility needed to be conquered and outspent, tamed and disciplined, or rhetorically refuted and outperformed in their patronage, they figure as an obstruction to papal projects at best, and a dangerous threat to papal authority at worst.¹⁵

An overview of the historiography on the nobility of the Papal States at first seems to confirm that the Quattrocento was an age of noble decline. The Colonna, after reaching the zenith of power with Martin's election, underwent a steady decrease in power and independence of action, although they remained a prominent presence at the papal court.¹⁶ Other ancient lineages, like the Prefetti di Vico and Dell'Anguillara, fared worse and bore the brunt of a papal vengeance from which they never recovered.¹⁷ Yet, Christine Shaw has asserted that the Orsini fared better, showing remarkable resilience in their ability to influence political affairs throughout the Papal States, not least by collaborating with lay papal kin.¹⁸ Shaw's further research suggests that several other baronial families were able to perpetuate their power throughout the Quattrocento.¹⁹ Benefitting from the regularity of lapses in papal authority during interregna and the relatively short duration of many pontificates, the nobility of the Papal States could always patiently wait out a hostile pope's death.²⁰ In the period prior to the *sede vacante*, the reigning pontiff's ailing health often led to a loss in the ability to fully

¹⁴ Elizabeth McCahill, *Reviving the Eternal City: Rome and the Papal Court, 1420-1447* (Cambridge MA, 2013); De Jong, *The Power and the Glorification*; Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, "Coinage and Papal Policy in Umbria in the Early 15th Century", *Imago Temporis* 7 (2013), pp. 343-53; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *La città rituale: Roma e le sue cerimonie in età moderna* (Rome, 2002); Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "Il cerimoniale come linguaggio politico", in Maria Antonietta Visceglia & Catherine Brice (eds.), *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome (XVI^e-XIX^e Siècle)* (Rome, 1997), pp. 117-76.

¹⁵ Fosi, *Papal Justice*, pp. 77-104.

¹⁶ Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*.

¹⁷ Antonio Berardozi, *I Prefetti: una dinastia signorile tra Impero e Papato, secoli XII-XV* (Rome, 2013); Vittorina Sora, "I conti di Anguillara dalla loro origine al 1465," *Archivio della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria* 30 (1907), pp. 53-118; Carlo Calisse, "I Prefetti di Vico," *Archivio della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria* 10 (1887), pp. 1-136, 353-594.

¹⁸ Shaw, *The Political Role*.

¹⁹ Shaw, "The Roman barons and the popes"; Shaw, "The Roman barons and the Guelf and Ghibelline factions"; Shaw, "The Roman barons and the security of the Papal States".

²⁰ Amedeo de Vincentiis, "La sopravvivenza come potere: papi e baroni di Roma nel XV secolo", in Carocci, *La nobiltà romana nel Medioevo*, pp. 551-613.

exercise his office, while during the papal interregnum temporal government was handed over entirely to the barons to create a semblance of stability and ensure some form of government endured while the cardinals were locked away in conclave.²¹ After every election, new popes had to establish their authority over the papacy's institutions and newly appointed men replaced their predecessor's personnel in the Curia.²²

As historians have come to recognise, collaboration between the papacy and nobility served the goal of overcoming some of the limitations of papal government. Sandro Carocci summarises the current consensus, arguing:

Popes benefited from the network of political relations that allowed the barons to intervene in many sectors: in the machinery of the curia, in the territory of the state, and in relations with other states, both Italian and foreign. In particular, the barons aided the process of political communication between urban societies and the state. They helped their allies in the urban ruling classes find the best intermediaries in the curia and government, while at same time assisting papal governors and officials in the difficult task of limiting conflicts between the Guelf and Ghibelline factions which, in the papal state too, were a structural feature of the political landscape.²³

As much as Carocci's arguments are generally seen as valid, so is his assertion that they so far lack substantial corroboration by in-depth studies.²⁴ This chapter seeks to redress this lacuna by looking at papal-noble collaboration in the case of the fifteenth-century Farnese.

²¹ Quattrocento *sede vacante* are little addressed, but there is excellent work on the papal interregna during the Middle Ages, the Western Schism and the Early Modern Period. See, for instance, Pattenden, *Electing the Pope*, pp. 98-132; John Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum* (Leiden, 2016); Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Morte e elezione del papa: norme, riti e conflitti: il Medioevo* (Rome, 2013); Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Morte e elezione del papa: norme, riti e conflitti: L'età Moderna* (Rome, 2013); Joëlle Rollo-Koster, *Raiding Saint Peter: Empty Sees, Violence, and the Initiation of the Great Western Schism (1378)* (Leiden, 2009).

²² Pattenden, *Electing the Pope*, pp. 177-87; Pierre Hurtubise, *La cour pontificale au XVI^e siècle d'Alexandre VI à Clement VIII (1492-1605)* (Vatican City, 2017), pp. 23-46; Amedeo de Vincentiis, *Battaglie di memoria: Gruppi, intellettuali, testi e la discontinuità del potere papale alla metà del Quattrocento* (Rome, 2002).

²³ Carocci, "The Papal State".

²⁴ Carocci, "The Papal State", p. 83; Carocci, *Vasalli del papa*, pp. 36-7.

The first part of this chapter analyses the Farnese's role in aiding the return and reestablishment of the papacy in Rome under Martin V and Eugene IV. The Farnese's commitment to supporting the papacy as it was expressed in their letter to Siena remained constant throughout both popes' pontificates. The Farnese's history therefore illuminates the relative continuity in papal attitudes towards the nobility between two popes who have traditionally been regarded as having had opposing views on the advantages and perils of relying on the nobility. Apart from an emphasis on the relative similarity in attitudes towards papal-noble collaboration, this chapter draws attention to the readiness with which Martin and Eugene employed barons in military and governmental offices in the Papal States, and how the personal network of Ranuccio XVII Farnese aided in the exercise of the offices that came his way. It argues that papal-noble collaboration was one of the primary reasons for the successful return of the papacy to Rome and in the re-establishment of papal temporal authority. The second part of this chapter looks at the middle decades of the Quattrocento. Developments in papal government, foremost the clericalisation of curial offices, gradually restructured the nobility's participation in government as the century progressed, even if the Papal States' informal structures of power remained largely intact. It pays particular attention to the pontificate of Pius II. As in the papacy's struggle with conciliarism, *condottieri*, *signori*, and the other Italian powers, Pius' pontificate is seen as emblematic for the papacy's eternal struggle with the nobility.²⁵ Although agreeing that Pius' pontificate was decisively important, this chapter argues the exact opposite of what has hitherto been the accepted narrative: Pius' reign, like all fifteenth-century papal reigns, was characterised as much if not more by cooperation with the nobility of the Papal States as antagonism. The third and final part moves on to address the Farnese's increasing gravitation towards Rome, their decision to direct sons into the Church, and their strategies to advance ecclesiastical careers for them. It places these findings in their context, above all developments in papal bureaucracy and the tendency of Italian nobility to invest in clerical careers in order to retain or regain a stake in the government of the Papal States and

²⁵ O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II*; Shaw, *Barons and Castellans*, p. 77; Caravale & Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio*, pp. 80-3.

the Catholic Church.²⁶ These studies have tended to focus on princely scions.²⁷ Yet the elites of the Papal States partook in this development, which may have been prompted by the papacy's growing influence after its restoration.

Ranuccio XVII Farnese, Pope Martin V, and the Colonna

It is generally held that the papacy's successful return to Rome under Martin was in no small part due to his Colonna relatives in the temporal government of the Papal States.²⁸ By contrast, Eugene, as a Venetian, had no recourse to local connections and was forced to rely on a series of able military cardinals in fighting his predecessor's Colonna kin and their allies.²⁹ Both popes needed military support to fend off the great *condottieri* who ruled large tracts of the Papal States virtually independently.³⁰ These studies are important for our understanding of the establishment of papal power during Martin and Eugene's pontificates. Yet, they have generally overlooked the crucial role played by the baronial elite of the Papal States in aiding the papacy by providing it with military support and through exercising temporal offices. The support of the Farnese for Martin, the role of Ranuccio XVII in mediating between Eugene and the Colonna, and subsequently as a general in the papal armies for the remainder of Eugene's pontificate indicate that noble support was a central element of papal rule throughout both reigns. The Farnese were not unique in this respect – families like the Savelli, Conti, and Dell'Anguillara, families with whom the Farnese established dynastic ties during this period,

²⁶ Fletcher, "Cardinals and the War of Ferrara"; Jennifer DeSilva, "Politics and Dynasty: Under-Aged Cardinals in the Catholic Church, 1420-1605", *Royal Studies Journal* 4/2 (2017), pp. 81-102; Marco Pellegrini, "Corte di Roma e aristocrazie italiane in età moderna: Per una lettura storico sociale della curia romana", *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 30 (1994), pp. 543-602; Christoph Weber, *Senatus divinus: verborgene Strukturen im Kardinalskollegium der frühen Neuzeit (1500-1800)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996); Wolfgang Reinhard, *Power Elites and State Building* (Oxford, 1996).

²⁷ A notable exception is Jennifer DeSilva, "Official and Unofficial Diplomacy Between Rome and Bologna: The de' Grassi Family under Pope Julius II, 1503-1513", *The Journal of Early Modern History* 14/6 (2010), pp. 154-73.

²⁸ Jennifer DeSilva, "Articulating Work and Family: Lay Papal Relatives in the Papal States, 1420-1549", *Renaissance Quarterly* 69/1 (2016), pp. 1-39; Arnold Esch, *Rom: Vom Mittelalter zur Renaissance* (Munich, 2016), pp. 74-80; Pellegrini, *Il papato*, pp. 69-80; Rehberg, "Etsi prudens paterfamilias", pp. 225-82; Caravale & Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio*, pp. 18-19; Reinhard, "Nepotismus".

²⁹ Pellegrini, *Il papato*, pp. 69-80; Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals and War*, pp. 38-52; Caravale & Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio*, pp. 49-65.

³⁰ Ferente, *La sfortuna*, pp. 1-4; Partner, *The Lands of St Peter*, pp. 396-417.

fought alongside the Farnese in support of pontifical power. There are several explanations for the readiness with which popes resorted to baronial support. Condottiere states were created and maintained through coercion. They seldom lasted long enough to create the sort of personal connections between ruler and subjects that guaranteed a level of loyalty that made dynastic succession possible and acceptable. In the case of Braccio da Montone and Angelo Tartaglia, their states imploded after the death of the person whose military authority held together the complex of subject cities, castles, and territories.³¹ Because barons were so deeply connected to local societies within their patrimony and to the civic political life of the Papal States' communes, baronial rule was much more solidly founded. Thus, despite the superior military resources that the great condottiere captains could dispose of, the barons of the Papal States were a valuable counterweight to their power through which the papacy could access local military and political support. In turn, the Farnese benefitted from collaborating with the papacy and in doing so were able to recuperate territories that had been lost during the Western Schism and even augment the areas under their lordly dominion.

Another important explanation for the widespread presence of patterns of papal-noble collaboration after the Western Schism was that a framework encompassing the language of cooperation, mutual expectations between papacy and nobility, and attitudes concerning the hereditary role nobles were expected to fulfil in the government of the Papal States was already largely in place. These considerations were readily expressed in papal concessions and in letters in, perhaps, formulaic language. But it is precisely because these expressions are formulaic that they reveal the normative discourses that constitute the overarching ideologies behind papal-noble collaboration. Even if baronial loyalty was not naturally forthcoming on the basis of feudal ties linking lord and vassal, an idea of reciprocity was perceived to constitute their theorised relationship, one that for the Farnese was further strengthened through a sense of political affiliation to the Guelph pro-papal cause. Thus, the Farnese's letter from the introduction shows how the memory of earlier episodes in the Farnese's history engendered an expectation that support of pontifical projects would in turn lead to rewards.

³¹ Ferente, *La sfortuna*, pp. 3-4; Chiatti, *La biografia*.

Papal investitures, such as that of Piansano, in turn stressed that it was Ranuccio's loyalty and devotion that merited him this reward, but also that in supporting pontifical power the Farnese were following their ancestors' political tradition.³² Martin and his relatives shared the basic concepts that structured this relationship, and readily took recourse to the ideological language of the pontifical cause. A letter from Martin to Ranuccio's father Pietro in 1418 shows that the Farnese were brought on board the papal project even before its return to Rome. Although the letter is now lost, the scribe inventorying the Farnese archive considered its content to be foremost about loyalty.³³ Giordano Colonna, Martin's brother and lieutenant in temporal affairs, similarly stressed the importance of loyalty in a letter dated 7 June 1419, linking it explicitly to favours that could be expected in return. Colonna expressed his appreciation for Ranuccio's support in language that mirrored the Farnese's self-perception as it was formulated in their letter to Siena:

For you have always been and [still] are a loyal servant of the Holy Church and of Our Lord, and, moreover, you have always been our devoted friend, and brother, and I am telling you, who has served, and serves the Holy Church and Our Lord, will merit reward, and he punished, who will do the opposite.³⁴

Papal-noble collaboration was therefore framed in terms of *fidelitas* and *devotio*. The pope and the Farnese themselves thus blended the language of chivalry and Christian piety.³⁵ The mutually understood implications were that loyalty on the nobility's part merited material rewards by a munificent prince, and spiritual ones in exchange for devotion to the Church. In a sense both came the

³² "Grata tue fidelitate et devot[i]o[n]is obsequia que nobis et Roman[e] ecc[lesi]e (...) liberali[te]r prestitisti." ASV, Reg. Vat. 354, f. 183^v.

³³ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 136^v.

³⁴ "p[er]ch[e] sete sempre stato e sete fedele S[ervito]re di S[ancta] E[cclesia] e di N[ostro] S[ignore], et anche ultimam[en]te à questo sempre sete stato n[ost]ro claro amico, e fr[at]ello, e dichiarandovi, chelà servito, e serve S[an]ta Ecc[lesi]a, e N[ostro] S[ignore] ne sarà meritevole, e così punito, chi farà lo contrario." Giordano Colonna to Ranuccio XVII Farnese, 7 June 1419. BSS, Archivio Colonna, II A, 17, ff. 158^r-159^r; Another copy is in BSS, Archivio Colonna, II A, 36, II, 47. On Colonna, see Peter Partner, "Giordano Colonna", *DBI*.

³⁵ Richard Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 33-56.

Farnese's way when Martin provided them with an absolution if they were to transgress moral boundaries, were they to attempt recovering their lost territories sword in hand.³⁶

Giordano Colonna's letter also suggests that a more personal, quasi-familial, bond connected him and Ranuccio Farnese. That such a bond existed requires some explanation. After all, the Farnese were Guelph and, somewhat paradoxically, Martin hailed from the Papal States' leading Ghibelline, and therefore pro-imperial family.³⁷ Maria Antonietta Visceglia has warned against seeing the Papal States' Guelph and Ghibelline factions as too static; factional allegiance mattered, but many families married across the factional divide and personal ties at times outweighed party politics.³⁸ Conflicts between Guelph families were ubiquitous; the Farnese waged war on their fellow Guelph Orsini of Pitigliano in 1413-1414 and 1416-1417.³⁹ In the Farnese's case, Ranuccio's marriage to Agnese Savelli united two families of different factional allegiance but with a shared enemy as the Savelli were in open conflict with the Orsini in 1414 and 1419.⁴⁰ Above all, Agnese came from a family traditionally allied to the Colonna, which may have prompted Ranuccio to favour personal to ideological allegiance once a Colonna had been elected pope in a way not dissimilar to how the Conti's dynastic ties to Martin led to their support for pontifical authority.⁴¹ In any case, Martin and his Colonna relatives needed active support from the Farnese and their Monaldeschi and Tartaglia kin in an area – the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia – where their own family had little influence.⁴² Exploiting a dynastic tie, no matter how distant, was therefore in the interest of Giordano Colonna as well. Where such ties were lacking,

³⁶ ASV, Reg. Vat. 348, ff. 173^r-174^r, published in Theiner, *Codex diplomaticus*, vol. III, p. 250.

³⁷ Prospero Colonna, *The Colonna Family: A Short Selective History* (Rome, 2010); Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*; Shaw, "The Roman barons and the Guelph and Ghibelline factions".

³⁸ Visceglia, "Factions in Rome"; See also, Ferente, *Gli ultimi Guelfi*, pp. 18-19; Ferente, "Guelphs!"; Shaw, "The Roman barons and the Guelph and Ghibelline factions".

³⁹ Luiten, "Like a Lily Amongst the Thorns", pp. 255-6.

⁴⁰ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.11,055.

⁴¹ The Conti were traditionally Guelph, but Martin V's mother was a Conti, and he was the nephew of Aldobrandino and cousin of Aldo Conti. Both Aldobrandino and Aldo fulfilled important offices during Martin's pontificate.

⁴² In 1417, Tartaglia's daughter Ambiglia married Bertoldo III Farnese and Elisabetta married Galeazzo Farnese; in 1419 Tartaglia married Agnesella Monaldeschi (later remarried to Ranuccio XVII Farnese), his daughter Adriana married Aloigi Monaldeschi, and his daughter Lavinia married Giovanni di Muzio Attendolo Sforza.

Martin actively created them through marriage or feudal investiture.⁴³ The Farnese, too, obtained favours. Apart from the castles and other privileges mentioned in Chapter 1, Ranuccio was created senator of Rome on 5 May 1419 and thus given the responsibility for the temporal government of the city.⁴⁴ He was unable to take up the office, however, because his presence was deemed more useful in the Patrimony. Giordano Colonna wrote to him from Rome:

And we also enquire whether you would like to remain [there] for several days, because your presence is required for the [many] things that are there to be done, and we could have no person more well-qualified for them at the moment, and where you are, it seems to us as if we are present ourselves, and such is the trust with which we confide in you as our brother, and if you will serve Our Lord and the Holy Church, you will be remunerated according to your merits.⁴⁵

The remaining content of these letters suggests that Ranuccio was involved in facilitating the transfer of Tartaglia from Braccio's camp to the papal armies commanded by Sforza. Moreover, from Giordano's two letters it can be inferred that Ranuccio's importance lay in the personal standing he had with the Colonna as well as the close connections he maintained with Sforza, Tartaglia, and Braccio.⁴⁶ As such, he fulfilled a crucial role as intermediary, negotiating between the demands and ambitions of the great *condottieri* and projects for the restoration of papal temporal authority, seeking to benefit where possible. Typically, the Farnese's approach to navigating the troubled waters of politics in the Papal States can be characterised as practical, even cynical when it came to their

⁴³ Achille Monaldeschi married Tradita Colonna, Angelo Tartaglia was created Count of Toscanella, Luca and Pietro Paolo Monaldeschi made Counts of Bolsena, and Francesco Monaldeschi nominated Bishop of Orvieto; ASV, Reg. Vat. 341, ff. 55^v-56^r; ASV, Reg. Vat. 348, ff. 166^v-173^r; ASV, Reg. Vat. 354, ff. 39^v-42^v; Monaldeschi, *Comentari Historici*, f. 130^r.

⁴⁴ ASV, Reg. Vat. 348, ff. 113^v-114^r; published in Theiner, *Codex Diplomaticus*, III, p. 236.

⁴⁵ "e voi similm[en]te preghiamo vi piaccia restare p[er] alcun di, p[er]che sete necessario alle cose, che ci sono da fare, e più p[er]sona à cio atta, al p[rese]nte, non laveremmo, e dove sete voi, ne pare essere p[rese]nti noi, e quella stima ne facciamo, come di n[ost]ro fr[at]ello, et se servirete N[ost]ro S[igno]re e S[anc]ta Chiesa, ne sarete rimunerato meritam[en]te." Giordano Colonna to Ranuccio XVII Farnese, 10 June 1419. BSS, Archivio Colonna, II A, 17, f. 160^r.

⁴⁶ Giordano Colonna to Ranuccio XVII Farnese, 7 & 10 June 1419. BSS, Archivio Colonna, II A, 17, ff. 158^r-160^r; BSS, Archivio Colonna, II A, 36, II, 47.

relations with the great *condottieri*. Although the Farnese had concluded several marriage alliances with Tartaglia in 1417, it was an army under Pietro Bertoldo I Farnese that moved in to confiscate Tartaglia's estates after he had been executed by Sforza on papal orders in 1422.⁴⁷

Ranuccio and his relatives were thus closely involved in the government of and the military operations in the Papal States. In the first years after the Western Schism these operations were deeply intertwined with the events that engulfed the Kingdom of Naples, and here too the Farnese were employed. Several Farnese had served in the armies of King Ladislaus of Naples during the Western Schism, and it is possible Ranuccio was among them.⁴⁸ When civil war broke out in the *Regno* between Ladislaus' sister and successor Queen Giovanna II, the pretender Louis III of Anjou, and Giovanna's ally and adopted heir, Alfonso V of Aragon, Martin V became personally involved as Naples' overlord.⁴⁹ The great *condottieri* of the era were drawn into the conflict, too, as competing parties attracted them to their service. In 1420, when Martin supported the aspirations of Louis of Anjou, he delegated Ranuccio Farnese to take on a role in the government and organisation of war on both sides of the border between the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples. Hence, Martin nominated Ranuccio as *commissarius* to the Campagna and Marittima, the papal province where the bulk of the Colonna possessions were located and which bordered the *Regno*.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, Louis of Anjou named Ranuccio *vicegerens* of the *Principatus ultra serras Montorii* and the *Principatus citra serras Montorii*, that is to say, the northern areas of the Abruzzi bordering the Papal States.⁵¹ The example of the

⁴⁷ *Cronaca di Viterbo di Nicola della Tuccia*, in Ignazio Ciampi (ed.), *Cronache e statuti della città di Viterbo* (Florence, 1872), p. 52.

⁴⁸ Conservators of Peace of Orvieto to Marco Corraro, 3 June 1408. Fumi, *Codice diplomatico*, pp. 616-17; *Cronaca di Luca di Domenico Manenti*, p. 412.

⁴⁹ Roxane Chilà, "Prouver la légitimité d'une succession: le cas du royaume du Naples au XV^e siècle", *e-Spania* 34 (2019), doi:10.4000/e-spania.33158; Margolis, *The Politics of Culture*, pp. 21-4; Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, pp. 195-7; Alan Ryder, "The Angevin Bid for Naples, 1380-1480", in Abulafia, *The French Descent*, pp. 55-69.

⁵⁰ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 135^v; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc 252, f. 7^r; Aldobrandino Conti and his son Aldo were Ranuccio XVII's predecessors in office in the Marittima and Campagna and would hold office in St Peter's Patrimony in Tuscia, too. ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 839, filza 30; ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.12,012.

⁵¹ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 124^r, 136^v; BCA, MS. L Be/Bc, f. 7^r; On the office of *vicegerens* in the Kingdom of Naples under the Anjou-Durazzo, see Davide Passerini, "Circa expeditiones arduas: l'ufficio di vicegerente sotto la dinastia dei Durazzo", *Studi di Storia Medievale e di Diplomatica* 3 (2019), pp. 111-69.

Farnese in general, and that of Ranuccio in particular, thus underscores the nobility's prominent role in facilitating Martin's successful return to Rome in the crucial first years following the Western Schism. To this end, nobles were ordered to act in the Papal States themselves as well as in the Kingdom of Naples. The Farnese, as well as the Savelli and Conti, supported pontifical power as part of the extended Colonna kinship network, further supporting the notion that nepotism as a governmental tool extended beyond the pope's direct kin.⁵²

Ranuccio XVII Farnese and Pope Eugene IV

Martin's death and Eugene's election reshuffled the political allegiances in the Papal States. As Gregory XII's (1406-1415) nephew, Eugene knew his way around Rome and the Curia. Yet, he could not rely on an extensive personal network as his predecessor had. On the contrary, tensions between Eugene and the Colonna quickly arose, as the pope suspected the Colonna of having ransacked the papal treasury, while the Colonna in turn feared being despoiled of their recent acquisitions. On 18 May 1431, two months into his pontificate, Eugene excommunicated the Colonna and their Savelli and Caetani allies.⁵³ Unable or perhaps unwilling to persecute the Colonna vehemently, Eugene was relatively forgiving in the first years of his pontificate, hoping to restore his personal authority by obtaining support from the entire baronial class.⁵⁴ To negotiate a truce, Eugene relied on an intermediary who was both reputed to be reliably loyal to the Church as well as personally acquainted with the Colonna and their confederates: Ranuccio Farnese.⁵⁵ Ranuccio had already served Eugene when the pope had sent the condottiere as *nuntius* to Giovanna of Naples for unspecified negotiations in April 1431.⁵⁶ He had thus

⁵² Luiten, "Sexuality, Agency, and Honor", p. 45; See also Pierre-Bénigne Dufouleur's critique of the use of nepotism as a pejorative rather than descriptive term in his "Retour sur le 'nepotisme': les nominations des cardinaux au XV^e siècle", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Age* 132/1 (2020), doi:10.4000/mefrm.6926.

⁵³ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.14,044.

⁵⁴ De Vincentiis, "La sopravvivenza", pp. 563-9.

⁵⁵ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 135^v; BCA, MS. Be/Bc 252, f. 7^v.

⁵⁶ "Dilectus filius nobilis vir Ranutius de Farnesio non nullarum terrarum nostrarum in temporalibus vicarius et nuntius noster de Curia nostra ad partes Regni Sicilie, pro non nullis nostris, et S[ancte] Romane Ecclesia negotiis profiscatur." BCA, Ms. Be/Bc 252, f. 7^{r-v}.

proven his worth as a negotiator while his connections to the Colonna must have made him a palatable and even trustworthy mediator. Indeed, the negotiations with the Colonna were initially successful and Ranuccio reported on 14 September 1431 that he had concluded a treaty with the Colonna in Genazzano.⁵⁷ The first months of Eugene's pontificate were therefore characterised by attempts to find a new balance between the newly-elected pope and his predecessor's family in which Ranuccio personally played a role.

Within a month of the conclusion of the treaty negotiated by Ranuccio, however, the conflict between Eugene and the Colonna spiralled out of control. The remainder of Eugene's lengthy pontificate witnessed large scale war during which the pope himself was forced to go into exile in Florence.⁵⁸ One of the consequences of the outbreak of war was a realignment of alliances in the Papal States along factional divisions. Traditional Ghibelline allies of the Colonna such as the Savelli and Prefetti di Vico opposed the papacy, forcing Eugene to rely on the Orsini, Rome's leading Guelph family and the Colonna's ancient rivals. Thus, when Eugene sequestered Cardinal Colonna's benefices, he handed them to Cardinal Giordano Orsini and his cousin Latino, and enlisted Orsini for important offices in the Papal States' temporal government.⁵⁹ Baronial families with a Guelph political tradition like the Farnese and Dell'Anguillara who had nevertheless supported Martin and his Colonna kin, now decided to stick to their alliance with the papacy. For the Farnese, their realignment with the Guelph faction is perhaps best symbolised by the betrothal contract concluded between Ranuccio and Cardinal Giordano Orsini on 23 April 1432 promising to wed Violante Farnese and Roberto Orsini when they came of age.⁶⁰ It is difficult to overstate the importance of this betrothal with an Orsini from the main Bracciano line. It almost certainly paved the way for a final and peaceful resolution of all outstanding claims with the Orsini of Pitigliano in the 1440s through a marriage alliance.⁶¹ Both within the Papal

⁵⁷ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Ugone degli Ugoni and Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Priors of Viterbo, 14 September 1431. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Archivio Colonna, III BB, 5, 5.

⁵⁸ Eleonora Plebani, "Una fuga programmata: Eugenio IV e Firenze (1433-1434)", *Archivio Storico Italiano* 170/632 (2012), pp. 285-310.

⁵⁹ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.14,049, II.A.14,050, II.A.14,056.

⁶⁰ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

⁶¹ Luiten, "Like a Lily Amongst the Thorns", pp. 256-9.

States and, as we saw in the last chapter, peninsula-wide the Farnese's political fortune was now closely tied to the Orsini's. The largest beneficiary of the Papal States' Guelph faction's amalgamation, however, was Eugene. Faced with a council in Basel, revolt in Rome, and the presence of competing mercenary-captains within his borders, he was able to rely on solid baronial support in order to secure power in large areas of the Patrimony. As such, there is notable continuity between the pontificates of Martin and Eugene, and it can be further adduced that baronial support – of which the Farnese are an exemplary case – played a decisive role not only in the papacy's successful return to Rome, but also in keeping the successor of St Peter in the vicinity of the apostle's grave.

Ranuccio's career under Eugene illustrates in detail how pontifical authority relied on delegation to barons and provides insights into the ways in which nobles' double bond with both prince and locality made them invaluable mediators between the papacy and the Papal States' periphery.⁶² But before addressing Ranuccio's role as papal commissioner in the Patrimony, it is worthwhile returning to how barons served in diplomatic roles and shaped the papacy's external policy. For, as so often in Quattrocento Italy, local conflicts in the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia became entangled with others wider afield and these wars involved most northern and central Italian powers. As a result, the campaign against the Prefetti in the Patrimony had to be postponed. The papacy's connection to the Kingdom of Naples meant that when Ranuccio's presence was required, he was sent there again in 1432. This time, Queen Giovanna nominated him *vicegerens* of Apulia on both sides of the river Pescara.⁶³ Within a few months, however, Ranuccio XVII was hurrying northwards again as he was made captain-general of the papal-Florentine army that fought an alliance of Siena and Milan.⁶⁴ Finally, Ranuccio was part of the embassy that received Emperor Sigismund, who made his way through Italy

⁶² This double bond has been more elaborately analysed in an exemplary study of Lombardy. Massimo Della Misericordia, "La 'coda' dei gentiluomini. Fazioni, mediazione politica, clientelismo nello stato territoriale: il caso della montagna lombarda durante il dominio sforzesco (XV secolo)", in Gentile, *Guelfi e ghibellini*, pp. 275-389; See also, Hilde de Weerd, Catherine Holmes & John Watts, "Politics, c. 1000-1500: Mediation and Communication", *Past & Present* 238/Suppl (2018), pp. S261-96.

⁶³ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 135^v-136^r; BCA, MS. L Be/Bc 252, f. 7^v.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 3.

on his *Romzug*, in Viterbo in 1433.⁶⁵ Perhaps wary of the danger that an imperial presence posed as it could potentially galvanise the historically influential Ghibelline faction in Viterbo, Sigismund's reception committee consisted of the flower of the Guelph nobility.⁶⁶ With Carocci's remark about the barons' role in facilitating relations with other states and rulers in mind, we can see how Ranuccio's career supports his argument.

Ranuccio's activities in the Papal States during Eugene's pontificate illuminate in detail Carocci's other argument that barons were effective intermediaries between the papacy and urban governments, and in doing so collaborated extensively with papal governors. Already in October 1431 Ranuccio was made commissioner-general in the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia where the Farnese's territories were located.⁶⁷ In the Patrimony, the Prefetti di Vico were the most powerful Ghibelline baronial family and staunch supporters of the Colonna.⁶⁸ Eugene's military efforts therefore focused on the Prefetti and relied heavily on local succour. The Guelph Farnese and Dell'Anguillara had been the Prefetti's ancient adversaries at least since the late Duecento, and unsurprisingly Eugene enlisted Ranuccio Farnese and Everso dell'Anguillara as his captains – the latter especially committed to fighting his hereditary enemies according to Piero Santoni.⁶⁹ Through his sister and mother Ranuccio was closely related to the Counts of Anguillara.⁷⁰ Overall command was handed to a cleric, Giovanni Vitelleschi. Vitelleschi had received his military training fighting as a soldier in Tartaglia's company, but, more importantly, hailed from a family who, like the Farnese, owned much property in and around

⁶⁵ On Sigismund's difficult and eventful *Romzug*, see Veronika Proske, *Der Romzug Kaiser Sigismunds (1431-1433): Politische Kommunikation, Herrschaftsrepräsentation und -rezeption* (Vienna, 2018); On the enduring attractiveness of the idea of the Holy Roman Empire in late-medieval Italy, see Anne Huijbers, "Res publica restituta? Perceiving Emperors in Fourteenth-Century Rome", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Age* 132/1 (2020), doi:10.4000/mefrm.6684; Alexander Lee, *Humanism and Empire: The Imperial Ideal in Fourteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford, 2018).

⁶⁶ During Sigismund's ceremonial entry into the city, he was preceded by Cardinals Giordano Orsini and Lucido Conti, and the noblemen Ranuccio XVII Farnese, Paolo Orsini, Everso dell'Anguillara, and Pietro Paolo Monaldeschi. *Cronaca di Viterbo*, p. 124.

⁶⁷ ASV, Reg. Vat. 365, ff. 3^v-4^r; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 29 October 1431. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

⁶⁸ Berardozzi, *I Prefetti*, pp. 162-82.

⁶⁹ Piero Santoni, "Giovanni Vitelleschi ed Everso Anguillara: due personaggi nella storia viterbese del Quattrocento", in Mencarelli, *I Vitelleschi*, pp. 61-7.

⁷⁰ Isabetta dell'Anguillara to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 5 October 1434, and Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 14 March 1439. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

Corneto, with whom the Farnese had regularly intermarried, and that had in the past fiercely opposed the Prefetti's influence in their city. Often presented as a singularly forceful and fearsome warrior-priest, his phenomenal success in reconquering the Papal States was probably the result more of his ability to forge alliances than frighten his adversaries.⁷¹ Vitelleschi's nomination fits a wider development whereby Eugene made use of a number of bishops, cardinals, and other churchmen with military experience such as Astorgio Agnesi, Ludovico Trevisan, and Domenico da Capranica. These clerics provided the organisational know-how and spiritual authority while the bulk of the army was made up of lay mercenary-captains that often hailed from the Papal States' baronial elite. The key to explaining Eugene's success in recovering the Papal States lies in the collaboration between these two groups. As a whole, this deeply interconnected web of curial clergymen and lay nobles were committed to furthering the papal cause and in return expected and were rewarded with ample investitures and benefices. It was during Eugene's pontificate that, in exchange for bankrolling the Camera Apostolica and fighting in the papal armies, Ranuccio was invested with a considerable number of vicariates, regaining or adding many castles and territories for and to the Farnese patrimony.

The Farnese's Role in the Locality

Ranuccio XVII's interactions with Orvieto and Viterbo can be taken as representative for the ways in which nobles were, or were not, able to mediate between the larger cities of the Papal States and the papacy in organising the military campaigns against the Prefetti and Colonna. Furthermore, Orvieto's case illustrates how these connections ran via multiple parallel channels that were simultaneously formal and informal. Precisely because a nobleman like Ranuccio combined many different personae – condottiere, papal official, diplomat, local nobleman, citizen, patron, and relative – was he able to mediate between various political stakeholders. Lacking such connections in Viterbo, Ranuccio was much less effective in obtaining the financial and logistical support required for his campaigns unless

⁷¹ Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals & War*, pp. 44-6; John Law, "Giovanni Vitelleschi: 'prelato guerriero'", *Renaissance Studies* 12/1 (1998), pp. 40-66; Partner, *The Lands of St Peter*, pp. 410-13.

personally present and was forced to resort to coercion rather than compromise to impose pontifical power. As a commissioner, Ranuccio was namely responsible not only for military command, but also for organising the papal armies' provisioning and financing. To this end he collaborated closely with papal officials such as the papal treasurer and the rector of the Patrimony.⁷² The Camera Apostolica did not possess the means to control the flow of money required for the upkeep of the armies efficiently or deemed it more expedient to have the military commanders extract and collect it directly as they were able to more effectively beg from, barter with, and coerce local governments. Often Ranuccio was forced to take out a loan on his own credit to finance his company.⁷³ Fostering good relations with communal governments also yielded another valuable resource: military intelligence. Thus, Ranuccio exhorted Orvieto's government to keep him informed about all movements of the enemy's forces and in return passed on information to them.⁷⁴ In the case of Orvieto, Ranuccio and his captain Paolo Pietro Monaldeschi even effected, after negotiating with communal authorities and papal officials, a reduction in their contribution to the army from 2,000 florins to only half.⁷⁵ Although this created a gap in the papal armies' budget, it did ensure that money was raised without causing too large an increase in Orvieto's burdens, which could have led to grumbling, vacillation or even outright insurrection, and Ranuccio indeed expressed his gratitude to the government for complying.⁷⁶ Here too, compromise and mediation by nobles were at the heart of the running of papal government. And it was Ranuccio who as a nobleman-condottiere connected an urban community in the periphery to papal government in the centre.

⁷² Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 1, 22, 27 November & 7 December 1431. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Ugone degli Ugoni to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 13 March 1432. Idem; Ranuccio XVII Farnese and Astorgio Agnesi to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 24 & 30 June 1433. Idem.

⁷³ Ranuccio XVII to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 3 & 6 June 1433. Idem.

⁷⁴ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 28 October 1431, 22 & 24 June, 4 July, 3 October 1433. Idem.

⁷⁵ Fumi, *Codice diplomatico*, p. 692.

⁷⁶ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 4 April 1433. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

In fact, Ranuccio was the intermediary through which letters from Orvieto were passed on to the Cardinal Camerlengo, Francesco Condulmer, and directly to Eugene, and vice versa.⁷⁷ When Orvieto's ambassadors were in Rome to meet Eugene, Ranuccio collaborated closely with them, and afterwards personally interceded on their behalf with the pope.⁷⁸ In dealing with Orvieto, Ranuccio employed his captains and kinsmen as intermediaries, some of whom came from Orvieto's ruling family.⁷⁹ As the communal government was only one body of authority within Orvieto, it is telling that Ranuccio also exploited his connection to Francesco Monaldeschi, Orvieto's bishop.⁸⁰ One foot in the papal palace, and his other firmly planted among Orvieto's elite, it was natural that Ranuccio functioned as the link between the papacy and its officials, and local governmental institutions. As a Farnese, he would have had the status, and hence the trust of those involved that was required to fulfil his duties as commissioner-general and papal captain.⁸¹

One may question whether a 'foreign' commissioner would have had the same effectiveness in handling negotiations with local authorities. Although Orvieto had been less than eager in providing money, its loyalty to the papal cause never wavered and payments continued to be made. In that respect the situation in Orvieto differed profoundly from that in Viterbo. In early 1434, Cardinal Francesco Condulmer and Pope Eugene wrote a series of letters ordering the city of Viterbo to loyally receive their commissioner Ranuccio and the papal treasurer Ugone degli Ugoni.⁸² One of the items on the agenda was the city's contributions. Presumably Viterbo was also to be used as a base where soldiers could be billeted and from where the hereditary lands of the Prefetti could easily be attacked.

⁷⁷ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 3 October, 5 November & 20 December 1433. Idem.

⁷⁸ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 21 February 1432. Idem.

⁷⁹ Ranuccio XVII's intermediaries were Giorgio Farnese, Gentile Monaldeschi, and Paolo Pietro Monaldeschi ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 2, filza 23; Paolo Pietro Monaldeschi to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 6 May 1432 and 10 & 20 January, 25 December 1433. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 27 January, 27 March, 11, 14 & 26 June, 6 July 1433. Idem; Astorgio Agnesi to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 21 June 1433. Idem.

⁸⁰ Ranuccio XVII Farnese to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 3 October, 31 November & 18 December 1433. Idem.

⁸¹ On the relationship between status and trust in the medieval Church, see Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith Made the Medieval Church* (Princeton, 2018), pp. 129-158.

⁸² Francesco Condulmer to Priors of Viterbo, 28, 30 January & 7 February 1434, and Eugene IV to Priors of Viterbo, 30 January 1434. BCA, Riforme 5, ff. 36^v, 43^v, 44^r.

On 10 February the communal council bluntly replied to the pope and Cardinal Condulmer that there was no need for Ranuccio to come; a few days later they concluded a separate truce with Giacomo di Vico.⁸³ Lacking the type of personal connections Ranuccio relied on in his negotiations with Orvieto, only the presence of a papal army kept Viterbo in line in the early 1430s as well as during the resumed hostilities against the Prefetti and Colonna after 1435.⁸⁴ The eventual defeat, capture, and decapitation of Giacomo di Vico spelled the end for the Prefetti's power in Viterbo and dealt a big blow to the city's Ghibelline faction. It is significant that one of the first things on Ranuccio's mind was creating his own network within the city, thus filling the void left by the vanquished di Vico. The strategies with which the Farnese put down roots in Viterbo have been addressed before: they obtained citizenship, established patronage relations, and Ranuccio placed his daughter Giulia in a prominent convent, effectively integrating his family into the social, religious, and political fibre of the city, much as the Farnese had already achieved in Orvieto. Symbolising Farnese power in Viterbo was the splendid palace at the bridge that formed the only entrance to the area where the cathedral and papal palace were located. These local connections in Viterbo became of the utmost importance during Pius II's pontificate, but the basis for the Farnese's intervention in Viterbo's internal political affairs was laid in the 1430s.

For the remainder of his tenure and Eugene's pontificate, Ranuccio served in the papal armies, fighting in the locality alongside Everso dell'Anguillara against *condottieri* like Bernardo d'Utri, lieutenant of the Farnese's erstwhile ally Francesco Sforza.⁸⁵ The Farnese remained unaffected by the rapid rise and fall of papal henchmen, surviving the political fallout from Vitelleschi's imprisonment and assassination unscathed and establishing good relations with his successor, Cardinal Trevisan. Moreover, on 30 October 1442 it was Ranuccio and Princivalle de' Gatti that imprisoned the rector of

⁸³ Priors of Viterbo to Eugene IV and Francesco Condulmer, 10 February 1434. BCA, Riforme 5, f. 45^r; These letters and the peace treaty are also published in Cesare Pinzi, *Storia di Viterbo* (Sala Bolognese, 1974 [1887-1889]), vol. III, Appendix.

⁸⁴ Cesare Pinzi, "Lettere del Legato Vitelleschi ai Priori di Viterbo: dal 1435 al 1440", *Archivio della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria* 31 (1908), pp. 357-407.

⁸⁵ *Cronaca di Viterbo*, pp. 133-70.

the Patrimony on suspicion of collaborating with papal opponents.⁸⁶ More detail would only substantiate the Farnese's continued support for Eugene, and it is best to turn to the nature of the Farnese's support for pontifical power rather than the way in which it manifested itself. What was remarkable about the Farnese's history is the steadfastness – for most of the century – of their support for the pontifical cause.

The Farnese's steadfastness is all the more conspicuous taking into account the deep political rift that separated Martin's from Eugene's pontificate as a result of the latter's conflict with the former's kin. The Farnese's example therefore suggests that there were dynasties which fostered an attachment to the papacy based on an awareness of their ancestors' political tradition, a tradition that had been transmitted within the dynasty over the course of many generations and that was expressed in letters such as that sent to Siena at the start of 1418. Perhaps this was inevitable for a family whose political life played out on the peninsular level, one which hailed from the Papal States, and as papal vassals had needed to articulate their relationship vis-à-vis their overlord. But the Farnese seem to have stood on the more ideologically motivated end of the spectrum of Guelph partisans. Ranuccio's will – as much a political testament for his heirs as a legal document dividing the Farnese's patrimony – included a clause that expresses this desire that his heirs remain unfaltering in their support of the pontifical cause. The clause runs as follows: “furthermore, the lord testator commanded to his sons and heirs named above, that they shall be, and are bound to be loyal and obedient and devoted to the reigning supreme pontiff and to the Holy Mother Church and to live and remain forever under their protection.”⁸⁷

Ranuccio's sense of loyalty and gratitude for pontifical favours was also expressed through different means. Valentano's Palazzo Comunale still preserves a travertine relief that once adorned the Farnese castle which contains Martin V's coat of arms flanked, almost supported, by two Farnese

⁸⁶ *Idem*, p. 55.

⁸⁷ “Item mandavit dominus testator, eius filijs et heredibus suprascriptis, quod sint et esse debeant fideles et obedientes ac devoti Summo pontifici pro tempore existenti et Sancte Matre ecclesie et semper sub ipsorum protectione vivere et permanere.” Lefevre, “Il Testamento”, p. 206.

escutcheons, which thus form a heraldic representation of the Farnese-Colonna relationship during his pontificate.⁸⁸ Furthermore, although most of Ranuccio's children were named after relatives, his daughter Eugenia was almost certainly named after Eugene, who may have stood in as godfather. Personal relations with Martin and Eugene, local political and factional allegiance, ancient rivalries, an ideological attachment to the institution of the papacy, and – more down to earth – political expediency, all precipitated a lasting adherence and continuous support for the papacy on the Farnese's part. What is more, taking all these parameters into consideration, one can see how the transition from adherence to Martin and his Colonna kin to mediation between Eugene and the Colonna, and finally to staunch support for Eugene took place. The Farnese were also conspicuously harmonious among themselves in their course of action, with members of minor branches serving in the mercenary companies led by Ranuccio. In all, the effect of the Farnese's loyalty on the extension of papal power during the first half of the fifteenth century was largely positive. If on the one hand the Farnese created a patrimony for themselves that was under-taxed and largely self-governed, their mediation in the nearby surrounding cities nevertheless did much to buttress pontifical temporal authority, and this placed the Farnese centre stage in Martin and Eugene's projects for the restoration of pontifical power in St Peter's Patrimony.

The Farnese during the Pontificate of Pope Pius II

After the pontificates of Martin V and Eugene IV the Papal States entered calmer waters. As a result, papal finances improved and the threat of mercenary-captains abated once the attention of the remaining two great *condottieri*, Francesco Sforza, who had conquered Milan and was acclaimed its duke, and Jacopo Piccinino, who had effectively been placed outside of the political order created by the Peace of Lodi, had been diverted away from the Papal States.⁸⁹ The conciliarist threat to papal supremacy was effectively contained by Eugene IV, Nicholas V, and Pius II – although it never entirely

⁸⁸ See Figure 58 in the Appendix.

⁸⁹ Ferente, *La sfortuna*.

disappeared until the Council of Trent.⁹⁰ For the Farnese these developments resulted in a substantial decrease in their political importance within the Papal States during the pontificates of Nicholas V and Callixtus III. Militarily, Ranuccio XVII had groomed his son Angelo III to succeed him in his position as papal commander in order to secure continuity of Farnese power in papal service. To this end, he had Angelo learn the trade commanding 100 lances under the rector of the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia in 1440, and under Cardinal Trevisan in the following year.⁹¹ This earned him some renown as a condottiere, but above all it allowed Ranuccio to transmit to his heir the social ties and network that made him such a valuable asset to the papacy and that ensured close collaboration with papal officers. Despite these precautions, Ranuccio's death in 1450 left the Farnese bereft of a strong figurehead with the same political weight. The absence of wider conflicts further decreased the Farnese's importance and general reforms which reduced the number of laymen in political office, including military ones, limited options for advancement. Several popes even initiated policies to push back in areas where baronial families had made gains and had extended their possessions and influence. Nicholas utilised the improved papal finances to recover Montalto and Marta, which had been pawned to the Farnese. Pius' pontificate has often been presented as the culmination of many of these developments and hence it merits our closer attention.

That Pius' pontificate has been regarded as such, is in no small part due to the extensive records left of his reign by Pius himself. In his *Commentaries*, Pius presents himself as an ambitious and expeditious pope whose broad erudition made him an accomplished one-man government. Moreover, in his telling of affairs, he could always count on the timely arrival of divine intervention in those rare scenarios his eloquence did not sway men's minds.⁹² Yet, because the *Commentaries* are

⁹⁰ Francis Oakley, *The Conciliarist Tradition: Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church 1300-1870* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 20-59.

⁹¹ Pietro Ramponi to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 27 April 1440. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated; Paschini, *Lodovico Cardinal Camerlengo*, p. 59.

⁹² Zweder von Martels & Arjo Vanderjagt (eds.), *Pius II - 'el più expeditivo pontifice': Selected studies on Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464)* (Leiden, 2003).

such a rich source for the mid-Quattrocento, historians have had to rely heavily on its contents.⁹³ Only recently has Emily O'Brien cast doubt on Pius' *Commentaries* as a reliable source which accurately depicts contemporary events.⁹⁴ Indeed, Pius was a great dissimulator in gesture as well as writing.⁹⁵ Yet, as much as O'Brien's analysis of Pius' commentaries is often perceptive, when it comes to Pius' stance towards the Roman barons, she does not heed her own precautions. O'Brien is certainly right in asserting that "in the course of his pontificate, his [Pius'] decisions and actions had sparked intense rebellion against his authority, seriously aggravated existing instability in the Papal States, and stirred up questions about the legitimacy of the pope's temporal power", she never seriously questions the older narrative of papal-noble antagonism.⁹⁶ In this view, Pius found himself bogged down by the unruly nobility of his state. Even if barons such as Jacopo Savelli and Everso dell'Anguillara were castigated by military interventions, which, in Pius' own words, served as a deterrent to the rest of the nobility, the nobility overall and its tendency to pursue its never-ending feuds were mostly an unwelcome distraction from more important matters at hand, not least Pius' crusade.⁹⁷

Addressing the Farnese's relations with Pius and how that pontiff required their support advances the view forwarded by O'Brien, Anna Modigliani, and Paola Farenga that during his pontificate papal temporal power was challenged both in Rome and within the Papal States.⁹⁸ More generally, by addressing the mutual dependency of the papacy and the nobility during Pius' reign, a more nuanced view appears of the middle decades of the fifteenth-century, one that highlights the lasting utility of the Farnese's local influence once enlisted in support of pontifical power and that also

⁹³ Three out of four volumes of the English translation facing the Latin text of Pius' *Commentaries* have been published so far. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *The Commentaries*, ed. and trans. Margaret Messerve & Marcello Simonetta (Cambridge MA, 2004-). I also use the complete Latin text facing the Italian translation. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *I commentarii*, ed. and trans. Luigi Totaro (Milan, 1984).

⁹⁴ O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II*, pp. 113-88; Emily O'Brien, "Arms and Letters: Julius Caesar, the Commentaries of Pope Pius II, and the Politicization of Papal Imagery", *Renaissance Quarterly* 62/4 (2009), pp. 1057-97.

⁹⁵ Peter Godman, "Pius II in the Bath: Papal Ceremony and Cultural History", *The English Historical Review* 129/539 (2014), pp. 808-29.

⁹⁶ O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II*, p. 103.

⁹⁷ Piccolomini, *Commentaries*, III, pp. 115-17; Volker Reinhardt, *Pius II. Piccolomini: Der Papst mit dem die Renaissance begann: Eine Biografie* (Munich, 2013); Marco Pellegrini, "Pius II", *DBI*.

⁹⁸ O'Brien, *The Commentaries*, pp. 86-112; Modigliani, "Pio II e Roma"; Farenga, "I romani".

shows the limitations inherent in attempts at extending papal control over the Patrimony of St Peter.⁹⁹ My approach to arriving at this new view is two-fold: deconstructing the passages of Pius' *Commentaries* containing especially forceful invectives against barons provides insight in Pius' use of rhetorical devices, while at the same it allows for an unfolding of the complicated political interrelations that connected the actions of local barons to events on the European scale. This in turn serves as a stepping-stone to an analysis of Pius' passages in which he discusses his baronial allies that together with additional sources provide the material for his pontificate's reassessment. Central to this reassessment is the Farnese's support for Pius' military campaigns, a support that the pope himself actively strove to secure.

The passages in his *Commentaries* in which Pius decries his baronial opponents for their irreverence and savage behaviour are among the most memorable, yet their crimes are largely the invention of Pius' pen. Both Jacopo Savelli and Everso dell'Anguillara founded monastic institutions in their territories, so it is probably best to take Pius' polemics in which he denounces them as irreligious Epicurean enemies of the priesthood *cum grano salis*.¹⁰⁰ By attributing Savelli and Dell'Anguillara's rebellious behaviour to inborn malevolence, Pius sought to draw attention away from the wider political developments in which he himself played an active, at times exacerbating role. Savelli and Dell'Anguillara's opposition to the papacy resulted from Pius' support for Ferrante of Aragon against the claims of René of Anjou.¹⁰¹ When a French army headed by Jean of Anjou arrived in Italy and some of Naples' most powerful barons declared in favour of the Angevin cause, this had repercussions for both the Roman barons as well as the pope. The Roman and Neapolitan barons were linked through ties of marriage, and some held lands on both sides of the border. Moreover, as the Kingdom of Naples'

⁹⁹ Amedeo de Vincentiis emphasises the futility of papal projects for extending their power in the Patrimony through the use of lay family members in his "Nepotismo inefficace: papi, nepoti e il *Patrimonium* nel Quattrocento", in Alessandro Pontecorvi & Abbondio Zuppante (eds.), *Famiglie nella Tuscia tardomedievale: Per una storia* (Viterbo, 2011), pp. 33-41.

¹⁰⁰ Antonio López Fonseca & José Manuel Ruiz Vila, "Ocaso de una noble familia romana: edición crítica y traducción de las *Epistulae consolatoriae* (1465-1468) a Francesco dell'Anguillara, conde de Everso, preso en el castillo romano de Sant'Angelo", *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos* 31/1 (2011), pp. 111-46.

¹⁰¹ Modigliani, "Pio II e Roma"; Farenga, "I romani".

suzerain, the pope ultimately decided whom to invest. During Pius' pontificate, war in the *Regno* was bound to spill over into the Papal States as the Ghibelline faction, most notably the Colonna and Savelli, supported the Angevin bid. Moreover, Edoardo Fumagalli has convincingly argued that the conflict between Pius and Everso dell'Anguillara stems from an inheritance dispute between Everso and Napoleone Orsini concerning the County of Tagliacozzo in the Kingdom of Naples.¹⁰²

This conflict had turned especially violent when Everso nearly escaped assassination by Napoleone's men during Callixtus III's coronation ceremony.¹⁰³ Several attempts by Callixtus to mediate and end the conflict notwithstanding, these treaties did not prevent further escalation.¹⁰⁴ When Napoleone Orsini turned an internal family dispute between two branches of the Counts of Anguillara to his advantage, this only aggravated the situation and Everso retaliated by allying himself with the Colonna.¹⁰⁵ When the war over the Kingdom of Naples broke out, these earlier divisions soon reasserted themselves in the Papal States. For a pontiff as proud as Pius, admitting that he was swept away in the factional current engulfing the Kingdom of Naples, the Papal States, and Rome itself where revolts were fomented by the Savelli, was no option. Surely not when his own role by openly supporting the Aragonese claim contributed to spread of the conflict. Hence, in order to legitimate his political choices, Pius and his supporters decried Jacopo Savelli and Everso dell'Anguillara as ferocious, sadistic, and bellicose monsters.¹⁰⁶ Yet, ultimately, the punishment meted out to Jacopo Savelli was mild – dispossession of a few castles that were immediately resold to a consortium of families closely linked to the Savelli – and Pius wisely refrained from persecuting the Colonna at all.¹⁰⁷

Crucially, on the one hand Pius, resorted to a mixture of punishment and clemency, damning rhetoric and political compromise, and military intervention with mediation for peace in his dealings

¹⁰² ASC, Archivi di persone e famiglie, Anguillara, Pergamene, credenzone 14, tomo 65, n. 5; Edoardo Fumagalli, "Documenti sforzeschi su Everso dell'Anguillara e i suoi figli", *Aevum* 60 (1986), pp. 282-9.

¹⁰³ *Diplomatari Borja*, ed. Miguel Batllori, Carlos López Rodríguez & Ivan Parisi & Maria Toldrà (Valencia, 2002-), vol. IV, pp. 286-287; Infessura, *Diario*, pp. 59-62.

¹⁰⁴ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.17,012, II.A.17,016.

¹⁰⁵ ASR, Collezione delle pergamene, Pergamene Orsini, cassetta 73, #8.

¹⁰⁶ Jacopo Ammannati-Piccolomini, *L'Eversana deiectio di Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini*, ed. Rosella Bianchi (Rome, 1984).

¹⁰⁷ ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 841, filza 25; ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 842, filza 5.

with the Papal States' Ghibellines. On the other hand, Pius, in shaping his legacy, also severely downplayed his reliance on support from the Guelph faction to salvage his brittle temporal authority, and instead identified his own military genius as the decisive factor in determining the outcome of the war. Yet it is questionable whether Pius would have been able to pursue any viable strategy against Everso dell'Anguillara without the support of Roman baronial families, most prominently the Dell'Anguillara's neighbours: the Orsini and Farnese. Several passages in his *Commentaries*, once read in light of their political context, reveal this reliance. For example, Napoleone Orsini was nominated captain-general of the papal armies on 17 August 1461, a position in which he was confirmed on 8 December 1462.¹⁰⁸ The Orsini and their allies were thus at the forefront of the war in the Papal States as well as in the Kingdom of Naples. Pius himself declared that when a council was held to discuss the army's command, "they found there was one man who stood out above the rest and seemed worthy of assuming command of so large a force. This man was Napoleone, head of the Orsini family." Opposition against such clear favouritism of one faction above another was brushed away as "jealousy of the other Roman barons, who resented the glory of the Orsini and thought it risky to give more power to a family that was already the strongest in Roman territory."¹⁰⁹ To justify taking recourse to the support of one faction to castigate another, Pius needed to stress Napoleone's qualities as a military commander. Similarly, Pius portrayed Roberto Orsini, Napoleone's brother and Violante Farnese's husband, as a valiant warrior and *vir audax* who distinguished himself in several battles.¹¹⁰ During the assault on Celano, Roberto Orsini was miraculously saved from certain death when he was wounded by a flying stone whose impact would normally have been fatal.¹¹¹ Such divine intervention Pius tended to reserve for himself. The fact that Roberto was present not much later at the assault of Arce, suggests that Pius might have exaggerated the account, and Roberto's dance with death should be taken as flattering rhetoric intended to convey his standing in the author's eyes. Perhaps one of the

¹⁰⁸ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.17,035, II.A.17,038.

¹⁰⁹ Pius, *Commentaries*, III, pp. 170-3.

¹¹⁰ Pius, *Commentaries*, II, pp. 294-5; Pius, *I commentarii*, pp. 2032-3.

¹¹¹ Pius, *I commentarii*, pp. 2390-1.

sincerest declarations of his vision of the mutual relationship between barons and papacy is one of Pius' speeches he supposedly gave to the war-weary Roman populace. Pius spoke to the assembled crowd:

Some are bruited it about that neither Jean [of Anjou] nor Piccinino has taken up arms against us but declared war against the Orsini alone. (...) But suppose they did attack only the Orsini. Aren't the Orsini subjects of the Church? If someone harms them, doesn't he harm us as well? We look out for the Orsini, the Colonna, the Conti, and the Savelli, so long as they remain loyal. Whoever attacks them attacks us. And so our campaign is just indeed, an honorable struggle undertaken in defence of our subjects!¹¹²

Pius applied an oratorical trick by inverting whom depended on whom for protection; surely it was the Orsini that came to his defence, not the other way around. Nonetheless, in this passage Pius betrayed a corporate view of society. Underlying this view was a realisation that papacy and nobility stood in a relationship with mutual responsibilities such as protection and reward – as long as the nobility remained loyal. If the papacy represented the head of the Holy Roman Church, it rested on and was supported by the strong shoulders of the baronial elite. With the political situation and Pius' rhetorical repertoire in mind, let us turn to the passage in which he describes his visit to Farnese lands.

Pius presents his visit to the Farnese as a pleasant retreat in a most delightful place (*in loco amoenissimo*). The descriptions of the sloping green hills bedecked with flowers, babbling brooks bursting with fish, and the gently undulating lakes of Tuscia gloss over a rougher reality of an area torn by civil strife and traversed by bands of soldiers.¹¹³ No mention of murderous plots in Viterbo, nor of

¹¹² Pius, *Commentaries*, III, p. 43.

¹¹³ On the role of landscape in Pius II's *Commentaries*, see Arnold Esch, "Das Erlebnis der Landschaft bei Enea Silvio Piccolomini/Pius II.", *Das Mittelalter* 16/1 (2011), pp. 149-60. I personally do not exclude the possibility of an Ovidian undertone in Pius' work, where the peacefulness and tranquillity conveyed by the descriptions of the surrounding landscape are, in fact, deceiving and violence and monsters (in Pius' case rebellious subjects) lurk around the corner, a meaning inaccessible to modern perceptions but perhaps readily recognised by learned contemporaries familiar with the political situation. A local chronicler confirms that Pius on one of his sojourns in the Papal States "took with him many soldiers, because it is rumoured that he was suspicious [of potential perils] (*à con seco de molte gente d'arme, perchè se dice che lui à sospetto*)."
Cronaca perugina, p. 397.

factional discord in Orvieto. Above all, not a word on the real reason Pius left Rome. Rome's stifling summer heat and the soothing baths of Viterbo certainly provided a convenient excuse for the gout-ridden pope, but in June 1462 the city itself was on the brink of revolt during one of the most troubled periods of Pius' pontificate.¹¹⁴ Pius was aware of the role papal visits could play in cementing ties with the nobility. Hosting the pontiff and his court, even in flight, remained a tremendous honour and reflected well on a family's status. Pius initiates the description of his visit to the Farnese by praising the castle and town of Capodimonte for the strength of their impenetrable fortifications. The castle gardens and orchards are depicted as perfectly modelled on the prescriptions of Piero de' Crescenzi's *Liber ruralium commodorum* (1304-1309) and among the places visited an extensive description is given of the construction in Marta used to catch the famous eels of the Lago di Bolsena.¹¹⁵ But it was not eels Pius was after; the pope was more interested in the safety of Farnese territory and, crucially, was rather fishing for support or trying to ensure it would remain forthcoming. The *Commentaries'* positive portrayal of the Farnese's towns, castles, and especially the character of Gabriele Francesco Farnese himself were part of Pius' efforts to maintain the Farnese's favour, or construed in such a way as to reward their loyalty. Indeed, the lord of the manor, Gabriele Francesco, receives an unusually generous treatment. Typically, a critical verdict is levelled against almost every single one of the many prominent contemporary figures that so densely populate Pius' *Commentaries*, but not Gabriele Francesco. This is especially evident in the passage which describes how Gabriele Francesco organises a boat race in the pope's honour. Pius' rowdy nephew, Guicciardo Forteguerri, boasts that his men of Bolsena, the city of which he was prefect, will easily win, as do the rowers themselves. Worse still, Forteguerri argues that it is futile for the others to even try and compete. Gabriele Francesco astutely replies:

¹¹⁴ O'Brien, pp. 110-11; Modigliani, "Pio II e Roma"; Farenga, "I romani".

¹¹⁵ Luiten, "Friends and Family, Fruit and Fish", p. 350.

If the palm of victory were to be given to those who are the superior drunkards, I have no doubt your subjects would be the winners, although the Clarentani are also eminent drinkers. Yet an oar is not at all as easily pulled as a goblet is downed. This race was instituted by the Bishop of Corneto and has been held for years, but never has one heard of the Bolsenesi winning. However, the men of Marta have often taken the prize. I hope the same will be true today; and it is not inconceivable your rowers will be able to have their drink each and every time the oars splash up the water.¹¹⁶

Pius concedes Gabriele Francesco the humanist qualities of wit and eloquence, virtues that are further amplified by the contrast with the boisterous Forteguerra. Eloquence and wit are qualities that Pius most readily appropriates for himself, and it is often through his jocular replies that Pius becomes the hero of his own story. To ascribe such qualities to someone else was therefore unconventional, and by extension highly meaningful. Throughout the *Commentaries* such discrepancies between character descriptions of allies and opponents are indicative of Pius' political and military alliances, even if their actual military role is often downplayed in favour of Pius' own. In the case of the Farnese, the desire to obtain their military support was of especial importance in the summer of 1462. During Pius' escape from Rome preparations had been set in motion that would see the battlefield shift from the Kingdom of Naples to the Papal States. Vigorous preparations were made for military campaigns of which the brunt would fall on Everso dell'Anguillara and Sigismondo Malatesta.

For Pius, it was a strategic necessity to secure the support not only of Everso's personal enemies, the Orsini of Bracciano, but also the Farnese. By marriage, the Farnese were closely affiliated to the Orsini and Conti and the three families may have been expected to align their political stance and act concurrently. Yet, significantly, Everso's son Francesco had a Farnese wife and so did Jacopo Savelli's brother Pandolfo. The Farnese's allegiance to the papacy may therefore not have been

¹¹⁶ "Si multibibis (...) palma debetur, non eo inficias clientes tuos victuros fore, quamvis egregie Clarentani [inhabitants of Valentano] bibunt. Sed non tam facile remus trahitur quam scyphus exhauritur. Hunc ludum Cornetanus episcopus instituit primus et iam pluribus annis cucurrere naves, nec auditum est Vulsinenses aliquando vicisse. Martani saepe tulerunt praemia. Idem hoc anno facient, spero, nisi provisum est totiens tuos remiges posse bibere quotiens aquas remis everberant." Pius, *I commentarii*, p. 1628. The rest of the boat race mirrors the boat race Aeneas held in his father Anchises' honour in Virgil's book V of the *Aeneid*.

automatically forthcoming, and rewards and favours were expected for service against their relatives by marriage. Thus, while the Farnese provided substantial financial support for Pius II, in return they received territories; in exchange for a loan of 6,000 ducats to the Camera Apostolica, the Farnese reobtained the strategic fortified town of Marta.¹¹⁷ But there were other arguments in play that may have determined the Farnese's decision to stick to their tradition of loyalty to the papal cause. In recent years before the Angevin invasion of Italy, the Farnese had strengthened their ties with Cosimo de' Medici and Francesco Sforza, both of whom came out in support of Ferrante of Aragon – much like Pius. Moreover, Everso's machinations in Viterbo and Orvieto, where he was fomenting rebellions against the government, posed a threat to Farnese influence there. In Viterbo, Everso supported a rebellion of the Ghibelline faction against its Guelph regime. Viterbo had been in a state of heightened tension since the assassinations of Princivalle and Guglielmo Gatti in 1454 and 1456 and the brutal reprisals that followed. Characteristically, Pius claims to have personally prevented Everso from taking over Viterbo.¹¹⁸ However, from local sources it can be inferred that the Farnese intervened and took decisive action in propping up the Guelph government run by their kin and clients – Galeazzo Luigi Farnese headed the army that suppressed the revolt.¹¹⁹ After decades of investing in the extension of their local power base in Viterbo, the Farnese were in no mood to forfeit the gains they had made. In a similar manner, the Farnese and Orsini of Pitigliano prevented several attempts at regime change in Orvieto in the troubled years of 1461 and 1462.¹²⁰ At Everso dell'Anguillara's bidding, Gentile Monaldeschi della Vipera had reignited his faction's struggle against the Monaldeschi della Cervara, who were closely linked to the Farnese. Much like in Viterbo, a show of military force toppled the unwarranted new regime and reinstated a pliable government that would defend Farnese interests.¹²¹

Everso's actions illustrate how local civic conflicts were connected to the supralocal level of the Papal States' Guelph and Ghibelline factions through baronial intermediaries. On the European

¹¹⁷ ASV, Arm. XXXV, 33, f. 139^{r-v}; BCA, Ms. L Be/Bc, f. 8^r; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 125^v.

¹¹⁸ Piccolomini, *Commentaries*, I, pp. 526, 826-8, 868.

¹¹⁹ Monaldeschi, *Commentarii historici*, f. 138^v; Bussi, *Istoria*, pp. 260-1.

¹²⁰ See Chapter 1.

¹²¹ BCA, MS L Be/Bc 252, f. 8^r; Monaldeschi, *Commentarii historici*, f. 139^r; Fumi, *Codice diplomatico*, pp. 720-1.

scale, they were also connected to the competing Angevin and Aragonese claimants to the Kingdom of Naples. There is some evidence that factional divisions on the supralocal level during Pius' reign were not dissimilar to those of Eugene's pontificate. Perhaps the most accurate indication that the Farnese's support for Pius II was as much support for their Orsini relatives is contained in a letter of Angelo Farnese to Cardinal Trevisan of 6 October 1460. Angelo informs Trevisan that, "now, at the moment, we are here in Vicovaro with two squadrons." Vicovaro was an Orsini stronghold located between the Savelli's lands and those of the Colonna and thus of the utmost strategic importance. As Angelo explains what he was doing in Vicovaro with his squadrons, they were keeping an eye on Everso's son, Dolce, and a son-in-law, Antonello da Forlì, who were at the nearby Savelli stronghold of Palombara. Furthermore, Angelo alludes that, "we are [here] for the defence of this place by command of monsignor [Latino] Orsini."¹²² This suggests a rather decentralised approach to the conflict and puts the strength of papal power in perspective.

In this, Pius' pontificate differed little from those of his predecessors and immediate successors, and to the extent that it was emblematic, it above all illustrates how even in a period of widespread rebellion and warfare between pope and nobility, patterns of cooperation were equally ubiquitous and even necessary for the survival of pontifical authority. The Farnese's role in the defence of papal power illustrates this vividly and shows how patterns of papal-noble collaboration were characterised by support and reward, much like Pius envisaged in his *Commentaries*. This relationship was shaped by personal interactions and was fostered within a nexus of other types of relations that included factional allegiances, marital ties, political affiliations with other polities and princes, inheritance disputes and feuds, and patronage. As such, a picture appears of politics on the Papal States in which central papal authority was only one, albeit an important one, of many factors in play that shaped political decision-making for baronial dynasties like the Farnese. The Farnese's fifteenth-

¹²² "Mo, al presente, semo cqui in Vicuaro con duj squatrj et semo per defensione de quisto luoco sì per comandamento de monsignore delli Orsinj. Delle novelle di qua sentemo che el conte Jaco [Piccinino] s'è levato da campo dove luj et esse tirato inderieto verso le terre del conte de Maniero; Diophebo [dell'Anguillara] et Antonello da Forlì dicese essere infra Palombara e Montecellj." Angelo III Farnese to Ludovico Trevisan, 6 October 1460. Caetani, *Epistolarium*, p. 90.

century history therefore shows that Sandro Carocci hit the mark with his argument that barons fulfilled vital roles in the functioning of the Papal States that popes had to contend with but could also use to their benefit.¹²³ For the Farnese, their allegiance to the papal cause made them invaluable sources of support who in return for their military, financial, and political aid were granted extensive territorial, jurisdictional, financial, and ecclesiastical rewards through which they managed to effectively perpetuate and even extend their power.

How Baronial Families from the Periphery Pursued Clerical Careers in Rome

Many more examples of interventions by lay members of the Farnese dynasty can be forwarded for the remainder of the Quattrocento, but this would not significantly alter our understanding of the Farnese's political power in the Papal States. Instead, it is worthwhile addressing what was truly novel in this phase of the Farnese's relationship with the papacy: the pursuit of clerical careers at the papal Curia for Farnese scions. Although the Farnese had placed some daughters and sons in the Church in the Trecento, these efforts had traditionally focused on local episcopal and monastic institutions. What set the second half of the Quattrocento apart was that the Farnese now pursued a strategy of acquiring offices at the Curia. Moreover, in lieu of surplus sons, valuable spare heirs were forced or encouraged into taking up a clerical career, suggesting that the potential benefits were expected to outweigh the risk of dynastic crisis. In fact, this altered attitude towards the prospective careers of Farnese men requires some further qualification. Although curial offices brought a steady annual return of ten percent of their investment, their pay was meagre even in comparison to a condottiere of mediocre standing. Moreover, by virtue of their military power, Farnese *condottieri* could claim considerable influence in political affairs and serve and maintain diplomatic connections with various polities on the peninsula. Apart from military clout and a chance to gain additional income, the family also had to forego the opportunity of establishing dynastic ties through marriage – and the prospect of a dowry – when they gave a son to the Church. In light of such observations, it seems necessary to reconstruct

¹²³ Carocci, "The Papal State", p. 83; Carocci, *Vasalli del papa*, pp. 36-7.

some of the considerations that guided Farnese decisions. Why this sudden focus on the papal Curia and why at this precise moment in the Farnese's history? Was the pursuit of clerical office in this period unique to the Farnese or can it be linked to wider developments taking place in the papal bureaucracy or the Italian peninsula?

It seems no accident that the Farnese's investment in clerical careers coincided with a greater clericalisation of offices at the Curia, a growth in their number, and increasing venality. Paolo Prodi drew attention to clericalisation of office and to how this development extended to other governmental institutions in the Papal States.¹²⁴ Where, at the start of the century, lay noblemen still fulfilled key functions in the government of the Papal States (as the Farnese's history vividly attests), these were gradually replaced by ordained men in all areas, even to some extent in the papal armies. To be sure, the nobility retained its influence in papal government, but the route to exercising power through governmental office now ran via a clerical career at the Curia. The expansion of the number of clerical offices ran in parallel to this process of clericalisation. The number of offices grew from the end of the Western Schism on, yet this development accelerated during the second half of the fifteenth century, and especially so during the pontificates of Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII.¹²⁵ The number of curial offices rose sharply as the college of apostolic abbreviators was re-founded under Sixtus IV and its number fixed at seventy two and the total of apostolic secretaries raised from six to thirty by Innocent VIII in 1487. The number of apostolic protonotaries was kept at seven while apostolic scriptors hovered around a hundred incumbents.¹²⁶

Innocent VIII's reforms of the Curia not only altered the number of offices but also had other repercussions for how business was transacted in Rome and implications for the social background of men who aspired to a curial career. Innocent VIII's reforms gave the six domestic secretaries and fifteen *cubicularii* (chamberlains) more responsibility in the daily running of papal government to tackle the

¹²⁴ Prodi, *The Papal Prince*, pp. 108-9.

¹²⁵ Frenz, *Kanzlei*.

¹²⁶ *Bullarium sive collectio diversarum constitutionum multorum pontificum a Gregorio Septimo usque ad S.D.N. Sixtum Quintum pontificem opt. max.: cum rubricis, summarijs, lucubrationibus & quadruplici indice*, ed. Laertio Cherubini (Rome 1586), vol. I, pp. 113-18.

growth in bureaucracy, although the same reforms greatly reduced the importance of the other apostolic secretaries.¹²⁷ The latter category, on which the Farnese focused their initial efforts, became increasingly venal, and initially sold for the steep price of 2,600 florins. However, the office of apostolic secretary brought a steady return – 350 ducats a year according to John D’Amico – and could be transferred to designated successors for a small sum and thus effectively monopolised within families or extended kinship groups.¹²⁸ This increase in curial offices’ venality extended beyond the college of secretaries to other offices as well. As a result, curial offices were increasingly seen as an investment for noble families. Exacerbating this was the fact that the papal Curia was by no means a meritocratic organisation. Although some humanists from humbler backgrounds also profited from the increased prospects for advancement in the Curia for literati, the most important predictor for a rapid rise through the ranks remained noble birth.¹²⁹ Indeed, historians have observed a gradually thickening nexus of familial and relational ties in the papal Curia as the early modern period progressed that was the result of the venality of court offices and the requirement of social connections for advancement.¹³⁰ Although it has been argued Roman nobles only started investing in lower curial offices during the pontificates of Leo X and Clement VII, the Farnese’s case shows that this tendency existed from the very moment the acceleration of the papal bureaucracy’s growth initiated and that baronial families from the Papal States were among the first to profit from these developments.¹³¹

After all, with the papacy now solidly in place in Rome and the pope a figure who could wield political power, there may have been an incentive for nobles from the wider Papal States to participate

¹²⁷ Partner, *The Pope’s Men*, pp. 26-9, 150-82, 197-200.

¹²⁸ Miles Pattenden, “The Papal Curia”, in Pamela Jones, Barbara Wisch & Simon Ditchfield (eds.), *A Companion to Early Modern Rome, 1492-1692* (Leiden, 2019), p. 47; Partner, *The Pope’s Men*, p. 14; John d’Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore, 1983), p. 28.

¹²⁹ Partner, *The Pope’s Men*, pp. 15, 82-101; See also the various contributions in Cristina Carbonetti Vendittelli & Marco Vendittelli (eds.), *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano 5: Roma e la Chiesa (secoli XII-XV)* (Rome, 2017).

¹³⁰ Pattenden, “The Roman Curia”, p. 50; Weber, *Senatus divinus*; Barbara McClung Hallman, *Italian Cardinals, Reform, and the Church as Property* (Berkeley, 1985).

¹³¹ Andreas Rehberg, “Scambi e contrasti fra gli apparati amministrativi della Curia e del comune di Roma: Osservazioni intorno ai decreti comunali dal 1515 al 1526”, in Jean Armand & Olivier Poncet (eds.), *Offices et papauté (XIV^e-XVII^e siècle): Charges, hommes, destins* (Rome, 2005), pp. 501-64.

in papal projects in the centre. In the Farnese's case, one or more members exercising office in the higher echelons of the curial elite gave them a stake in the advancement of pontifical power while simultaneously offering a channel through which papal policy might be influenced and in turn through which papal power might be delegated to the locality.¹³² Of course, the lay Farnese and their agents could readily gain access to papal circles, but clerics in high places provided a level of permanency in the dynasty's representation in Rome. Alessandro Farnese's letters express the extent in which he saw the efforts of his cousin Paolo and himself to advance within the papal Curia as an extension of the Farnese's dynastic politics, as well as how he envisaged himself in the role of mediator for his wider network of kin.¹³³ Both Farnese cousins also remained involved in their lay kin's military careers as Paolo Farnese's correspondence with Gentile Virginio Orsini and Alessandro's with the eminent humanist and Venetian ambassador Ermelao Barbarbo suggest.¹³⁴ New cardinals had to tread carefully, and sometimes unwittingly became embroiled in Rome's factional divisions, because, unbeknownst to them, renting their lodging in the Orsini or Colonna palace could be taken as a sign of partisanship.¹³⁵ However, such concerns were no issue for the Farnese. When he moved to Rome, Alessandro Farnese immediately rented one of the apartments of the Palazzo Orsini at Montegiordano.¹³⁶ To be sure,

¹³² DeSilva, "Official and Unofficial Diplomacy", pp. 543-8.

¹³³ "Misser Puccio mio. So certo V[ostra] M[agnificentia] ha pigliato piacer[e] grandissimo della mia dignita (...) veram[en]te has ben rastione V[ostra] M[agnificentia] de allegrarse impero ch[e] quella po ben dir[e] haver[e] un suo fratello cardinale, et che sirra utile ad tucta casa de pucci no[n] manco che alla propria de pharnese." Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci 23 September 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR 15, f. 158^{r-v}; "Datevi conforto e piacere, similiter faremmo noi de qua et circa el bisogno farremo continuamente forze et industri le cose vostre habbiano bono et optabile successo sarremo con l'ambasciatore vostro et consiglioremone insieme vi faremo favor de parenti e superiori alli piedi di N[ostro] S[ignore]." Alessandro Farnese to Giannozzo Pucci, 15 July 1493. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 58; "Similiter exortamo V[ostra] M[agnificentia] ad valerse dellopera mia p[er] quanto possa et vaglia appresso de N[ost]ro Signor[e], imp[er]och[e] sirro semp[re] p[re]paratissimo et volontoroso in tucte quelle cose che siano firmam[en]to et exaltation[e] della Illustra Casa de Medici, et i[n] spetie de V[ostra] M[agnificentia]." Alessandro Farnese to Piero de' Medici, 10 September 1492. ASF, MAP, XIX, 129^{r-v}.

¹³⁴ Paolo Farnese to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 20 May 1491. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, f. 459^{r-v}; Ermolao Barbaro to Alessandro Farnese, undated *Carteggio umanistico*, p. 59.

¹³⁵ Carol Richardson, "The Housing Opportunities of a Renaissance Cardinal", *Renaissance Studies* 17/4 (2003), pp. 607-27; Chambers, "The Housing Problems".

¹³⁶ "Et n[ost]ro Signor[e] alexandro e stato creato, et eade[m] hora pubblicato cardinale. Uscio fora de palazzo collo diadema chiamato cappel rosso, su le hor[e] xvij accompagnato da tucti cardinali novi et vecchi ch[e] si trovano i[n] roma, et con gran sole[n]nita smonto in nella casa del signor cognato i[n] monte jordano dove e et sirra sua residentia." Stefano dell'Aquila to Puccio Pucci, 20 September 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, LC, MR, 15, f. 153^{r-v}.

influencing papal policy through clerical careers for their offspring, relatives, and clients had been a strategy that was pursued by Roman baronial families for centuries.¹³⁷ It is not unlikely that the numerous dynastic connections to these families that were created by the Farnese lowered the threshold for pursuing a career at the Curia as their kin could now advocate on their behalf with the pope. The presence at the papal Curia of Farnese relatives from the north of the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia, such as the Monaldeschi and Ottieri, who also had recently married into the Roman nobility, suggests such marital ties contributed to the decision to destine sons for a curial career.¹³⁸ In fact, the Ottieri preceded the Farnese in acquiring and embellishing a family palace in Rome when Sinolfo degli'Ottieri, papal secretary and treasurer, bought what would later become the Palazzo Madama in 1492.¹³⁹ With this in mind, it is possible to reappraise Alessandro Farnese's rapid ascent, even if that leads to the conclusion that it was less exceptional than is generally held.

Paolo Farnese: Apostolic Protonotary, Secretary, and Papal Chamberlain

That Alessandro and not his older and lesser-known cousin Paolo was singularly credited with the Farnese's success within the papal Curia is perhaps not surprising considering his impressive career that culminated in his election as Paul III. However, historians, speculating over the extent of the influence of Alessandro's sister Giulia, through her sexual exploits with Alexander VI, or the role of the supposedly overbearing *éminence grise* that was their mother, Giovannella Caetani, in advancing the adolescent Alessandro's clerical career, have undervalued the various other factors in play that contributed to his success as well.¹⁴⁰ When taking into account that Paolo also rapidly rose through the ranks of the curial elite, Alessandro's career seems less spectacular. It is worthwhile, therefore, to address Paolo's career before moving on to Alessandro's. There is some evidence to suggest that Paolo,

¹³⁷ Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, "Strumenti di preminenza: benefici e carriere ecclesiastiche (secoli XII-XIV)", in Carocci, *La nobiltà romana nel Medioevo*, pp. 199-210; Rehberg, *Kirche und Macht*; Rehberg, *Die Kanoniker*; Allegrezza, *Organizzazione del potere*.

¹³⁸ ASV, Reg. Vat. 542, ff. 239^v-240^r; Conti, *Le Storie*, vol. II, p. 41.

¹³⁹ Ivana Ait, "'Negotia di cardinali': Giovanni de' Medici e la simulata compravendita di Palazzo Madama", *Roma nel Rinascimento* 15 (2014), pp. 299-314.

¹⁴⁰ Luiten, "Sexuality, Agency, and Honor".

like his cousin Alessandro, had a solid humanist grounding. Paolo took an interest in his cousin's education in Florence.¹⁴¹ Considering their respective ages, it was probably Paolo and not Alessandro who took up a spot at the Farnese college in Bologna, the Collegio Ancarano, in 1480, presumably to study law and theology.¹⁴² In the following years, Paolo must have moved to Rome in search of employment. In the Curia, Paolo could rely on the potent voices of Cardinals Orsini, Todeschini-Piccolomini, and Ammannati-Piccolomini, who all three had been close to his father. On February 1483 he obtained the privilege of being granted the option to elect a personal confessor and acquire a portable altar from Sixtus IV.¹⁴³ More important than these indicators of personal piety, Paolo is addressed as a member of the *Collegium abbreviatorum apostolicorum* of which he had been a member since 1482.¹⁴⁴ Abbreviators were employed in the Papal Chancery and as their duties consisted of examining, revising, and expediting papal briefs and bulls got an inside look at the workings of papal policy. Paolo's star was on the rise, and in 1485 he had added the prestigious office of *cubicularius* to his portfolio when he was used by Innocent VIII as his representative to Pier Luigi Farnese.¹⁴⁵ *Cubicularii* took care of private papal needs in his chamber, which gave them great access to and intimacy with the pope.¹⁴⁶ They also fulfilled a series of administrative jobs pertaining to letters, petitions, and even secret correspondence, therefore acquiring valuable knowledge that could potentially be translated into influence.

¹⁴¹ Alessandro Farnese to Paolo Farnese, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 27-8.

¹⁴² BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 127^r.

¹⁴³ ASV, Reg. Vat. 640, ff. 16^r-17^v. These privileges had also been bestowed on his brother, father, and grandfather BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 135^v-136^r.

¹⁴⁴ Walther von Hoffmann gives the dates 1482-1499 for Paolo's membership of the college of abbreviators in his *Forschungen zur Geschichte der Kurialen Behörden: Vom Schisma bis zum Reformation* (Rome, 1914), vol. II, p. 117.

¹⁴⁵ Innocent VIII to Pier Luigi I Farnese, 25 November 1485. ASV, Arm. XXXIX, 19, f. 71^r.

¹⁴⁶ BAV, Vat. Lat. 12343, f. 111^{r-v}; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "The Pope's Household and Court in the Early Modern Age", in Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan & Metin Kunt (eds.), *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 239-64. On the importance of access: Dries Raeymaekers & Sebastiaan Derks (eds.), *The Key to Power? The Culture of Access in Princely Courts, 1400-1750* (Leiden, 2016); Paul Dover, "'Saper la mente della soa Beatudine': Pope Paul II and the Ambassadorial Community in Rome (1464-1471)", *Renaissance & Reformation* 31/3 (2008), pp. 3-34.

The Neapolitan Barons' War temporarily halted Paolo's rise through the ranks of the curial bureaucracy as his lay relatives relinquished papal service and entered the camp of Innocent's opponents. Nonetheless, once hostilities had ended Paolo regained favour. The exact date of his nomination as apostolic protonotary and apostolic secretary is unknown, but it is likely that Stefano dell'Aquila's letter of 5 April 1488 to Alessandro refers to Paolo's promotion. In this letter, Dell'Aquila, apart from congratulating Alessandro with the birth of a son to his cousin Ranuccio XVIII and Primavera da Varana (*nato ex Varanea virgine puero*), specifically refers to "the pontifical offices that your younger first cousin (Paolo was Ranuccio's younger brother) obtained in Rome (*pontificiis muneribus, quibus minor patruelis potitur in urbe*)."¹⁴⁷ In the same month, Paolo's brother Ranuccio successfully reingratiated himself with the pope by concluding a combined Florentine-papal *condotta* for which Lorenzo de' Medici and Innocent had eagerly negotiated. Paolo's promotion would have coincided with these negotiations and may have been part of the bargain. Further supporting the supposition that this was the period when Paolo was promoted to apostolic protonotary is a lyrical congratulatory letter written by Alessandro Farnese. Alessandro wrote to Paolo,

I understood from the letters of my brother Angelo that you are well and obtained a prestigious benefice; but if this is so, then I need to warmly congratulate you and I greatly rejoice. And indeed, amidst these fateful events (literally: this broth of all things), I have it as very pleasing that something may be hoped for and obtained by good men; moreover, I exult that these things augment our family. Remains that you may thus bear yourself henceforth so that you are worthy of seeing even greater things, to which I highly encourage you.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Stefano dell'Aquila to Alessandro Farnese, 5 April 1488. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 35-6. His nomination certainly took place before 1491 when Paolo signed a letter as apostolic protonotary and secretary. Paolo Farnese to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 20 May 1491. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, f. 459^{r-v}.

¹⁴⁸ "Intellexi ex litteris Angeli fratris te et bene valere et dignitatem adeptum esse non vulgarem; quod si est, ita ut maxime debeo tibi gratulor et mihi gaudeo. Nam cum in hac fece omnium rerum etiam a bonis aliquid sperari et assequi posse pergratum habeo, tum hoc familiae nostrae additum esse triumpho. Restat quod ita te imposterum geras ut etiam maioribus rebus dignus videare, ad quod te maxime hortor." Alessandro Farnese to Paolo Farnese, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 27-8.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the office of apostolic protonotary. Directly concerned with the political machinations of the Roman court and the documents that enshrined them on paper, the apostolic protonotary had both direct access to important political circles, the pope himself, and through the many documents that passed through his hands to an enormous amount of political information.¹⁴⁹ Apostolic protonotaries were at the centre of political power at the Curia and even had precedence over bishops at court. Protonotaries' influence extended beyond the Curia as Paolo Farnese's sponsorship of his humanist friend Antonio Mancinelli shows.¹⁵⁰ In an attempt to obtain a lectureship at the University of Rome for Mancinelli, Paolo enlisted the support of his relative Gentile Virginio Orsini in order that he and Orso Orsini, Bishop of Teano, might sway (or coerce) some of the electors in Mancinelli's favour.¹⁵¹ No wonder that the office of protonotary was part of the *cursus honorum* of most successful prelates and when in 1494 the King of Naples requested the pope that his grandson be made a cardinal this was refused on the basis of his inexperience, "having neither been apostolic protonotary nor bishop."¹⁵² Protonotaries were often promoted directly to bishoprics, archbishoprics, and even the cardinalate. In the case of Giovanni Colonna, he became the head of his family by virtue of being protonotary.¹⁵³ The office was highly sought after by other barons and in 1492 apart from Paolo Farnese, Giacomo Caetani of Sermoneta, Sinolfo degli'Ottieri, and Giulio Cesarini fulfilled the office.¹⁵⁴ Combining the offices of apostolic abbreviator, secretary, protonotary, and chamberlain while only a quadragenarian, it was only a matter of time before he would have obtained an even higher ecclesiastical dignity. But it was not to be.

¹⁴⁹ Giorgio Marchesi Buonaccorsi, *Antichità et eccellenza del protonotariato apostolico partecipante colle più scelte notizie de'Santi, sommi Pontefici, cardinali, e prelati che ne sono stati insigniti sino al presente* (Faenza 1751).

¹⁵⁰ On Mancinelli, see Paul Gehl, *Humanism for Sale: Making and Marketing Schoolbooks in Italy, 1450-1650* (2011). <http://www.humanismforsale.org/> (last accessed 26-07-2019).

¹⁵¹ Paolo Farnese to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 15 April 1491. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 70, parte 2, f. 255^r.

¹⁵² "no[n] essendo p[ri]ma ne prothonotario ne vescovo." Bartolomeo da Bracciano to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 20 December 1493. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 3, f. 592^r.

¹⁵³ Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*, pp. 103-5.

¹⁵⁴ ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Pergamene, II.A.18,054; Conti, *Le Storie*, vol. II, p. 41.

Innocent's death and Alexander's election caused an abrupt hiatus in Paolo's hitherto successful career. Paolo was still in post shortly after the conclave, but by Summer and Autumn 1493 he was no longer in Rome but in the Romagna accompanying his brother Ranuccio's mercenary-company (now in service of the Republic of Venice).¹⁵⁵ It was Paolo who reported his brother's death at the Battle of Fornovo to Viterbo's communal government, suggesting that he had until that point remained in his brother's retinue.¹⁵⁶ After that, Paolo seems to have retired to the Farnese's territories where he was hunting when an Orvietan ambassador tried to gain an audience in 1498.¹⁵⁷ Naturally, Paolo still concerned himself with issues of dynastic importance: he concluded negotiations betrothing his two nieces Camilla and Margherita – who presumably were under his tutelage – to the brothers Troilo and Giacomo Savelli of Palombara, his nephew Federico to Giulia Farnese's daughter, Laura Orsini, in 1499, and made arrangements for the succession to his possessions in a (lost) will dated 1500.¹⁵⁸ Nonetheless, Paolo maintained his self-exile from the papal Curia and presumably died in relative obscurity some time shortly before he could see his brother-in-law ascend to the papacy as Pius III (1503). His cousin Alessandro signed a new marriage contract as legal guardian of Margherita Farnese, betrothing her to Giovanni Conti of Valmontone on 10 October 1502, suggesting that at that point Paolo had been interred in the Farnese family tomb.¹⁵⁹ The explanations for how Paolo's model curial career stalled lie in the examination of his cousin Alessandro's career, which surpassed Paolo's and in doing so prevented his further promotion. Moreover, where Paolo's career sheds light on the strategies of ecclesiastical promotion pursued by the Farnese at the Curia, Alessandro's career also

¹⁵⁵ ASV, Reg. Vat. 772, ff. 7^v-13^v; Ranuccio XVIII Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 12 September 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, MR 15, f. 147^{r-v}; The Papal Master of Ceremonies Johann Burchard lists Paolo as a member of the College of Abbreviators on 4 June 1493: "P. Farnesius, protonotarius et secretarius" but also marks him as 'absens.' Johannes Burckardi, *Liber Notarum ab anno MCCCCLXXXIII usque ad annum MDVI*, ed. Enrico Celani (Città di Castello 1906–1942), vol. I, p. 435.

¹⁵⁶ Angeli, *Famiglie Viterbesi*, p. 218.

¹⁵⁷ Bernardino to Conservators of Peace of Orvieto, 24 October 1498. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 686, parte 3, unfoliated.

¹⁵⁸ BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 128^{r-v}, 139^v; ASR, Collegio dei notai capitolini, busta 176, ff. 895^r-896^v, published in *Regesto dei documenti*, pp. 210-15.

¹⁵⁹ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

provides evidence how local ecclesiastical institutions and family relations aided the advancement of the Farnese scions.

Alessandro Farnese: Papal Treasurer and Cardinal

Of Alessandro we know that he had a model humanist education at Pomponio Leto's Roman Academy.¹⁶⁰ Leto regarded Alessandro as a promising pupil with whom he remained in correspondence long after his schooldays. At the age of sixteen, Alessandro was selected to orate on reinstating the practice of celebrating Rome's birthday by crowning poets with laurel, and gave a speech that both reflected his dexterity in composing Latin as well as the breadth of his erudition.¹⁶¹ For all his intellectual qualities, it was presumably his family ties that gained him the position of apostolic scriptor on 1 February 1482, his young age notwithstanding.¹⁶² Alessandro added a few other benefices to his portfolio and was made receiver of the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Gradoli, as well as secular prior of the chapter of San Lorenzo in Viterbo on 13 February 1485.¹⁶³ Gradoli was part of the Farnese patrimony and it is possible that the *iuspatronatus* over local ecclesiastical institutions gave the Farnese the opportunity to provide their offspring with some additional income from minor benefices. Furthermore, Alessandro's position at Viterbo's cathedral no doubt reflects his family's local influence in the political and religious life of that commune; Alessandro also became a canon of San Lorenzo on 22 June 1492.¹⁶⁴ If these benefices provide insight into the Farnese's local patronage network, the

¹⁶⁰ Frugoni, "Per uno studio", pp. 202-10; On Leto's Roman Academy, see Susanne de Beer, "The Roman 'Academy' of Pomponio Leto: From an Informal Humanist Network to the Institution of a Literary Society", in Arjan van Dixhoorn & Susie Speakman Sutch (eds.), *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 181-218; Anna Modigliani, Angela Calocero & Elettra Camperlingo (eds.), *Pomponio Leto tra identità locale e cultura internazionale: atti del convegno internazionale, Teggiano, 3-5 ottobre 2008* (Rome, 2011).

¹⁶¹ Concetta Bianca, "Pomponio Leto e l'invenzione dell'Accademia Romana", in Marc Deramaix, Perrine Galand-Hallyn, Ginette Vagenheim & Jean Vignes (eds.), *Les Academies dans l'europe humaniste: Idéaux et pratiques* (Geneva, 2008), pp. 25-56.

¹⁶² ASV, Reg. Vat. 659, ff. 34^v-35^r.

¹⁶³ ASV, Reg. Vat. 711, ff. 33^r-34^v.

¹⁶⁴ Jennifer DeSilva draws attention to how cathedral and basilica chapters were monopolised by local patrician families in Bologna in her "Ecclesiastical Dynasticism in Early Modern Bologna: The Canonical Chapters of San Pietro and San Petronio", in Gian Mario Anselmi, Angela de Benedictis & Nicholas Terpstra (eds.), *Bologna –*

remainder of the bull is as relevant. The bull stresses Alessandro's baronial descent and promises to reserve the next available canonry at the Lateran Basilica of Saint John for Alessandro. Normally the prebends at Rome's major basilicas were firmly controlled by the Roman barons for their kin or clients.¹⁶⁵ That such a position was reserved for Alessandro Farnese is testimony to the Farnese's integration into the ranks of Rome's baronial elite. Yet, much like that of his brother Paolo, Alessandro's career also suffered from the outbreak of the Neapolitan Barons' War.

There are several scurrilous tales about Alessandro's imprisonment in Castel Sant'Angelo that originated during or after his pontificate. In reality, he was merely a hostage when his family, above all his brother Angelo IV, broke off their *condotte* with the pope and took up service with his enemies.¹⁶⁶ Whether he escaped, as some versions would have it, or was released, Alessandro transferred to Florence where he lived with his sister's in-laws and was able to complete his education. In Florence, Alessandro was surrounded by some of Italy's most pre-eminent humanists of the day, amongst whom Demetrio Calcondila, Angelo Poliziano, Marsilio Ficino, Flavius Mithridates, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Gregorio da Spoleto, and Bartolomeo Scala. Among Alessandro's fellow students were Giovanni de' Medici, Giulio de' Medici, and the brothers Alessandro and Paolo Cortesi. In particular, Alessandro avidly took to learning Greek, albeit not without complaining to his cousin Paolo "what a heavy burden [literally: millstone] it is to venture outside of one's own language."¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Alessandro was apparently studious, as his letters became interspersed with Greek citations and his

Cultural Crossroads from the Medieval to the Baroque: Recent Anglo-American Scholarship (Bologna, 2013), pp. 173-91.

¹⁶⁵ Andreas Rehberg, "Luci e ombre sui canonici delle grandi basiliche di Roma nel Rinascimento: appunti sulla loro formazione culturale-religiosa e sulla loro reputazione presso i contemporanei", in Amedeo de Vincentiis & Anna Modigliani (eds.), *Roma e il papato nel medioevo: studi in onore di Massimo Miglio* (Rome, 2012), vol. I, pp. 419-39; Andreas Rehberg, "Religiosità collettiva e privata fra i canonici delle grandi basiliche di Roma nel tardo medioevo", in Giulia Barone & Anna Esposito (eds.), *Vita religiosa a Roma (secoli XIII-XV): Atti della giornata di studio su Roma religiosa (secoli XIII-XV), Roma 12 maggio 2008* (Rome, 2010), pp. 41-80; Barone, "Nobiltà romana e Chiesa".

¹⁶⁶ Luiten, "Sexuality, Agency, and Honor", pp. 38, 41.

¹⁶⁷ "Graeca versamus, adeo ut vix hoc exiguum temporis quo ad te scripsimus impune studiis nostris eripere potuerimus; tantae molis est extra linguam propriam peregrenari." Alessandro Farnese to Paolo Farnese, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 27-8; The reference is to Virgil's *Aeneid*, 1.33; "In litteras Graecas me totum transfudi ita tamen ut nonnunquam aliquis locus Latinis relinquatur." Alessandro Farnese to Sulpizio da Veroli, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 31-2.

progress led his fellow student Scipione Forteguerra to compliment him: “I have heard incredible and unbelievable things about you, o Alexander, that you have learned so well the language of the Greeks that it is hard to discern whether you happen to be born a Roman or of the Greek mother tongue.”¹⁶⁸

Although Alessandro’s erudition gained him lasting fame in the works of Paolo Cortesi and Ludovico Ariosto, the immediate benefits of his Florentine sojourn were more mundane. He had sought to attract the attention of Lorenzo de’ Medici through his poetry, for which he also enlisted the aid of Lorenzo’s son Giovanni, with the aim of obtaining his support for his curial career.¹⁶⁹ Now that the Neapolitan Barons’ War had been concluded and an alliance made between Innocent VIII and Lorenzo, the latter’s recommendation carried significant weight. In two letters to his ambassador in Rome of 4 April 1489, Lorenzo warmly recommended Alessandro and supported his petition to buy one of the newly-created secretarial offices without however taking the habit and conclusively foregoing the chance of dynastic succession.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps realising that the request for such a high curial office without ordination was much to ask, Lorenzo wrote another more forceful letter a week later in order to convey the extent of his support:

A few days ago, I wrote you a letter in favour of my lord Alessandro Farnese, and currently he intends to come hither, possibly for the same reason and in order to be known by the Sanctity of Our Lord as his most devoted servant. I would like to convey to you that this man, apart from being born to the house that he is, has many and singular qualities, amongst which most abundantly erudition and excellent manners, because he is most sophisticated and an example of a decent and laudable life. For these reasons, which you know how much they are capable of moving me, I recommend him to you as I would

¹⁶⁸“Ἀπιστά καί παράδοξα, ὡς Ἀλέξανδρε, ἤκουσα περί σου, ὅτι τὰ περὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων διάλεκτον οὕτω ἐξέμαθες, ὥστε οὐ ῥάδιον εἶναι διαγνῶναι, πότερον Ῥωμαῖος ἢ Ἕλληνας τὴν φωνὴν ὦν τυγχάνεις.” Scipione Forteguerra to Alessandro Farnese, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 55-7. I thank Davide Massimo for his help in translating this letter.

¹⁶⁹ Alessandro Farnese to Lorenzo de’ Medici, undated, and Alessandro Farnese to Giovanni de’ Medici, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 24-5, 29.

¹⁷⁰ Lorenzo de’ Medici to Giovanni Lanfredini, 4 April 1489. Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, XV, pp. 48-59, 62-3.

my son Piero, and I pray you introduce him and recommend him most warmly to Our Lord, for you could do me no greater favour nor could I be more content than with this.¹⁷¹

It was not until the following year that Alessandro took up his post as clerk in the Curia again, but from that moment on his career took off.¹⁷² Lorenzo's support finally gained him the much-desired position of apostolic secretary on 16 August 1490.¹⁷³ On 8 July 1491 – now also being able to count on the support of the Vice-Chancellor of the Church, Rodrigo Borgia, and his relatives – Alessandro was promoted to the post of apostolic protonotary.¹⁷⁴ The Farnese's decision to invest in clerical careers for their offspring had thus paid off. Through a combination of allocating local benefices, pulling strings with their clients in nearby communes, and obtaining the support of allies and relatives among Rome's barons, the College of Cardinals, and Florence's unofficial ruler, the two Farnese cousins had gained entrance to the curial elite. Considering the relatively young age at which this had been achieved, it would not have been unreasonable to dream of attaining additional dignities such as an episcopal mitre or even a cardinal's red hat.

The Farnese had much to hope from the outcome of the conclave that followed Innocent VIII's death in 1492. Of the cardinals that entered the Sistine Chapel and were locked inside, the Farnese sported close or more distant familial connections to a substantial number of them. Even so, none of the outcomes would have been as advantageous as Rodrigo Borgia's election. As Giulia's brother,

¹⁷¹ "Io vi scripsi a' dì passato in favore di messer Alexandro da Farnese, et al presente ha facto pensiero venire di costà, forse per la medesima cagione et per essere consciuto dalla Sanctità di Nostro Signore per suo fedelissimo servitore. Io voglio farve intendere che costui, oltre allo essere nato della casa che è, ha molte e singolari parte in sé, tra la quali sono molto abundante le lettere et buoni costumi, perché è et doctissimo et uno exemplo di buono et laudabile vita. Per queste cagioni, che sapete quanto mi soglono muovere, ve lo raccomando quanto farei Piero mio figliuolo, et vi priegho lo introduciate et raccomandiate caldissimamente a Nostro Signore, di che non potresti farmi maggiore piecere né io potrei esserne più contento." Lorenzo de' Medici to Giovanni Lanfredini, 10 April 1489. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, XV, pp. 79-80.

¹⁷² ASV, Reg. Lat. 912, f. 162^r; Von Hoffmann, *Forschungen*, II, pp. 88-9.

¹⁷³ ASV, Reg. Lat. 891, f. 136^r.

¹⁷⁴ ASV, Reg. Vat. 695, f. 300^r; Gigliola Fragnito, "Paolo III", *DBI*; Although it has not survived intact and is difficult to decipher, a letter from Lorenzo Pucci seems to suggest the involvement of Adriana del Milà and Juan López, Rodrigo Borgia's secretary, in promoting Alessandro. Lorenzo Pucci to Puccio Pucci, 15 January 1491. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 37.

Alessandro stood to gain and immediately after Borgia's election was nominated treasurer-general of the Church.¹⁷⁵ Reflecting on the new status that Giulia and Alessandro had acquired at court, and the potential benefits to their wider kinship network, a certain Gottifredo, a servant of the Pucci, reported back to Florence "that our monsignor Alessandro [Farnese] and my lord Alessandro [Pucci] are great masters and are favoured by the pope to the extent that the court following murmurs he will make him a cardinal."¹⁷⁶ Within a year these rumours turned out to be prophetic as Stefano dell'Aquila, Angelo Farnese, and Alessandro himself announced the felicitous news of his elevation to the cardinalate to the Pucci in Florence.¹⁷⁷

Some contemporaries adduced, probably correctly, that Giulia Farnese had a decisive role in her brother's elevation.¹⁷⁸ Historians have generally accepted these conclusions.¹⁷⁹ However, other considered that Alessandro Farnese and his colleague Giuliano Cesarini, likewise a Borgia relative, were also raised to the cardinalate to placate the Roman populace.¹⁸⁰ Alessandro himself pretended to see Piero de' Medici's hand in his nomination, although this was presumably intended to emphasise his prospective value as a mediator between Florence and the papacy.¹⁸¹ Probably none of these explanations suffices on its own. Few other candidates for the cardinalate could boast the same level of education or the same pedigree as Alessandro Farnese; he was *ex baronum genere* (from the baronial class) after all. Alessandro's family was well-connected to the Italian peninsula's noble, princely, and royal families, and had fostered and maintained these connections for decades. Moreover, by virtue of his sister's marriage to Orsino Orsini, Alessandro was regarded as Borgia kin

¹⁷⁵ Alessandro Farnese to Piero de' Medici, 10 September 1492. ASF, MAP, XIX, 129^{r-v}.

¹⁷⁶ "che lo nostro monsignore Alexandro et lo signore Alexandro sono grandi maestri e sono favoriti dal papa per modo che la brigata disse che lo farà Cardinale." Gottifredo to Puccio Pucci, 29 September 1492. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 42.

¹⁷⁷ Stefano dell'Aquila and Angelo IV Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 20 September 1493 and Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 23 September 1493. ASF, Signori, DB, OP, MR 15, ff. 153^r-154^v, 158^{r-v}.

¹⁷⁸ Infessura, *Diario*, p. 293.

¹⁷⁹ Although Helge Gamrath is reluctant to attribute any decisive role to Giulia Farnese in his *Farnese*, p. 27.

¹⁸⁰ "Romani Populi, Alexandrum Farnesium ex Baronum genere, et Iulianum Caesarinum Gabrielis filium, Prothonotarios et Secretarios apostolicos." Conti, *Le storie*, vol. II, p. 61; "p[er] co[n]to d[e] romani voleva il prothonot[ario] cesarini et il prothonot[ario] da Farnese suo tesauriere", Antonio Collenuccio to Piero de' Medici, 14 September 1493. ASF, MAP, LV, 84^r-85^r.

¹⁸¹ Alessandro Farnese to Piero de' Medici, 5 February 1494. ASF, MAP, CXXXIX, 187^{r-v}.

and the letters exchanged between him and Cesare Borgia further attest to the familiarity between the two families.¹⁸² Giulia's intervention therefore may not have been instrumental at all in determining *whether* a Farnese obtained a red hat. It can nevertheless be argued that Giulia's intervention did determine the moment *when* the elevation came Alessandro's way, namely at an age – Alessandro was twenty-five – at which usually only papal nephews or scions from Italy's princely dynasties could aspire to the cardinalate.¹⁸³ Giulia presumably also played a pivotal role in determining who of the two Farnese clerics was promoted. There is no other way to explain why Alessandro, the younger cousin who had only just freshly embarked on a curial career in Rome, would have been preferred over Paolo with his long and impressive track-record in some of the most prestigious curial offices. Giulia's interference and Alessandro's subsequent promotion may go a long way in explaining why Paolo opted for self-exile from Rome, perhaps disillusioned as the road to promotion was now closed to him.

Ultimately, the Farnese's success was the result of many differing factors. A variety of political strategies were pursued by the Farnese that proved in the end to be fortunate choices in light of the historical turns and developments of the Quattrocento. Throughout the century, the Farnese had extended their territorial power and influence in the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia. Moreover, they had cultivated and extended their ties with members of the curial elite, the College of Cardinals, and many of the incumbent popes. Most importantly, the Farnese had – a few notable but exceptional events aside – pursued a strategy of support for pontifical power since the end of the Western Schism, and had reaped the rewards that they had aspired to by virtue of the deeds of their ancestors and their own, in the form of economic privileges, military offices, investitures with castles and territories, and, finally, ecclesiastical benefices. A member of the dynasty among the ranks of the cardinals was therefore as much the crowning achievement of, aided by contingency, favourable actions and dynastic strategies pursued throughout the entire Quattrocento.

¹⁸² Alessandro Farnese to Cesare Borgia, undated, and Cesare Borgia to Alessandro Farnese, 5 June 1490. *Carteggio umanistico*, pp. 52-4.

¹⁸³ DeSilva, "Politics and Dynasty".

Chapter Five

Patronage of the Arts and Sponsoring of Humanists in the Construction of Farnese Dynastic

Memory on Isola Bisentina

In the midst of the Lago di Bolsena lies an isolated island, Isola Bisentina. An abandoned church stands on the island alongside the remains of a Franciscan friary now largely overrun by vegetation and animals. In earlier days, according to Pius II, who visited the place and dined at the friars' table, the monastic garden spilled over into a forested area inhabited by tame rabbits and all kinds of fowl.¹ Several walkways crossed the island leading up to its oratories that were built on or in the cliffs on the island's outer edges as sites for contemplation and prayer, thus integrating the entire topography into a unified sacred landscape.² The island's church, dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, contained the final resting place of most members of the Farnese dynasty between 1450, when the mausoleum's founder Ranuccio XVII was interred, and 1565, when the embalmed body of Ranuccio XXI Farnese, Cardinal-Bishop of Sabina, became the last addition to the mausoleum. Isola Bisentina thus retained a central role as the focus of the Farnese's dynastic memory for over a century in a period of particular relevance for their history. It is therefore worthwhile reflecting how sponsorship of the construction of a mausoleum, church, Franciscan friary, and sacred landscape fit into the Farnese's wider dynastic and cultural politics.

Naturally, Farnese fifteenth-century patronage focused on other traditional areas, including the creation of a family college in Bologna, the construction of palaces, refurbishment of castles, sponsorship of mythical genealogies, as well as the decorative arts, endeavours that are lost, have survived only fragmentarily, or have been altered since.³ But Isola Bisentina stands out for its ambitious

¹ Piccolomini, *I commentarii*, pp. 1618-22.

² The term sacred landscape is borrowed from Michel Conan (ed.), *Sacred Gardens and Landscapes: Ritual and Agency* (Cambridge MA, 2007).

³ Gamrath mentions now lost tapestries depicting the Farnese's history in his *Farnese*, p. 38.

scope, the innovativeness of its programme, the ways in which other actors – most notably popes – were drawn in and persuaded to contribute, and how humanists in the Farnese’s circle referred to it in texts. Moreover, Isola Bisentina is the only example of a Franciscan sacred landscape that was created at the behest of a baronial dynasty; it was intimately connected to the dynasty’s memory in ways that its members themselves, as well their subjects, could engage with. Therefore, Isola Bisentina is an exemplary case that is illustrative of the ways in which the Farnese utilised patronage for the fabrication of their dynastic memory in the fifteenth century. Yet in other aspects the programme that was developed on the island was in many ways novel and inspired by cultural and spiritual developments that ran counter to the classicising models of what later became defined as Renaissance art. Finally, the Isola Bisentina features in one of the early writings of the famous humanist Paolo Cortesi, his dialogue *De hominibus doctis* (1490), which was written in collaboration with Alessandro Farnese, who might have suggested the Isola Bisentina as its setting. An analysis of the role of the Isola Bisentina and the Farnese monuments in Cortesi’s work further illuminates how the island’s fame spread textually and in which circles, but above all reveals something of the dynastic consciousness of Quattrocento nobles and their interactions with sites that were used to anchor and articulate dynastic memory.

Renato Lefevre, the most recent historian to study Isola Bisentina, concluded that research into the construction and history of the island’s mausoleum, church, friary, and landscape raises more questions and hypotheses than definitive answers. This chapter aims to resolve a few of these questions while also opening up several new ones. I nevertheless take up Lefevre’s suggestion that “careful comparisons with analogous endeavours of the same period and the same cultural ambience could perhaps provide useful indications.”⁴ After all, the key to unravelling the meaning of acts of noble patronage lies in the way in which they interacted with contemporary practices and culture.⁵

⁴ Renato Lefevre, “Interrogativi e ipotesi sul ‘sacrarium’ farnesiano dell’Isola Bisentina”, in Renato Lefevre (ed.), *Rinascimento nel Lazio* (Rome, 1979), pp. 159-84.

⁵ Claudius Sittig & Christian Wieland, “Einleitung”, in Claudius Sittig & Christian Wieland (eds.), *Die ‘Kunst des Adels’ in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 2018), pp. 7-22.

Therefore, it is precisely my goal in this chapter to integrate the Farnese's patronage that centred on Isola Bisentina into a wider Quattrocento cultural framework of Franciscan piety and developments in devotional practices. In doing so, I circumvent the pitfall of appreciating the Farnese's patronage on Isola Bisentina solely by measuring it by the yardstick of the Renaissance revival of classical forms.

Helge Gamrath, for instance, sees the construction of the Farnese mausoleum, church, friary, and landscape as a statement of splendour, a manifestation of *magnificenza* typical of Renaissance culture, yet ultimately undervalues the island's artistic programme for its failure to adopt a proper classicising style.⁶ By contrast, it is argued here that the late-Gothic style chosen for Ranuccio XVII's monument was consciously adopted to reflect its patron's vicinity to the papal court and the style in vogue for funerary monuments there.⁷ Similarly, the programme for Isola Bisentina's sacred landscape resonated with Franciscan innovations in devotional practices, reflected a renewed interest in the Holy Land and its venerable sites, and its execution took place in interaction with prominent Franciscans and with further contributions by a series of popes.

The preceding chapters have argued that consciousness of being part of a larger dynasty, the *domus de Farnesio*, guided and constrained decisions made by the Farnese in the areas of inheritance, social interaction with subjects as well as peers, career choice, political allegiance, and their relationship with the papacy – not dissimilar to how such an awareness guided such choices for other dynasties, too.⁸ It certainly provided the impetus for the Farnese's patronage on Isola Bisentina. The final parts of this chapter use the evidence available to provide insight into how this consciousness was imbibed through engagement with the memory of Farnese ancestors and their deeds.

⁶ Gamrath, *Farnese*, pp. 33-7.

⁷ For Ranuccio XVII Farnese's monument, see Figure 56 in the Appendix.

⁸ Iris Holzward-Schäfer, "Gefährdete Dynastien in historisch-interdisziplinärer Perspektive: Resümee", in Ellen Widder, Iris Holzward-Schäfer & Christian Heinemeyer (eds.), *Geboren, um zu herrschen? Gefährdete Dynastien in historisch-interdisziplinärer Perspektive* (Tübingen, 2018), pp. 267-86; Michael Hecht, "'Dynastie' als Norm und Praxis: Verwandtschaftliche und herrschaftliche Ordnung am Beispiel der Fürsten von Anhalt in der Frühen Neuzeit", *Mitteilungen der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* 5 (2016), pp. 121-29.

As a result of the close affiliation with *histoire de mentalités* the first generation of scholars concerned with the role of memory in history focused on collective memories, precipitating a response that instead posited memory was contested, differentiated, and negotiated.⁹ Predictably, third wave memory studies now emphasise the dialectic relation between group and individual memory.¹⁰ Like the inherent tension between individual and dynasty, dynastic memory consisted of a personal individualised attitude towards the past as well as of shared, transmitted, echoed, and mediated narratives, not to mention textual and material manifestations of such narratives. These could be intended for personal use or public display. Moreover, recent studies in memory follow Reinhart Koselleck in ascribing to memory different temporalities. Koselleck argues that the past can be experienced as absent, as something definitively past, but can also become present as a mental representation and linked to the future in the form of aspirations and impulses for action in what he terms bundles of possibility.¹¹ It can be helpful to present dynastic consciousness in the same terms as it illuminates how dynasty placed the individual in connection with time and with temporalities in both an unbroken linear chain of descent that connected individuals to their progenitors as the blood of their forefathers flowed through their veins, as well as a cyclical idea of time in which ancestors' achievements foreshadow and inspire emulation by their descendants.¹² Relying on Koselleck's framework can help in making sense of the scattered evidence pertaining to the Farnese's interactions with their ancestors' memory and aid in appreciating how individual members of the Farnese saw their place within this wider dynastic framework and envisaged their actions as making a lasting contribution to their dynasty's honour and benefit. Inevitably, such remembrance was a subjective representation or even imagination of a glorious past that could be part history part mythology. Many of these

⁹ Alon Confino, "Memory and the History of Mentalities", in Astrid Erll & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 77-84.

¹⁰ Gregor Feindt, Félix Krawatzek, Daniele Mehler, Friedemann Pestel & Rieke Trimçev, "Entangled Memory: Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies", *History & Theory* 53/1 (2014), pp. 24-44; Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory", *Parallax* 17/4 (2011), pp. 4-18.

¹¹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten: Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 203-21, 246-64.

¹² Anita Guerreau-Jalabert, "Flesh and Blood in Medieval Language about Kinship", in Christopher Johnson, Bernhard Jussen, David Sabean & Simon Teuscher (eds.), *Blood & Kinship: Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present* (New York, 2013), pp. 61-82.

representations of the past were transmitted orally, by letter, or both, as is reflected in Stefano dell'Aquila's citation of Ranuccio XVII's story of how he had reunited his family and the dispersed Farnese patrimony in a letter reproaching Alessandro Farnese for coveting a larger chunk of his brother's inheritance.¹³ Often, more permanent artefacts for anchoring dynastic memory were desired. These could be wills, historical narratives laid down in text, in painting, or other artistic media, and these retained a central role in the social life of the Farnese.

Unsurprisingly, tombs were particularly in vogue as mnemonic devices for dynastic memory. Tomb monuments in sacred spaces were tangible material objects that anchored dynastic memory spatially and temporally, and that were specifically designed to be interacted with subsequently.¹⁴ As sites of devotional practices tombs retained an integral role in the lives of family and community.¹⁵ Tombs, intended as eternal monuments, communicated a continuity of power that glossed over those moments of dynastic crisis during which public power was transferred and had to be claimed by younger generations after the death of a prominent family member.¹⁶ Monumental funerary architecture was therefore widely used by royal dynasties throughout Europe, including those dynasties that ruled over parts of Italy like the Angevins of Naples with whom the Farnese had sported ties.¹⁷ Such practices of anchoring dynastic memory in sacred spaces had in the Middle Ages spread among the nobility and mercantile elites of the Italian cities, too.¹⁸ The Farnese, by creating a family

¹³ See Chapter 1.

¹⁴ Natalia Nowakowska, "Introduction: space, time, and dynasty", in Natalia Nowakowska (ed.), *Remembering the Jagiellonians* (London, 2018), pp. 1-27.

¹⁵ Thea Tomaini, "Introduction", in Thea Tomaini (ed.), *Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 1-16; see also, Sharon Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, 1992).

¹⁶ Michel Foucault makes the link between tombs, mausoleums, and graveyards as heterotopias to what he dubs heterochronias, ruptures in (in this case dynastic) time. Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (London, 1998), pp. 182-3.

¹⁷ Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, pp. 251-61; Vinni Lucherini, "Celebrare e cancellare la memoria dinastica nella Napoli angioina: le tombe del principe Andrea d'Ungheria e della regina Giovanna I", *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 21 (2015), pp. 76-91; Stefano D'Ovidio, "Osservazioni sulla struttura e l'iconografia della tomba di re Robert d'Angiò in Santa Chiara a Napoli", *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 21 (2015), pp. 92-112; Tanja Michalsky, *Memoria und Rapresentation: die Grabmaler des Konigshauses Anjou in Italien* (Gottingen, 2000).

¹⁸ Frithjof Schwartz, *Il bel cimitero: Santa Maria Novella in Florenz 1279-1348: Grabmaler, Architektur und Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 2009); Brendan Cassidy, "The Tombs of the Acciaiuoli in the Certosa del Galuzzo outside Florence", in J.M. Luxford (ed.), *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2008),

tomb and sponsoring the construction of its surrounding church, were therefore pursuing a patronage strategy that was well-established and my analysis of the motivations that led to its construction in the first part of this chapter will be in line with scholarship on funerary memorials before moving on to my analysis of the Franciscans' involvement and how this led to the innovative creation of a sacred landscape.

Dynasty and Divinity: The Farnese Mausoleum on Isola Bisentina

The construction of a mausoleum and Franciscan complex was a conscious decision to instigate a new burial tradition for the Farnese dynasty. Before this, family members had been interred in Ischia. Geographically, Ischia was located at the heart of the Farnese patrimony, whereas Isola Bisentina was on its eastern border. Furthermore, Ischia was one of the Farnese's oldest possessions as well as most imposing castles, and its temporary rebellion at the end of the Trecento did not diminish its importance as the Farnese's central residence during the first half of the Quattrocento. Puccio II Farnese expressly stated in his 1385 will that "he wanted and ordered that his body be buried in the Church of Saint Hermes in Ischia in the sepulchre in which the other members of his house are buried."¹⁹ A family burial chapel, tomb, and tradition thus already existed and the creation of a new mausoleum on Isola Bisentina was therefore a sudden yet significant break with the past. Capodimonte, by contrast, and the island just off its shore had been in possession of the Farnese only since 1385 and official confirmation thereof only took place in 1419.²⁰ Yet the island offered a relatively empty space to work with, as its medieval castle and hamlet had been abandoned and lay in ruins. The castle had been constructed on order of Pope Urban IV, who had liberated the island from Giacomo de' Bisenzi and the Prefetti di Vico in 1262.²¹ Afterwards, it had become a prison for heretics condemned for life as well as

pp. 322-53; John Paleotti, "Medici Funerary Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to the 'Early Medici'", *Renaissance Quarterly* 59/4 (2006), pp. 1117-63.

¹⁹ "voluit et mandavit corpum suum sepeliri in eccl[esia]m S[anc]ti Ermetis de Castro Ischie in Polisine sepulchro in quo sepulti sunt alij de domo sua." ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated

²⁰ ASV, Reg. Vat. 348, ff. 172^v-173^r; *Cronaca di Luca di Domenico Manenti*, pp. 394-5.

²¹ Daniel Waley, *Mediaeval Orvieto* (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 44-5.

a refuge for hermits.²² We do not know exactly when the Church of San Giovanni on the island had been built, but at the start of the Quattrocento it was in seriously dilapidated state.

Plans for developing Isola Bisentina and reconstructing the Church are attested in 1431. Renato Lefevre and Fabiano Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio have argued these consisted of repairs and alterations of an already existing edifice, whereas Umberto Pannucci cites a brief in which Eugene IV donated the island to the Franciscans with the privilege to build an entirely new church.²³ In 1440, Eugene himself paid a visit to the island to witness the construction work undoubtedly accompanied by his captain Ranuccio XVII Farnese. The construction of most of the church, the friary as well as a family mausoleum, however, seem to have been conceived of at this point or even later and largely under the auspices of the condottiere.²⁴ The epitaph of Ranuccio's funerary monument tells us more:

Hoc sepulcrum fieri fecit magnificus dominus Ranutius de Farnesio pro se et aliorum de domo sua A.D. MCCCCXLVIII et die maij completum fuit²⁵

Conceived and finished in the final years of his life, Ranuccio was the driving force behind this monument for posterity. Ranuccio expressed his desire to be buried in San Giovanni in his will; he states explicitly that he had a monument built there. To fund the further construction and decoration of this monument and the church interior, Ranuccio further relinquished a helmet decorated with 18 pounds worth of silver. Both the text of the tomb's epitaph and the stipulation in Ranuccio's will that

²² Annibali, *Notizie storiche*, vol. II, 115-16; Mercurio Antonelli, "La 'Malta' dantesca e l'Isola Bisentina", *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 77 (1921), pp. 150-2.

²³ Lefevre, "Interrogativi e ipotesi", pp. 159, 163; Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina", pp. 108-32; Pannucci, *I Castelli*, p. 118. The brief itself relates both of reparations insofar as possible, but also includes the possibility of constructing an entirely new church and bell tower. *Bullarium Franciscanum continens constitutiones epistolas diplomata romanorum pontificum: Eugenii IV et Nicolai V: ad tres ordines S.P.N. Francisci spectantia*, ed. Ulricus Hüntemann (Quaracchi, 1929), p. 24.

²⁴ Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina", p. 108.

²⁵ "The magnificent lord Ranuccio Farnese had this sepulchre made for himself and for the other members of his house. Completed in the year of the lord 1449 and in the month of May."; Both Lefevre and Gamrath include a [sic] after aliorum, the former indicating that it should instead be aliis, concluding that the Farnese's mastery of Latin was poor. To me it seems that it may very well be a partitive genitive, which was commonly used on tombs. Lefevre, "Interrogativi e ipotesi", p. 165; Gamrath, *Farnese*, p. 33.

his descendants and heirs commit themselves to the repair and upkeep of the church exterior, interior, and the friars who lived on Isola Bisentina make it clear he intended to establish a dynastic tradition and lasting tie between his dynasty and the Franciscan convent and its church.²⁶

That Ranuccio's construction of a family mausoleum was taken up by his descendants can be inferred from Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis*. In this text, a young Alessandro Farnese, a close friend of the author, explains that the church and mausoleum were further embellished by his father and uncle; I will discuss this at greater length later on. The Church of St John the Baptist remained the Farnese's central burial space throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, which further suggests the importance it had obtained in enshrining the Farnese's dynastic memory. In his 1460 will, Angelo III announced his wish to be buried in the family crypt on Isola Bisentina. As an act of generosity he destined 50 gold ducats as well as his garments for the decoration of the altar.²⁷ Although leaving garments might not seem munificent, clothing represented a large chunk of the value of a nobleman's personal and portable possessions; one that was furthermore translatable into money and easily reused and recycled.²⁸ Furthermore, Angelo had expensive tastes. A friend of the cultured Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici, he shared with him an interest in sumptuous attire.²⁹ Angelo's gambesons therefore represented a value that, whether exchanged for money or reused for decorative purposes, must have added significantly to the church's interior.

In another stipulation, Angelo entrusted his brother Gabriele Francesco and his wife Giustina with the care for the construction of his *sepulchrum*.³⁰ This would have added another large, possibly freestanding monument to the church interior following that of his father. Further embellishments were made after the demise of more family members who requested additional tombs and left

²⁶ "ut omnes filii et heredes sui recomisum habeant locum ac fratres pro tempore existenses et ecclesiam Sancti Johannis de Insula predictam, in victu vestitu ac reparatione dicte Ecclesie discrete secundum eorum facultatem et temporum qualitates." Lefevre, "Il Testamento", p. 197.

²⁷ Item reliquit d[ic]te eccl[es]ie pro param[en]to altaris ubi est d[ic]ta sepultura supravestes ip[s]ius testatoris. ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 351, ff. 129^r-132^v.

²⁸ Daniel Lord Smail, *Legal Plunder: Households and Debt Collection in Late Medieval Europe* (Cambridge MA, 2016), pp. 41-5.

²⁹ Maria Grazia Pernis & Laurie Adams, *Lucrezia Tornabuoni de' Medici and the Medici Family in the Fifteenth Century* (New York, 2006), p. 28.

³⁰ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie I, busta 351, f. 130^r.

monetary bequests. Pier Luigi I Farnese, for example, expressed in his will the desire to be buried in the mausoleum and bequeathed 100 gold ducats. The same sum was destined for the newly-founded Franciscan friary in Canino too.³¹ Gabriele Francesco's will has been lost, but, as is clear from the minutes of a council meeting of the government of Viterbo, where Gabriele Francesco had died in the Farnese palace, they honoured the nobleman's memory by contributing to the costs of the funerary cortège that would carry the body to the Farnese's *locus*.³² It seems safe, therefore, to assume that his body was ferried to the Farnese's isle of the dead.

Angelo IV Farnese died in Capodimonte on the shore of the Lago di Bolsena and he too was presumably interred on the island. Members of the dynasty would in fact retain the tradition of being buried on Isola Bisentina well into the sixteenth century.³³ The mangled body of the assassinated Pier Luigi II Farnese was buried there, as was his son, Cardinal Ranuccio XXI Farnese, whose body would be recognised by colleagues during a visit of Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) and his court to the Farnese, where they saw according to a contemporary eyewitness account, many "*sepulture, arche e depositi*" as well as several embalmed corpses preserved in lifelike state.³⁴

Unfortunately, the additional monuments were destroyed during later renovations of the church. The only surviving, though heavily damaged, tomb – that of Ranuccio XVII Farnese – consists of a Gothic arch with two female figures holding candles. It is topped by his escutcheon sown with lilies, as well as a larger lily device crowning the arch.³⁵ The arch rests on a marble sarcophagus with a central epitaph flanked by two mirrored armorial achievements. These contain an escutcheon with 9 lilies placed 3-3-3, helmet with torse, and a unicorn crest. Heraldry therefore connected this monument to other expressions of Farnese patronage and parts of their patrimony. The presence of

³¹ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

³² BCA, Riforme 20, ff. 71^v-72^v.

³³ Federico Farnese bequeathed 200 ducats, Giulia Farnese 500, and both were interred on Isola Bisentina. ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

³⁴ Johannes Orbaan, "Viaggio di Gregorio XIII alla Madonna della Quercia", in *Miscellanea della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria* (Rome, 1920), pp. 365-418.

³⁵ See Appendix 56.

the unicorn with band wrapped around its neck is significant, too. It is an innovation that is still absent on the fourteenth-century Florentine monument of Pietro V Farnese.

The story of the adoption of this crest received a prominent place in Annius of Viterbo's *De Viterbii viris et foeminis illustribus*, written in the second half of the 1480s. Annius' work traces back the mythical genealogy of the Farnese from the Egyptian god Osiris through Cappadocia to Central Italy.³⁶ The story of the unicorn's band around its neck supposedly dates back to Ranuccio's service with Giovanna of Naples. In a chivalric gesture, the Queen presented Ranuccio with the honour of adding her regal band to his coat of arms, according to Annius.³⁷ If his story contains a kernel of truth, this would have been one that had been transmitted for three generations before Annius presumably heard it from Alessandro Farnese. The prominent presence of the regally adorned unicorn as the Farnese crest thus may have communicated the personal links that existed between Ranuccio himself, his dynasty, Giovanna of Naples, and the popes who sent him in support of her claims.

Heraldry was not alone in connecting the tomb monument to Ranuccio's other possessions, his extensive political connections, and his military exploits. Its sculptor did as well. The tomb is attributed to Isaia da Pisa. Isaia's oeuvre has incongruously been characterised as both late-Gothic and proto-Renaissance, and appreciation of his work has suffered as a consequence.³⁸ In the case of the Isola Bisentina, it is true that its late-Gothic style is far removed from the architecture of a contemporary family mausoleum that likewise was part of a larger Franciscan complex: the Tempio

³⁶ This genealogy only survives in fragments. BCA, MS. II. C. 49, ff. 214^r-215^v; Annius refers specifically to the Theban Osiris (*Osyri Thebano Aegyptio principe*). My hypothesis is that the claim to be descended from the Theban Osiris is a play on Alessandro Farnese's name, and Alexander the Great, who claimed to be, like all Macedonian kings, descended from Hēraklēs and to be his embodiment. Hēraklēs, of course, was the son of Zeus, a title that Alexander started to claim after visiting the Oracle of Amun in Egypt. Amun was a specifically Theban deity Hellenised as Zeus-Amun that had replaced or had been conflated with Osiris. The story is likely taken from Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Historiarum Alexandri Magni Macedonis libri qui supersunt*, IV, vii, 5-32, Plutarch's, *Vita Alexandri*, xxvii, 5-11 or Diodorus Siculus' *Βιβλιοθήκη ἱστορική*, 49, iii-51, iv, texts well known in the humanist circles in which Alessandro Farnese moved. Alessandro himself to some extent identified with Alexander the Great and the Macedonians in letters to Lorenzo de' Medici and Puccio Pucci. Alessandro Farnese to Lorenzo de' Medici and Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Puccio, undated. *Carteggio*, pp. 24-5, 60-1.

³⁷ "quod vir militia praeclarissimus esset legionum equitumque dux et magister a Regina Ioanna conductus est donatusque extiit ab eadem regia fascia qua unicornea sua contorquet colla ob dignitatem." BCA, MS. II. C. 49, f. 215^r.

³⁸ "Isaia da Pisa", *Grove Art Online*, doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T041676 (last accessed 16-10-2020).

Malatestiano at Rimini.³⁹ The construction of the Tempio Malatestiano was overseen by Leon Battista Alberti, the great humanist author and architect, and thus executed in a style perceived to mimic Classical Antiquity. Not only a renowned artist but especially a prolific writer, Alberti's work on architecture *De re aedificatoria* has become the normative standard against which all contemporary work is measured. However, it would not do justice to the Farnese sepulchre to dismiss it on the basis of its failure to achieve 'modernity' in style in the way that the Tempio Malatestiano did. Both styles, *al antica* and late Gothic, existed in parallel, and at times even mixed, and Gothic was considered far from outdated during the first half of the fifteenth century. The architectural embellishments of the Vatican Palace under Nicholas V were likewise executed in Gothic fashion with so-called 'Guelph battlements' and crenelation, and, as Flavia Cantatore argued, have suffered from being judged against Alberti's norms, too.⁴⁰

Ranuccio XVII's tomb is perhaps best appreciated once it is placed in the context of what Pio Francesco Pistilli has defined for the papal court as, "a late-Gothic culture with signs, at times unconsciously, of Renaissance innovations."⁴¹ Moreover, Isaia da Pisa's style of execution was much in vogue at the papal court in the 1440s. The tomb of the Portuguese Cardinal Antão Martins de Chaves (†1447) was by him, but it was above all the commission of Eugene IV's tomb that placed Isaia at the centre of Rome's artistic scene.⁴² The construction of this tomb was overseen by Eugene's nephew, Cardinal Francesco Condulmer, who, as we have seen, had collaborated closely with Ranuccio in military affairs and was nominated as guardian to Ranuccio's heirs. Isaia was still working on Eugene's tomb in 1449, and the Farnese sepulchre can therefore be seen as a parallel project that consciously articulated the political links between the recently-deceased pope and his condottiere. Clearly then,

³⁹ Charles Hope, "The Early History of the Tempio Malatestiano", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992), pp. 51-154.

⁴⁰ Flavia Cantatore, "The Palace of Nicholas V: Continuity and Innovation in the Vatican Palaces", in Silvia Beltramo, Flavia Cantatore & Marco Folin (eds.), *A Renaissance Architecture of Power: Princely Palaces in the Italian Quattrocento* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 290-319.

⁴¹ Pio Francesco Pistilli, "Patronato artistico al principio del Quattrocento: il ruolo dei cardinali nella rinascita della Roma cristiana", in Jürgen Densdorfer & Ralf Lützelshwab (eds.), *Die Kardinäle des Mittelalters und der frühen Renaissance* (Florence, 2013), pp. 301-20.

⁴² Michael Kühenthal, "Zwei Grabmäler des frühen Quattrocento in Rom: Kardinal Martinez de Chiavez und Papst Eugen IV.," *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 16 (1976), pp. 17-56.

Ranuccio's tomb carried the message that its sponsor possessed cultural savvy, prominent political connections, and thus that his dynasty should be counted among the leading ones in the Papal States.

A Franciscan Friary in an Age of Reform

If artistic choices for Ranuccio's tomb were a conscious attempt at communicating his personal links to the papal court, how then must we reinterpret his decision to specifically opt for the Friars Minor? Links between the Farnese and the mendicant orders are attested in the fourteenth century. Female members of the Farnese regularly became Poor Clares. A letter from Catherine of Siena to Ranuccio's grandmother Pentasilea Salimbeni is further proof not only of existing contacts between the Farnese and mendicant orders, but also of the spiritual turmoil of married noble life. Catherine exhorts Pentasilea to raise virtuous children, educated in the holy commandments, and as piously practicing Christians.⁴³ Echoes of such piety can be found in Ranuccio's will.⁴⁴

Generally, mercenary-captains and baronial families have had a bad press when it comes to their piety. Baronial unruliness was often perceived by popes as a direct attack on their spiritual as well as temporal authority as these were indistinguishably intertwined, and popes were wont to use the spiritual as well as temporal punishments at their disposal against their barons. Yet it seems inescapable that, even if barons and mercenary-captains found themselves opposed to papal rule, they seldom questioned the inherent truth of the Christian faith. Ranuccio XVII Farnese himself had obtained a papal privilege for a personal confessor, one his children and grandchildren would receive likewise, and had received by papal bull the privilege to hear mass in towns under interdict.⁴⁵ Both suggest a deep, although not unusual concern with personal devotion. Ranuccio's will abounds with

⁴³ "e li Figlioli nutricularli nelle virtù, e nelli santi comandamenti dolci di Dio, perchè non basta alla Madre, et al Padre di nutricularli solamente el Corpo (...) ma debba nutrire l'Anima nella gratia, giusta il suo potere, riprendendoli, e castigandoli nelli difetti. E sempre volliate, che usino la Confessione spesso, e la mattina odano la Messa, ò almeno li di comandati dalla Santa Chiesa." Catherine of Siena to Pentasilea Salimbeni, undated. *Le lettere di S. Caterina da Siena: ridotte a miglior lezione, e in ordine nuovo disposte*, ed. Niccolò Tommaseo & Piero Misciatelli (Florence, 1939-1947), vol. I, pp. 368-70.

⁴⁴ Item mandavit dominus testator dictis suis filijs quatinus ante omnia timeant et venerentur omnipotentem deum. Lefevre, "Il Testamento", p. 206.

⁴⁵ ASV, Reg. Vat. 640, ff. 16^r-17^v; ASV, Reg. Lat. 912, ff. 149^r, 285^v; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, ff. 135^v-136^r.

pious bequests, and the amount of alms and provisions far exceed contemporary norms – usually a few missals, breviaries, and dowries for unmarried girls – to also include monetary rewards for those clerics interceding for him at his sepulchre as well as financial support for pilgrims. Generous patronage of the Franciscans on Isola Bisentina could perhaps not erase the sins committed during the military life of a condottiere, but monks would say prayers for the salvation of the patron's soul. It made sense for men who pursued wealth through violence to munificently sponsor a mendicant order renowned for its poverty and pacifism.

As much as spiritual turmoil may have provided a powerful incentive for pious practices on the personal level, it is also difficult to overstate the prominence of the Franciscan Order and its Observant reform movement in fifteenth-century society.⁴⁶ The reverberations of Franciscans at the helm of movements of spiritual renewal could be felt throughout Italy in the public squares, where sermons targeted usury, the moral conduct of the faithful, as well as magic and witchcraft; but were also evident in more intimate, domestic environments, where devotional innovations were introduced that had their origins in the mendicant reform movement.⁴⁷ The Franciscans remained highly influential in lay and clerical piety and among all strata of society.⁴⁸ They were highly effective private and public brokers of peace and allying with them was therefore a politically expedient move to make in Quattrocento Italy.⁴⁹ Recent scholarship concludes that Franciscans remained deeply involved in civic politics, were highly influential at the papal court, fulfilled diplomatic functions, maintained intimate relationships with rulers, and were active in education.⁵⁰ It may be that these considerations added to

⁴⁶ James Mixson, "Religious Life and Observant Reform in the Fifteenth Century", *History Compass* 11/3 (2013), pp. 201-14.

⁴⁷ Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard & Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 52-4; Fabrizio Conti, *Witchcraft, Superstition, and Observant Franciscan Preachers: Pastoral Approach and Intellectual Debate in Renaissance Milan* (Turnhout, 2015).

⁴⁸ Bert Roest, *Franciscan Learning, Preaching and Mission c. 1220-1650: Cum Scientia Sit Donum Dei, Armatura ad Defendam Sanctam Fidem Catholicam...* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 132-96; on the difficult relationship between Franciscans and humanism, see Remo Guidi, *Frati e Umanisti nel Quattrocento* (Alessandria, 2013).

⁴⁹ Glenn Kumhera, *The Benefits of Peace: Private Peacemaking in Late Medieval Italy* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 156-74; Cynthia Polecristi, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy: Bernardino of Siena & His Audience* (Washington, 2000), pp. 84-124, 181-236.

⁵⁰ Stefan Visnjevac, "'Equip Yourself to Inflict Vengeance [...] Thus it Will Be Recognised that You are the Founder of Peace': Laudation and Attempted Persuasion Through a Sermon for the Emperor Sigismund", *The Mediaeval Journal* 4/2 (2014), pp. 63-82; Letizia Pellegrini, "Tra la piazza e il Palazzo: Predicazione e pratiche di

the decision made by the Farnese to sponsor the Franciscans specifically. In that respect, it is crucial that Friar Angelo da Bolsena oversaw the construction work and financing of the project at Isola Bisentina. After all, Angelo was his order's procurator-general at the papal court and vicar of the Franciscans in the Province of Rome. Moreover, as nuncio and receiver of the crusading tenth in the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia, Campania, and Tuscany he was a prominent figure at the papal court under Callixtus III, Pius II, and Sixtus IV.⁵¹ Despite their isolated location, the friars of Isola Bisentina remained intimately connected to the world.

The link between dynasty and memory it created was crucial, too, in the decision to fund a friary. This is suggested by the lasting ties between the Farnese and the friary on Isola Bisentina – as late as the first half of the seventeenth century Cardinal Odoardo Farnese paid generously towards restoration works on the island's oratories.⁵² These ties lasted not only because Ranuccio XVII Farnese admonished his heirs to contribute towards the construction, embellishment, and reparation of the fabric, but the Farnese dynasty could expect to retain their links with the friary above all through the privileges and obligations they were expected to uphold as part of their *iuspatronato*. The *iuspatronatus* tied together the clerical institution or monastic community with the dynasty of its benefactors even to the extent where cloister and community were considered part of the dynasty's patrimony transferable through inheritance.⁵³ Patrimony and piety, religion and rulership were therefore closely linked in the act of founding a religious institution. The Farnese were hardly inventing the wheel when munificently sponsoring a Franciscan friary. Their Orsini and Colonna relatives were

governo nell'Italia del Quattrocento", in *I frati osservanti e la società in Italia nel secolo XV: Atti del XL Convegno internazionale* (Spoleto, 2013) pp. 109-33; Paolo Evangelisti, "Un non-umanista consigliere politico di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Etica politica ed 'arte dello stato' nel Memoriale e nelle lettere di Antonio da Vercelli, osservante francescano (marzo-maggio 1478)", in Marcello de Matteis (ed.), *Ovidio Capitani: Quaranta anni per la Storia medievale* (Bologna, 2003), vol. II, pp. 167-87.

⁵¹ Riccardo Pratesi, "Angelo da Bolsena", *DBI*.

⁵² Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina".

⁵³ Hansmartin Schwarzmaier, *Klöster, Stifter, Dynastien: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte des Adels im Hochmittelalter* (Stuttgart, 2012); Wilhelm Kurze, *Monasteri e nobiltà nel senese e nella toscana medievale: studi diplomatici, archeologici, genealogici, quiritici, e sociali* (Siena, 1989), pp. 295-317.

amongst the earliest supporters of the order.⁵⁴ Indeed, the act of founding a monastic community was a well-established practice among families of the high aristocracy and the Farnese foundation confirmed their status as one of the Papal States' leading families. During the Quattrocento, Farnese relatives and acquaintances such as the counts of Marsciano, da Varano, da Montefeltro and Orsini del Balzo all sought to strengthen their dynasties' prestige by linking themselves to the Greyfriars.⁵⁵ The Savelli of Palombara founded a Franciscan convent during Pius II's pontificate and the example set by the Farnese would be imitated in the more immediate region by the Sforza of Santa Fiora, who renovated and enlarged the Franciscan monastery of Santissima Trinità around 1488. Guido Sforza and his wife Francesca Farnese sponsored this reconstruction and the lavish fresco decoration for the friary, and would be buried there, while Francesca's mother Giustina Conti, left the friary as a bequest the residue of her dowry.⁵⁶ The construction of another Franciscan friary in Canino under Gabriele Francesco Farnese's auspices during the 1470s was an extension of the project to link the memory of the Farnese dynasty to the divine. All in all, the exchange of the spiritual economy on Isola Bisentina created a lasting symbiotic link where the friars were responsible for church services and for saying prayers for the deceased, whereas the Farnese committed themselves as perpetual protectors, sponsors, and benefactors.⁵⁷ However, the links with the Franciscan Order on Isola Bisentina gave rise to a phenomenon that is unique to such dynastic projects: the integration of the rest of the island into a sacred landscape dotted about with oratories.

⁵⁴ Emily Graham, "Reconsidering Reputation Through Patronage: Cardinal Napoleone Orsini and Angelo Clarenò at the Avignonese Papal Court", *Journal of Medieval History* 39/3 (2013), pp. 357-75; Bianca Lopez, "Between Court and Cloister: The Life and Lives of Margherita Colonna", *Church History* 82/3 (2013), pp. 554-75.

⁵⁵ Anna Clotilde Filannino, *La Contessa con gli zoccoli: Angelina da Montegiove, nobile, penitente e francescana* (Assisi, 2006); Giuseppe Capriotti, "Visions, Mental Images, Real Pictures: The Mystical Experience and the Artistic Patronage of Sister Battista da Varano", *IKON* 6 (2013), pp. 213-24; William Hudon, "'In the End, God Helped Me Defeat Myself': Autobiographical Writings by Camilla Battista da Varano", *Religions* 9/3 (2018), pp. 1-21; Rosalba Di Meglio, "Istanze religiose, movimento dell'Osservanza e progettualità politica nel Mezzogiorno angioino-aragonese", in *I frati osservanti*, pp. 77-107; Sarah Pearson, "The Convent of Santa Chiara in Urbino: A New Chronology of its Construction and Patronage", *Architectural Histories* 3 (2015), doi:/10.5334.

⁵⁶ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated; ASR, Archivio Sforza-Cesarini, busta 842, filza 1.

⁵⁷ The term spiritual economy is borrowed from Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham NC, 1999); see also Giles Gasper, "Bernard of Clairvaux, Material and Spiritual Order, and the Economy of Salvation", *Journal of Medieval History* 45/5 (2019), pp. 580-96.

The Creation of a Sacred Landscape and the Making Present of the Holy Land

When Pope Eugene IV inspected the ongoing construction work, he may have been the first pontiff to be hosted on Isola Bisentina by the Farnese, but he would not be the last. In summer 1462 Gabriele Francesco Farnese hosted Pius II and his retinue in Capodimonte. Pius had shortly before left a beleaguered capital where an uprising was stirring, and had made his way to safer allied territory. His visit to the Farnese was above all a diplomatic event in which Pius sought to enlist or strengthen the support of one of the Papal States' most powerful pro-papal families.⁵⁸ On the day of the Feast of Saint John the Baptist Pius celebrated mass in the church on Isola Bisentina. After the subsequent boat race, a mock naval battle in 'Ethiopian style' fought with spears and bows between the boats of the *referendarii apostolici* was staged.⁵⁹ This placed crusading rhetoric at the centre of attention, as various references to Ethiopian spearmen and archers appear in well-known crusader histories such as that of Fulcher of Chartres and Albert of Aachen.

The crusader ideal was alive and well in mid-Quattrocento Italy and Pius' ambition to organise a crusade against the Turks, just as his predecessors had done (and one or two successors were to do), is well attested.⁶⁰ Indeed, the language of crusader rhetoric was widespread throughout Europe, even if political action lagged behind outward shows of pious zeal.⁶¹ Pius was so enthused by the festivities as well as by the decorative programme of the island that he decided to sponsor the construction of one of the oratories, which was subsequently dedicated to Mount Tabor, as well as Pope Pius I.⁶² The choice for Isola Bisentina as a background for a staged battle against the infidel, as well as for the dedication of oratories to sites in the Holy Land raises several important questions. How should we

⁵⁸ See Chapter 4.

⁵⁹ Piccolomini, *I commentarii*, pp. 1617-29.

⁶⁰ Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat* (Oxford, 2012), especially chapter 5 on the involvement of Observant Franciscans in preaching the crusade.

⁶¹ Rolf Strøm-Olsen, "Political Narrative and Symbolism in the Feast of the Phaasant (1454)", *Viator* 46/3 (2015), pp. 317-42; Paul Botley, "Giannozzo Manetti, Alfonso of Aragon and Pompey the Great: A Crusading Document of 1455", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 67 (2004), pp. 129-56.

⁶² Massimo Miglio notes the potential for Pius II's choice of name for referring to the Church's early days but in lieu of much evidence for such connections concludes that it is in all likelihood a Virgilian play of words on his own name, Aeneas. Massimo Miglio, "Pio II e il papato nel Quattrocento", in Massimo Miglio (ed.), *Storie di Roma nel Quattrocento* (Rome, 2016), pp. 191-9.

understand the overarching programme of the project on Isola Bisentina? Who was involved, besides the Farnese, and at which points, in the programme that integrated the entire Isola Bisentina into a sacred landscape? To what extent did the crusading rhetoric articulated in the festivities surrounding Pius' visit presuppose a perceived presence of the Holy Land on the island?

Perhaps the creation of a garden complex at the Franciscan friary provided the impetus to imagine the entire topography of Isola Bisentina as a single sacred landscape and to the construction of several oratories on the outer edges of the island. On the basis of both the architectural evidence and the remains of fresco decorations it is possible to conclude that the oratories of San Francesco, San Gregorio, and Santa Concordia were the first constructed on Isola Bisentina.⁶³ Saint Francis was, of course, the founder and inspiration of the Franciscan Order. Saint Gregory was the first monastic pope and a Church Father. The choice of Santa Concordia is more surprising. Concordia was the martyred foster-mother of Saint Hippolytus, who, as was understood in the fifteenth century, had been a soldier converted while guarding Saint Lawrence. The oratory dedicated to Santa Concordia could therefore be a reference to the earlier use of Isola Bisentina: as a prison for convicted heretics. As Eric Nelson and Jonathan Wright argue, it was not unusual for sacred landscapes to have a palimpsest of layered meanings in which older cultural significance was absorbed into newer creations.⁶⁴ The integration of the entire island into a sacred landscape is a crucial development and places the project for Isola Bisentina at the heart of contemporary Franciscan experimentation in devotional practices. In response to growing demands in lay participation in the mysteries of the faith, the mendicant orders introduced innovations, some of which stressed the interaction of pious devotion with bodily and sensory experience.⁶⁵ During the Quattrocento, the Dominican Order, for example, promoted the use of the rosary as a mnemonic device during prayers throughout Europe, a use that quickly gained large

⁶³ Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina", p. 110.

⁶⁴ Eric Nelson & Jonathan Wright, "Introduction", in Eric Nelson & Jonathan Wright (eds.), *Layered Landscapes: Early Modern Religious Space Across Faiths and Cultures* (London, 2017), pp. 22-45.

⁶⁵ Among others: Henning Laugerud, Salvador Ryan & Laura Katrine Skinnebach (eds.), *The Materiality of Devotion in Late Medieval Northern Europe: Images, Objects and Practices* (Dublin, 2016); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York, 2011).

numbers of followers.⁶⁶ The creation of sacred landscapes gained popularity among a number of orders, but particularly with the Franciscans, who, from the second half of the fifteenth-century on, increasingly created spaces where Rome and the Holy Land could be made present. But before we turn to the fusion of sacred landscapes and the making present of the Holy Land, it is worthwhile to address the attempts of the Farnese to co-involve other benefactors because their involvement was central to this development.

The chronology is obscure, but either plans for an oratory dedicated to the Hill of Calvary existed, the edifice was under construction, or had recently been completed when Pius visited in 1462. Pius himself is of little help and only mentions 'various chapels' on the island. Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio argues, on the basis of a rough dating, that the elaborate fresco cycle depicting the Crucifixion and the Entombment of Christ was the result of Farnese patronage.⁶⁷ What we do know is that during his visit Pius became interested in the project and intervened personally with a generous contribution. The pontiff ordered the construction of yet another oratory on the highest point of the island, dedicated to Pope Pius I, but above all, to Mount Tabor.⁶⁸ This is another clue that suggests that the oratory dedicated to the Hill of Calvary antedates that of Mount Tabor, as the biblical events at the former – the crucifixion and burial of Jesus – are of greater significance than those at the latter – Jesus' Transfiguration. Yet both oratories are executed in the same architectural style, one that moreover differs from the older oratories of Saint Francis, Saint Gregory, and Saint Concordia, and it is therefore likely that they were constructed closely in time with each other. Pius also used his spiritual powers in addition to his monetary support. Any visitors entering on 11 July and 6 August, the liturgical cycle's days dedicated to the Transfiguration and to Pius I, received significant indulgences towards the

⁶⁶ Irene Galandra Cooper & Mary Laven, "The Material Culture of Piety in the Italian Renaissance: Re-touching the Rosary", in Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling & David Gaimster (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2017), pp. 338-53.

⁶⁷ Fabiano Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "L'oratorio di Monte Calvario a Isola Bisentina, Viterbo" (2009): http://www.arpai.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/isola_bisentina_oratoriomontecalvario_storico.pdf (last accessed: 27-8-2019).

⁶⁸ Piccolomini, *I commentarii*, p. 1627.

remission of sins as the frescos on the walls still mention today.⁶⁹ Apart from Pius II and the Farnese, the friar Angelo da Bolsena was also actively involved in obtaining funds for the oratories and in organising the execution of their decorative programme, and it seems therefore best to regard the entire programme for the island as one that took shape in interaction between the Farnese, the Franciscans, and the pope.⁷⁰

Several other popes subsequently contributed to the beautification and beatification of Isola Bisentina's sacred landscape. Giovanni de' Medici and Alessandro Farnese had known each other since adolescence and the, by now, Pope Leo X and Cardinal Farnese visited Isola Bisentina for long summer hunting trips that took place during several years of Leo's pontificate.⁷¹ Impressed by the island, Leo was persuaded by Alessandro to contribute towards the construction of an additional two oratories. Sketches currently held by the Uffizi show these oratories were designed by the famous architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger. These new oratories were dedicated to the Mount of Olives – the place of the Ascension of Jesus – and to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, whose shrine in Egypt was often included in pilgrimages. To stress how Isola Bisentina was a collaborative project in which the Farnese were closely involved, Sangallo's octagonal design of the oratory of Saint Catherine was also specifically intended to mirror his own octagonal design for the Rocca Farnese in Capodimonte, as this oratory was constructed on the outlying cliff visible from that town, leaving observers in little doubt about the visual connection between the two edifices. Bringing the total of oratories to seven, Leo also provided plenary indulgences for all visitors on a par with those that could be obtained on a tour of the seven main basilicas of Rome. Furthermore, Alessandro Farnese obtained a privilege from Clement VII to spend an additional sum of 700 ducats on restorations, and after his election as Paul III confirmed the plenary indulgences made by Leo X.⁷² These additions did not significantly alter, but rather enlarged or restored the programme envisaged fifty years earlier at the time of Pius' visit, although the extensive

⁶⁹ Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina".

⁷⁰ Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina", p. 114; Pratesi, "Angelo da Bolsena".

⁷¹ Jeremy Kruse, "Hunting, Magnificence and the Court of Leo X", *Renaissance Studies* 7/3 (1993), pp. 243-57; Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina", pp. 115-25.

⁷² Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "Gli oratori dell'Isola Bisentina", p. 130; Gamrath, *Farnese*, pp. 34-5.

indulgences must have attracted additional visitors. The most important innovation happened at the time of the construction of the oratories of Calvary and Tabor, as these, and subsequent additions, referred to real, actual places; places located in the Holy Land and in custody of the Franciscan Order.

The fifteenth century saw a flowering of devotional practices that enabled the pious to conduct imagined pilgrimages to Rome or Jerusalem in return for an indulgence or as a spiritual exercise that brought the devoted closer to the suffering of Christ in his final days or his mother Mary's emotional despair. The idea of making a pilgrimage was still extremely popular in the Quattrocento. Even leading mercenary-captains such as Roberto Sanseverino and Gian Giacomo Trivulzio made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and a military lifestyle therefore did not exclude appreciation of such pious practices.⁷³ In fact, the two kinsmen Angelo IV Farnese and Orsino Orsini intended to visit the Holy Land together, a project that never materialised.⁷⁴ Increasingly, however, virtual pilgrimages or sites where Rome and the Holy Land were made present were seen as an alternative to physical pilgrimages. After all, the expenses involved in going on a pilgrimage and the myriad difficulties during such a peregrination were daunting. The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 only added to the anxieties of pious Christians, hence the deeply felt need for alternatives. Many surviving texts that functioned as guidebooks that invoked the real spaces of Rome and the Holy Land attest to how widespread this desire was among Europe's clergy, nuns, and the laity.⁷⁵ But apart from texts, the Holy Land and its sites could also be made present through a variety of alternative media that included architectural copies, wooden models, relics, paintings, and even maps, most notably models of the churches and depictions of the events at the Hill of Calvary, Mount Tabor, and the Mount of Olives – all three of which had an oratory dedicated to them at Isola Bisentina.⁷⁶ Initially, scholars considered virtual pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem the

⁷³ Bruno Figliuolo, "La 'pietas' del condottiero: il pellegrinaggio di Roberto Sanseverino in Terrasanta (30 aprile 1458-19 gennaio 1459)", in Mario del Treppo (ed.), *Condottieri e uomini d'arme nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Naples, 2001), pp. 243-65; Emilio Motta, "Gian Giacomo Trivulzio in Terra Santa (1476)." *Archivio storico lombardo* 13 (1886), pp. 866-78.

⁷⁴ Bartolomeo da Bracciano to Gentile Virginio Orsini, 27 April 1491. ASC, Archivio Orsini, Serie I, Corrispondenza, busta 102, parte 2, f. 424^r.

⁷⁵ Kathryn Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011).

⁷⁶ Kathryn Blair Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land: Reception from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2017). See also, Marianne Ritsema van Eck, "Encounters with the Levant: The Late

exclusive prerequisite of nuns and religious women, who due to strict rules regulating their enclosure were unable to make physical pilgrimages themselves yet could readily turn the secluded space and geography of their convent into a sacred landscape.⁷⁷ But the making present of the Holy Land on Isola Bisentina at a friary located not far from the busy pilgrim's route to Rome reveals that enclosure had little to do with the demand for virtual pilgrimages, and that their popularity extended to the general population. In fact, the Isola Bisentina prefigures the later Franciscan innovation of more elaborate *sacri monti*.

The spatial recreation and making present of the Holy Land at the Isola Bisentina allowed pilgrims to have a performative experience that functioned as an alternative to a tour of the holy sites. The act of strolling across the island to the oratory of Calvary was thus turned into an imitation of the *Via Crucis*. The issue at stake for the fifteenth-century devout was to spiritually, emotionally, and physically experience the suffering of Christ – an *imitatio Christi* – or of Mary who herself was thought to have been the first to retrace her son's final steps, stopping at important points along the route to pray and weep. This could be achieved in two ways and Kathryn Rudy differentiates between interiority, or stationary devotion making use of the imagination, and exteriority, or somatic experiences.⁷⁸ Calvaries increasingly relied on the sensory experience in devotional practices surrounding the making present of the Holy Land. Franciscans possessed intimate knowledge of the holy places as custodians of the Holy Land and their mission to bring faith to the poor masses, those unable to make extensive pilgrimages, may explain why the Franciscans and Poor Clares were particularly at the forefront of these developments. The making present and material of the Holy Land

Medieval Illustrated Jerusalem Travelogue by Paul Walter von Guglingen", *Mediterranean Historical Review* 32/2 (2017), pp. 153-88; Pnina Arad, "Pilgrimage, Cartography, and Devotion: William Wey's Map of the Holy Land", *Viator* 43/1 (2012), pp. 301-22; Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent*, pp. 41-118; Annabel Jane Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem: Relics, Replicas, Theme Parks* (Chicago, 2006), pp. 97-143.

⁷⁷ Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, "Jerusalem Behind Walls: Enclosure, Substitute Pilgrimage, and Imagined Space in the Poor Clares' Convent at Villingen", *The Mediaeval Journal* 3/2 (2013), pp. 1-38; Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, "Virtual Pilgrimages? Enclosure and the Practice of Piety at St Katherine's Convent, Augsburg", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60/1 (2009), pp. 45-73; Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent*, pp. 23-35; June Mecham, "A Northern Jerusalem: Transforming the Spatial Geography of the Convent of Wienhausen", in Andrew Spicer (ed.), *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 139-60.

⁷⁸ Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent*.

on the basis of their knowledge of its topography is taken to the extreme at the famous Sacro Monte at Varallo, which from 1480 on became an elaborate park that stretched the possibilities of somaesthetically experiencing the Holy Land to its utmost limits by including three-dimensional structures, *tableaux vivants*, and moveable wooden sculptures.⁷⁹ The creation of a sacred landscape at Isola Bisentina predates Varallo by several decades and is less articulated in its form, rather stimulating the visitor to undergo a contemplative mental pilgrimage. Isola Bisentina's legacy and impact on later creations of sacred landscapes is therefore difficult to gauge. But it is important to note that the island was the setting for the Provincial Chapter of the Franciscan Order in 1463, and therefore must have been familiar to prominent Franciscan friars.⁸⁰

We can also say something about who visited Isola Bisentina and what their impressions might have been. At first sight, an island in Europe's largest volcanic lake may seem like an isolated spot, but I have already addressed the prominence of the Franciscans, and Angelo da Bolsena in particular, at the papal court and throughout Italy, and suggested they were far from enclosed. Isola Bisentina's friars must have been keenly aware to whom the monuments in the church were dedicated, as they were expected (and paid) to say prayers in memory of the deceased members of the Farnese dynasty. Moreover, the communities surrounding the Lago di Bolsena included two larger cities, Bolsena and Montefiascone, as well as several sizeable towns like Marta, Capodimonte, Valentano, and Gradoli, the latter all Farnese lordships. The festivities held in honour of Pius II's visit instigated an annual feast dedicated to Saint John the Baptist in the church where the Farnese tombs were located, which attracted large crowds from the surrounding towns, and Alessandro Farnese himself related how he attended one such feast in 1489.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Marianne Ritsema van Eck, *The Holy Land in Observant Franciscan Texts (c. 1480-1650)* (Leiden, 2019); Geoffrey Symcox, *Jerusalem in the Alps: The Sacro Monte of Varallo and the Sanctuaries of North-Western Italy* (Turnhout, 2019); Allie Terry-Fritsch, "Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind: Somaesthetic Style and Devotional Practice at the Sacro Monte di Varallo", *The Open Arts Journal* 4 (2015), pp. 111-32; Bram de Klerck, "Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy: The Holy Sepulchre on the Sacro Monte of Varallo", in Jeroen Goudeau, Mariëtte Verhoeven & Wouter Weijers (eds.), *The Imagined and Real Jerusalem in Art and Architecture* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 215-36.

⁸⁰ Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "L'oratorio di Monte Calvario a Isola Bisentina, Viterbo".

⁸¹ Alessandro Farnese to Stefano dell'Aquila, 13 July 1489. *Carteggio umanistico*, p. 45.

Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio has found that the *Via Crucis* on Isola Bisentina was frequently walked by locals, for which evidence is attested in many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century wills in the Val di Lago's notarial records.⁸² All these local visitors arrived at the harbour near the central church, and would have recognised that the tombs that decorated its interior belonged to members of the Farnese dynasty, although it is difficult to say anything about how the Farnese subjects would have responded upon seeing these monuments. Moreover, with the Via Francigena, Christendom's most important pilgrimage road, nearby, it is not unlikely that some pilgrims diverted their route to visit the monastic complex on Isola Bisentina. Pius II wrote that the other island in the Lago di Bolsena, the Isola Martana, attracted great numbers of pilgrims because of the presence of relics of Mary Magdalene in the church there.⁸³ If large numbers made it to Isola Martana, this could well be the case for Isola Bisentina too.⁸⁴ After all, the extensive indulgences that could be obtained in the oratories would have been attractive, and the sacred landscape constructed by Farnese, Franciscan, and papal patronage allowed pilgrims to make a virtual visit to Jerusalem on their actual pilgrimage to Rome.

Would such visitors have recognised the heraldry, or would the name Farnese have meant in anything particular to them? It is likely that only a few would have been able to appreciate how the project on Isola Bisentina spun a dynastic narrative and how it materially anchored dynastic memory. Yet, for those sufficiently learned, the presence of the family mausoleum in a sacred landscape created a connection between dynasty and divinity that transgressed temporal delineations and signalled an eternal order. It was a conscious expression of the role the Farnese perceived themselves to have in God's overarching plan of salvation. This envisioned the Farnese among the Church's protectors, and by extension as protectors of the papacy. Indeed, this linkage would come to fuller expression in the

⁸² Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio, "L'oratorio di Monte Calvario a Isola Bisentina, Viterbo".

⁸³ Pius, *I commentarii*, pp. 1620-23.

⁸⁴ One returning visitor with a predilection for the Isola Martana was the celebrated poet, theologian, and later cardinal, Giles of Viterbo. Matteo Soranzo, "Words of Conversion: Poetry and Religious Identity in Early Modern Italy", *Journal of Religion in Europe* 6/2 (2013), pp. 229-62.

sixteenth-century patronage of the Farnese, most notably in the *Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani* in the Palazzo Farnese in Caprarola as well as in Rome.⁸⁵

The Complex on Isola Bisentina in Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis*

The fame of Isola Bisentina also spread through its inclusion in one of Paolo Cortesi's humanist works. The *De hominibus doctis* is a typical classicising dialogue on virtuous and erudite men. Cortesi's interlocutors in the dialogue, the grammarian Antonio Sulpizio da Veroli, Alessandro Farnese, and Cortesi himself, meet on Isola Bisentina. This is not simply a literary invention. Alessandro Farnese wrote to his brother-in-law Puccio Pucci about his love for the island as a place for silent and undisturbed intellectual contemplation where he could compose poetry and read Homer.⁸⁶ Furthermore, many letters attest of the friendship between Alessandro Farnese, Sulpizio da Veroli and Paolo Cortesi, as well as his brother Alessandro Cortesi. In a letter to his brother Alessandro, Paolo wrote that he loved Farnese as if he were his very own right eye, and the latter in his response also expressed his appreciation for their mutual friend.⁸⁷ In that respect it is important to note that Alessandro Farnese personally reviewed Cortesi's dialogue and commented on the content, and might have chosen Isola Bisentina as its setting.⁸⁸ Likewise, Paolo sent the manuscript or manuscript copy to a Farnese relative, Cardinal Todeschini-Piccolomini, and the dialogue's dedicatee was no one else but Lorenzo de' Medici.⁸⁹ Above all, it reveals something of the personal interaction of a member of the Farnese dynasty with the memory of his ancestors on Isola Bisentina.

Cortesi's dialogue starts with a description of the beautiful scenery of the Isola Bisentina. The Isola Bisentina is described as a classical *locus amoenus* with its abundant foliage and its peaceful and

⁸⁵ Partridge, "Dynasty and Divinity".

⁸⁶ "Ibi compositis rebus in insula illa amenissima abstergam omnem animi mucorem remittamque ambitioni nuntium ac divino comitatus Homero quod agere non possumus laudabimus teque quietioribus et multis epistolis compellabo." Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, undated. *Carteggio*, pp. 60-1.

⁸⁷ "Farnetiu[m] meu[m] amo eque ac dextru[m] oculu[m]" Paolo Cortesi to Alessandro Cortesi, 15 July 1488, and Alessandro Cortesi to Paolo Cortesi, 18 July 1488. ASF, Lettere varie 13, ff. 343^r-346^r, 360^r. The right eye reference is to the *De laude recte judicantium*, published in *Gesta Romanorum*, edited by Hermann Oesterley (Berlin, 1872), 347-8.

⁸⁸ Alessandro Farnese to Paolo Cortesi, undated. *Carteggio umanistico*, p. 54.

⁸⁹ Paolo Cortesi to Francesco Baronio, undated. ASF, Lettere varie 13, f. 425^r.

tranquil atmosphere. It would, however, be an error to interpret this passage in purely secular terms and as a move away from the sacrality of the landscape as it was given shape in the preceding decades. In humanist culture a *locus amoenus* was a place for philosophical as well as spiritual contemplation. In fact, the island is much more than just a peaceful retreat. In the dialogue Alessandro Farnese proclaims how much he enjoys being able to read and think *sine interpellatoribus*, undisturbed therefore. But – and this is crucial – Alessandro further adduces that, “there is another reason that entices and invites me to come here often.” When the third interlocutor, Paolo, asks what this reason is, Alessandro replies: “because here there are many monuments of my ancestors: for my grandfather Ranuccio laid the foundations of this sacred place, which was subsequently embellished through my father and uncle’s fervour, so that, as you see, it is elegant and magnificent.”⁹⁰ All interlocutors then proceed to recall the great military exploits of Ranuccio XVII, as well as the prowess and erudition of Alessandro’s uncle, Angelo III. The discussion of these famous Farnese who found their final resting place on Isola Bisentina then further inspires the interlocutors to initiate the rest of the dialogue on learned men.

This passage thus portrays, if perhaps in exaggerated form and with a literary flourish, how Alessandro and his interlocutors interacted with the memory of his Farnese ancestors. The space triggered dynastic memory, particularly the idealised and glorious military and intellectual pursuits of Alessandro’s grandfather and uncle, and made him conscious of standing in a long and venerable line of descent – it made the past present through mental representation. In that respect Alessandro’s casual mention of attending the annual celebration of the feast of Saint John the Baptist on Isola Bisentina in the church with the Farnese tombs, taken with the several expressions of his predilection for reading and contemplation on the island, suggests an engagement with the space and the

⁹⁰ “*Alex.* Ego vero, cum ociosus sum, sive quid volo sine interpellatoribus legere sive aliquid mecum ipse cogitare, hanc potissimum amoenitatem sequor; sed est alia quoque causa quae me saepius huc venire invitet atque allectet.

Paul. Quaenam est igitur ista causa?

Alex. Quia hic multa sunt monumenta maiorum meorum: nam Rhamnusius avus meus huius sacrarii fundamenta iecit, quod postea patris et patris mei studio auctum est, ut vides, lautius ac magnificentius.” Paolo Cortesi, *De hominibus doctis*, ed. Giacomo Ferrà (Messina, 1979), pp. 105-7.

mausoleum with which his grandfather had sought to anchor the Farnese's dynastic memory. It is illustrative, perhaps, that even in a letter describing his quiet retreat on the island in the company of a volume of Homer to Puccio Pucci, Alessandro also admits to concerning himself with the future of his dynasty, above all with the recent departure of his cousin Ranuccio XVIII, the family's expert condottiere, to Venetian service.⁹¹

Cortesi's dialogue therefore conveys a sense of entangled meaning and dynastic memory in the space on Isola Bisentina, one that fuses different temporalities with the natural amenities of the landscape and the fabricated artefacts that it holds in order to create a space where would-be humanists and members of the Farnese dynasty could come to contemplate, pray, and commemorate. Central to the entire programme is the presence of the Farnese's monuments in the church that embody the dynasty's memory. The dialogue exhibits the bonds of affection and admiration that existed between members of the Farnese dynasty and prominent members of Italy's humanist circles, but it also hints at important political connections that merit some further explanation.

That the dialogue was dedicated and presented to Lorenzo de' Medici would suggest that it was intended to circulate in Florentine pro-Medici circles. It is therefore not unlikely that, apart from being an exercise in erudition, Cortesi's introduction to the dialogue also contained a multi-layered and thinly-veiled message communicating the dynastic links between the Farnese and the Medici. Perhaps the allusions to the monuments on Isola Bisentina would remind a Florentine readership of another great Farnese monument: the tomb of Pietro V Farnese. This Roman sarcophagus topped by an equestrian statue was one of Florence's prominent civic monuments and stood in a highly visible place next to the cathedral altar. This monument therefore had a conspicuous place in Florence's religious and civic life and was a distinguished element in its civic memory. The more literary-minded members of Florentine society might also have read of Pietro Farnese's military exploits in Franco

⁹¹ Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, undated. *Carteggio*, pp. 60-1.

Sachetti's sonnets or Antonio Pucci's eulogy dedicated to his memory.⁹² For the Florentine elite, Cortesi's dialogue would thus evoke the memory of these long-lasting dynastic ties between their republic and the Farnese. More specifically, Cortesi's dedication brought to mind the personal relation that existed between Florence's ruler, Lorenzo de' Medici, and his Farnese allies. After all, both Alessandro Farnese and Paolo Cortesi had spent part of their education at the Medici court with Lorenzo's children. All the Farnese mentioned in the dialogue – Ranuccio XVII, Angelo III, and Pier Luigi I – had close political and personal links to Cosimo, Piero, and Lorenzo de' Medici. These ties were still active and of seminal importance to the Farnese's political life at the time Cortesi wrote his dialogue. Perhaps this text therefore also contained bundles of possibility in its muted expression that the long-lasting political collaboration between the Medici and Farnese dynasties might be maintained and even extended – an expectation that was fulfilled with the important positions Alessandro Farnese obtained during Leo X's pontificate and the latter's patronage of Isola Bisentina.

Patronage as a Political Tool

The decision to create a family mausoleum in the newly-built or recently restored Church of St John the Baptist on Isola Bisentina in some ways adhered to tradition. Neither the idea of anchoring dynastic memory through tomb monuments was new, nor did it depart from earlier Farnese burial practices except for a change of location. Patronage in this area was a secure route to status, one that would be an immediately recognisable statement in the eyes of contemporaries. That said, the tomb of Ranuccio XVII Farnese contained clues about the lifetime of the condottiere that it commemorated and about his political connections – those that linked him to the Kingdom of Naples, but above all those to the papacy in Rome during the pontificates of Martin V and Eugene IV. But it was the subsequent creation of a sacred landscape and the making present of the Holy Land that placed Isola Bisentina at the centre of developments in devotional practices among the Franciscans and laity in fifteenth-century Europe.

⁹² Fra Ildefonso di San Luigi, *Delle poesie di Antonio Pucci. Celebre versificatore fiorentino del MCCC. e prima, della Cronica di Giovanni Villani* (Florence, 1772-1775), vol. I, pp. 253-7; Franco Sacchetti, *Il libro delle rime*, ed. A. Chiari (Bari, 1936), p. 98.

And even if other sacred landscapes where Rome or the Holy Land were made present received extensive indulgences after petitions from their creators and custodians, nowhere did papal involvement extend much beyond spiritual benediction from afar.

The Farnese's political and personal connections precipitated the involvement of not one but several pontiffs who contributed to the execution of the programme at Isola Bisentina, a unique and important example of collaboration between a noble dynasty, the papacy, and members of a mendicant order in the area of patronage. Several letters as well as Cortesi's dialogue provide some insight into the ways in which Alessandro Farnese interacted with the memory of his ancestors, and the mediating role that the space of Isola Bisentina played in his remembrance. It provides insight into how a Farnese scion and his humanist acquaintances engaged with an imagined past – part fact, part fiction – that might be taken as illustrative of late-Quattrocento engagement with dynasty and ancestry. Moreover, it shows how Alessandro's individual engagement with the Farnese's memory stood in a dialectical relationship with a shared collective memory that was transmitted within the dynasty as well as expressed publicly.

The analysis of the Farnese's Quattrocento patronage also contributes to a better understanding of the Farnese's patronage from the Cinquecento on – a subject which has received much more scholarly attention as it includes a stunning number of high-quality works of art and architecture, and involved virtually the entire pantheon of famous sixteenth-century artists, architects, and humanists. Many elements of the Farnese's dynastic narrative from the Quattrocento were recycled and reused as building blocks in the Farnese's patronage during Paul III's pontificate and after, even if a direct linear line of descent is difficult to discern. This is most prominently the case for the role of defenders that the Farnese appropriated with respect to the Catholic Church, and also as protectors and sponsors of reforming orders.⁹³

Ranuccio XVII Farnese's role as a papal condottiere in Paolo Cortesi's and Annio of Viterbo's works, later depicted in frescoes in the Rocca Farnese in Capodimonte and on a set of tapestries,

⁹³ De Jong, *The Power and the Glorification*, pp. 92-117; Partridge, "Dynasty and Divinity".

prefigures his depiction in the *Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani* in Palazzo Farnese in Caprarola as well as that in the Farnese palace in Rome. Annius' story of the adoption of the Farnese unicorn with regal band as a crest finds an elaborate expression in Giulia Farnese's patronage in the castle of Carbognano, and unicorns also figure prominently in the rooms decorated by Paul III in Castel Sant'Angelo. In that castle extensive use is also made of the mythology of Alexander the Great, whose history may have provided the inspiration for Annius' claim that the Farnese descended from Osiris, and this is likewise a possibility for the extensive use of Herculean imagery as well as thunderbolt *imprese*, the attribute of Zeus-Amun at Caprarola.⁹⁴ Paolo Cortesi's work provided the inspiration for Paolo Giovio's dialogue on notable men and women of his time set on the island of Ischia, a work in which the Farnese receive extensive praise as well.⁹⁵ It was a topic Giovio would return to in his *Elogia virorum litteris illustrium* (1546), a work dedicated to Paul III's grandson, Ottavio Farnese.

It seems highly probable that the predilection for hermitages, landscape, and asceticism in the patronage of cardinals Alessandro the Younger and Odoardo Farnese in the *Stanza della Solitudine* and *Stanza della Penitenza* in the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola as well as the *Camerino degli Eremiti* in Rome were, besides erudite expressions of a Counter-Reformation spirituality, also inspired by the Farnese's Quattrocento patronage on Isola Bisentina in the context of the Observant Franciscan Reform movement.⁹⁶ After all, both patrons were intimately acquainted with Isola Bisentina. It was under Alessandro's auspices that the central Church of Saint John the Baptist was enlarged and a cupola, designed by Jacopo Berozzi da Vignola, was added to the now renamed Church of Saint James and Saint Christopher in 1588. Alessandro also ordered several paintings of Saint James, the

⁹⁴ Opher Mansour, "Cardinal Virtues: Odoardo Farnese in his *camerino*", in Mary Hollingsworth & Carol Richardson (eds.), *The Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics, Piety, and Art 1450-1700* (University Park, 2010), pp. 226-48; Partridge, "The Farnese Circular Courtyard"; Loren Partridge, "The Sala d'Ercole in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola Part II", *The Art Bulletin* 54 (1972), pp. 50-62; Loren Partridge, "The Sala d'Ercole in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola Part I", *The Art Bulletin* 53 (1971), pp. 467-86; Richard Harprath, *Papst Paul III. als Alexander der Grosse: das Freskenprogramm der Sala Paolina in der Engelsburg* (Berlin, 1978); see also Loren Partridge's scathing criticism of Harprath's interpretation of the decorative scheme in his review in *The Art Bulletin* 62/4 (1980), pp. 661-3.

⁹⁵ Paolo Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of Our Time*, ed. and trans. Kenneth Gouwens (Cambridge MA, 2013).

⁹⁶ Arnold Witte, *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation Diaeta* (Rome, 2008); Loren Partridge, "Discourse of Asceticism in Bertoja's Room of Penitence in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 40 (1995), pp. 145-76.

Crucifixion, and several Franciscan martyrs from Annibale Caracci that were later taken to the Vatican. The many lilies decorating the façade more abundantly communicated the church's and friary's link to the Farnese. Odoardo Farnese completed the work on the central church, and subsequently restored all the oratories.⁹⁷

Alessandro Farnese, '*Il Gran Cardinale*', initiated what would become a new family burial tradition. Alessandro's body was interred in a tomb in the *Gésu* in Rome, the new church of the Jesuit Order the construction of which he had so lavishly sponsored. Cardinals Odoardo and Francesco Maria Farnese followed this example, turning the Jesuit church into a family tomb for Farnese cardinals. But, as Clare Robertson noted, in more than one way the tombs of these Farnese cardinals mirrored the Quattrocento project envisaged by Ranuccio XVII Farnese: both were located inside a sponsored edifice pertaining to a reforming order with whom the Farnese maintained close dynastic links.⁹⁸

Even without conjecturing about genealogies of artistic and literary productions the Farnese's Quattrocento patronage merits our full attention as long as it is appreciated using contemporary standards and not a later art historical canon. Rather than being a conservative and backward looking project, the complex on Isola Bisentina resonated with cultural undercurrents that played a prominent role in fifteenth-century Europe. The Isola Bisentina was at the forefront of experiments among the mendicant orders with devotional innovations that employed a dialectic between contemplative and somatic experiences of the divine. It therefore makes little sense to judge the project on the basis of its ability or inability to achieve a classicising style, and perhaps even to argue for a dichotomous divide between late Gothic and *al antica*. After all, Leon Battista Alberti himself, besides being the author of the *De re aedificatoria* and the architect of the Tempio Malatestiano, also designed a tomb modelled on the Sanctuary of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem for Giovanni Rucellai. This so-called *Tempietto di Santo Sepolchro* in the Capella Rucellai in the Church of San Pancrazio in Florence was constructed built between 1457 and 1467 and its execution thus ran in parallel with the programme of Isola Bisentina.

⁹⁷ Annibali, *Notizie storiche della Casa Farnese*, vol. II, pp. 118-19.

⁹⁸ Robertson, '*Il Gran Cardinale*', p. 184; Clare Robertson, "The Artistic Patronage of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese", *Publications de l'École Française de Rome* 106/1 (1988), pp. 359-72.

Both edifices – the Capella Rucellai and Isola Bisentina – are a lasting testament to the attraction that the Holy Land and its sites held in the Renaissance imagination of its learned elite of humanists, bankers, friars, barons, and popes.

Conclusion

El famoso Rainuzo signor fra[n]cho	Ma pur al fin duna lancia i[n] un fiancho
Che ta[n]to in arme mai no[n] fece Achille	Morto fu che nhavea ben piu di mille
Face[n]do i fra[n]cesi venir ma[n]cho	Co[n] le sue mani i[n] quel di misse alfondo
Co[n] la sua spada che spa[n]de faville	Lassando sempre viva fama al mo[n]do

Giovanni Fiorentino, *I nuovi casi successi in Italia*¹

Dynasty as a concept has been used profitably in the context of European and global comparisons that have illuminated the differences and similarities in the inner dynamics of ruling families.² Despite the advantages that such comparison brings to our understanding of dynastic rule, some recent critique has surfaced that warns against applying the term dynasty too uncritically. According to Natalia Nowakowska, on one hand, dynasty is increasingly in vogue as a synonym for family, and the term suffers from dilution of meaning. On the other hand, Nowakowska posits in an echo of Cliff Davies that names for royal dynasties – as much the case for her Jagellonians as for Davies’ Tudors – were later inventions that in no way reflected the self-perception at the time; even worse, when used as an adjective, they risk seriously misrepresenting as unified in character both historical periods and composite territories (i.e. Tudor England or the Burgundian Netherlands).³ More damningly, Milinda Banerjee has shown how meddling in dynastic succession, and especially the imposition of the (foreign) Salic Law on princely families aided the British colonial project in India.⁴ The implications are that at best the term dynasty or dynastic names unwittingly introduce modern and Eurocentric notions into historical narratives, at worst replicate systems of oppression of the time under discussion.

¹ Published in Amedeo Quondam (ed.), *Guerre in ottava rima* (Modena, 1989), vol. II, p. 111.

² Bartlett, *Blood Royal*; Duindam, *Dynasties*.

³ Nowakowska, “What’s in a Word?”; Cliff Davies, “Tudor: What’s in a Name?”, *History* 97/1 (2012), pp. 24-42.

⁴ Milinda Banerjee, *The Mortal God: Imagining the Sovereign in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 108-47.

This thesis nonetheless adopts the term, and even extends it beyond the royal level at which it tends to be employed; after all, kings and nobles in Europe shared the same system of dynastic lordship. There are several arguments for doing so. First of all, the concept of dynasty in a noble context like that of the Farnese inherently was about perpetuating power, and thus about exploitation and inequality. Nowhere is this clearer than when discussing the hereditary transfer of lordly rule and jurisdictional authority, as well as the exploitation of the peasantry through the imposition of feudal dues. But also patronage of the arts served to legitimise the hereditary inequality of dynastic rule and in the Farnese's case to support the idea of nobility by blood. Secondly, that a notion of dynasty, even if the word itself was never used, existed among the Italian nobility and certainly the Farnese, is unequivocally supported by both written and material evidence, and was thus a contemporary social construct, not an imposition by later historians. In that respect, it is nonetheless of seminal importance to take into account the historicity of the ways in which the house was construed. The widespread phenomenon, especially among papal families, of adoption of cognate kin into the patrilineage, and the seemingly incomprehensible promulgation of certificates by Orsini and Colonna cardinals recognising the validity of Northern European families' spurious claims to kinship, show the risks inherent of relying on later historians and genealogists with a fixation on the agnatic lineage traceable to an ancestral seat.⁵ Historical notions of dynasty and kinship often defy modern expectations.

Over the course of five chapters, this thesis has roughly sketched the outlines of dynasty as a conceptual tool that aids in understanding the Quattrocento Farnese's self-identification, their actions, and the potential motivations that lay behind them. This conception is firmly rooted in the late-medieval culture of Latin Europe, but general principles that are of relevance for historical investigations into elites (and non-elites) outside of the European context can be distilled. In this view, dynasty is about inheritance and the intergenerational transmission of property but above all of public

⁵ Werner Paravicini, "Colonna und Orsini: Römische Ursprungslegenden im europäischen Adel am Ende des Mittelalters", in Enno Bünz, Ulrike Höroldt & Christoph Volkmar (eds.), *Adelslandschaft Mitteldeutschland: Die Rolle des landsässigen Adels in der mitteldeutschen Geschichte (15.-18. Jahrhundert)* (Leipzig, 2016), pp. 19-110; Petr Maťa, "The False Orsini from Over the Alps: Negotiating Aristocratic Identity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe", *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 55 (2013), pp. 155-218.

power. It is about the strategies adopted that laid down the parameters for such intergenerational transmission, parameters that also governed the social organisation of the family (without necessarily implying that these were strictly adhered to and inflexible). Likewise, dynastic succession also presupposes that social relations with subjects, relatives, and superiors (in the Farnese's case, the pope) were transferred down hereditary line and were given shape over the course of multiple generations. Indeed, Chapters 3 and 4 highlight how in their relationship with the Medici, for example, but also with a sequence of popes and prominent curial officials, the Farnese took great care to maintain and strengthen their ties and transmit these to their descendants. The emphasis on heredity also suggests dynasty's relation to different temporalities and to its role in connecting past to present and guiding or determining future action. Dynasty incorporated the lineage's linear conception of time, which, in the late-medieval language of the family tree, connected the Farnese's branches to the roots that were their (mythical) ancestors, roots firmly planted in the patrimony's soil moreover, as well as the buds that were their future heirs, the seeds for which awaited fertilisation in the consummation of the dynastic marriage. But dynasty also comprised a cyclical genealogical notion of time that followed the sinusoidal succession of generations and lifecycles. What connected every new generation to preceding ones was the presumption that the military and intellectual qualities of their ancestors were inherited by the younger generations; as a result, the descendants might emulate their deeds.⁶ As such, the past had direct bearing on the present in the expectation that dynastic antecedents became prophecies to be fulfilled in the present.⁷ Finally, dynasty stood in relation to memory, and patronage provided the means through which the Farnese preserved or fabricated their dynastic memory in order to attain, in the words of Giovanni Fiorentino, everlasting fame in this world.

⁶ Paolo Giovio expressed this forcefully when he wrote that "The Farnese have one named Ranuccio, a young man of outstanding natural ability. In his name and his prowess he recalls his uncle who was slain in the Battle of Fornovo." Giovio, *Notable Men and Women*, pp. 108-9.

⁷ Gabrielle Spiegel, "Structures of Time in Medieval Historiography", *The Medieval History Journal* 19/1 (2016), pp. 21-33.

The Farnese in Quattrocento Italy

This thesis has put forward an entirely new view of the Farnese's history before the election of Paul III. Overall, the general picture of an inexorable rise of the Farnese – more the result of lacunas in historical knowledge or deliberate framing by Paul III's enemies than of the Farnese's supposed obscure origins – gives way to a much more conservative view in which the Farnese pursued strategies that firmly adhered to tradition and without taking excessive risks. This conclusion is closely connected to the assessment that the Farnese belonged to the baronial aristocracy at the start of the fifteenth century and already possessed solid wealth and military resources. Moreover, the Farnese played to their strengths well. The solutions adopted in the area of inheritance all sought to avoid fragmentation and alienation of property while maintaining family unity as much as possible. The gradual development towards excluding women, illegitimate offspring, and clerical family members from inheriting almost led to the Farnese's extinction, but it also ensured their survival as the legitimation of natural offspring was secured through Alessandro Farnese's position at the papal court. Furthermore, the ways in which the Farnese negotiated, celebrated, and maintained dynastic ties were fairly common but were widely recognised by peers as appropriate and defining of the Farnese's status. That, despite conforming to contemporary baronial practices, the Farnese were nonetheless able to perpetuate their power and even expand their territorial and lordly possessions, shows that Quattrocento Italy offered many opportunities besides perils for noble families seeking to advance themselves.

For lay Farnese family members, the developing political situation on the Italian peninsula ensured a constant need for *condottieri* who were experts in the arts of war, but were also agents and diplomats. As scions from a family that had engaged in the military trade for centuries and that had profited from generations of connections to popes, princes, and city-states, employment in the major powers' armies not only brought the Farnese financial rewards but also advantageous political connections. With a significant landed patrimony and military resources to dispose of, the Farnese were able to use these assets to their benefit when employed in the papal armies, but these also made them attractive to other powers who sought to gain a measure of influence in the Papal States. The

Farnese were at the centre of developments that saw a promulgation of ties and alliances between political actors that stretched across state boundaries as they became increasingly integrated into an alliance consisting of the Sforza in Milan, Medici in Florence, Orsini in Rome, and the Neapolitan royal family. These developments also gained the Farnese support for their clerical members' first steps on the career ladder, most notably from Lorenzo de' Medici. Moreover, the Farnese's investment in curial careers coincided with developments at the papal Curia such as a growth in number of offices and their increasing venality. The Farnese and related families were among the first to profit from these developments. Alessandro Farnese's elevation to the cardinalate, though aided by his sister's relationship with the pope, was also the result of a long policy of political and military loyalty to the papal cause which the Farnese pursued in conscious emulation of (the tales of) their ancestors. Loyalty and devotion to the papacy figured prominently in the Farnese's dynastic identity, and nowhere was this more vividly expressed as in Isola Bisentina's programme, the execution of which united the Farnese, several popes, and the Franciscans in collaboration. Indeed, the memory of their dynasty's traditional adherence and of its military exploits in papal service was preserved well into the sixteenth century and gained renewed significance when the Farnese themselves became a papal family with the election of Paul III.

The Farnese's Waxing and Waning Fortune During the Italian Wars

As every flow must have its ebb, the Farnese faced adversity just when they had nearly reached the pinnacle of power. On 6 July 1494 Alessandro Farnese reported how he had reached Capodimonte "with the greatest and infinite sorrow because of our brother's infirmity, who is in such bad state that his life is in peril" and he requested his sisters' presence at Angelo IV's bedside; Angelo died in the following month.⁸ On their way to Rome from Capodimonte, the mourning Giulia and Geronima were captured by a French raiding party – the Italian Wars were in full swing at this point and Charles VIII of

⁸ "con grandissima et infinita melanconia per la infermità de nostro fratello lo quale si trova de modo che la vita sua è in pericolo" Alessandro Farnese to Puccio Pucci, 6 July 1494. Archivio Pucci, filza 2, A 10.

France had already traversed the Apennines – and, although upon recognition showered with all honours pertaining to the high-born, were ransomed at a significant cost to the papal coffers.⁹ At the hand of the same army, now traversing Italy in the opposite direction retreating back to France, Ranuccio XVIII Farnese met his end at the Battle of Fornovo in 1495, where he commanded the Venetian squadron of cavalry that nearly captured Charles VIII and the French baggage train but was repulsed with heavy losses.¹⁰ As much as this gained him recognition from poets singing the praises of Italian *condottieri*, and from men such as Doge Agostino Barbarigo and Francesco Gonzaga, it severely endangered the Farnese’s dynastic continuity.¹¹ Of Ranuccio XVII’s descendants, only Cardinal Alessandro and the young Federico and Gabriele Farnese survived in the male (and legitimate) line. The Farnese of Latera – descended from Ranuccio XVII’s brother, Bartolomeo – hardly fared better. In 1501, Ferdinando, son of Pietro Bertoldo II Farnese of Latera, fell in action in Cesare Borgia’s army during the assault of Faenza, leaving only his brother Galeazzo to perpetuate the lineage.¹² In an attempt to reunite the Farnese’s possessions and claims of Gabriele Francesco and Pier Luigi’s branches, and secure additional territories, Laura Orsini, Giulia Farnese’s daughter, was betrothed the Federico Farnese. In the end, Federico married a cousin, Ippolita Sforza of Santa Fiora, but died in his twenties without siring an heir, long pre-deceased by his brother Gabriele, spelling the effective end of his Farnese branch. Federico bequeathed his territories to his closest relative Alessandro Farnese who now held the lion’s share of the Farnese patrimony.¹³

It was Alessandro Farnese’s position as a cardinal that ensured his family’s dynastic continuity. With his mistress, Silvia Ruffini, he sired four children among which three sons. The elder two, Paolo II

⁹ On women’s complicated position and multifarious roles in the Italian Wars, see Stephen Bowd, *Renaissance Mass Murder: Civilians and Soldiers During the Italian Wars* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 99-111; For an abridged oversight of the Italian Wars, see Michael Mallett & Christine Shaw, *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 2012).

¹⁰ Conti, *Le Storie*, vol. II, pp. 122-3; Diario di Ser Tomasso di Silvestro, RIS, tomo XV, parte V, vol. II, p. 42.

¹¹ Letters cited in Giancarlo Malacarne, *I Gonzaga di Mantova: una stirpe per una capitale europea* (Modena, 2005), vol. II, pp. 264, 266.

¹² Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, ed. Silvana Seidel Menchi (Turin, 1971), vol. I, p. 460.

¹³ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 2071, unfoliated.

and Pier Luigi II, were legitimised by Pope Julius II on 8 July 1505.¹⁴ Legitimation of the third son, Ranuccio XX, took place during Leo X's pontificate, during which the pope also promulgated a bull confirming all of his predecessors' vicariates for the Farnese, delineating the Farnese patrimony's indivisibility, and securing its inheritance for Alessandro Farnese's offspring on 9 July 1513.¹⁵ The apparent ease with which such legal solutions for dynastic crises could be negotiated with (newly-elected) popes by members of the College of Cardinals offset the perils of potential dynastic failure among the lay members of Roman baronial families. In this case, the ability to negotiate a solution to the Farnese's dynastic crisis vindicated their decision to invest in clerical careers, although that decision had itself also contributed to creating the crisis.

As a member of the College of Cardinals with significant wealth from benefices at his disposal, Alessandro Farnese also managed to enlarge his family's patrimony. For, although it has been posited that Alessandro's career depended largely on his sister's relationship with Alexander VI, Alessandro managed to avoid the downfall of papal relatives and clients that generally followed a pope's demise.¹⁶ It is true that under Alexander VI he received his first important posts as legate to the Patrimony of St Peter in Tuscia on 13 November 1494, as Bishop of Corneto and Montefiascone on 28 April 1501, and as legate to the Marche on 28 November 1502.¹⁷ But the election of Alexander VI's successor, Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini – who took on the name Pius III – seemed especially promising for Alessandro. It was expected that Pius' brother Andrea, husband of Agnese Farnese, would fulfil the offices pertaining to the pope's closest lay kinsman and their son Giovanni that of cardinal-nephew.¹⁸ Such hopes, and any that Alessandro may have cherished for benefits that might have accrued from having such a close relative sitting on the pontifical throne, were dashed when Pius III died within a month of his election and only days after his coronation. Nonetheless, Pius' short pontificate is

¹⁴ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 1871, ff. 1^r-2^v.

¹⁵ ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, busta 1871, ff. 5^v-10^v.

¹⁶ Serio, *Una gloriosa sconfitta*, p. 157.

¹⁷ BCA, Riforme 25, f. 136^r; BAV, Vat. Lat. 12343, f. 149^{r-v}; BAV, Archivio Chigi 413, f. 137^r.

¹⁸ Paolo Piccolomini, "La famiglia di Pio III", *Archivio della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria* 26 (1903), pp. 143-64.

indicative of the extensive reach of Alessandro Farnese's inherited connections in the Curia, in the Papal States, and in wider Italy. In light of these connections, it is unsurprising that Alessandro remained in favour under Julius II, once Alexander VI's fiercest nemesis. In fact, Julius actively sought to associate himself with the Farnese by negotiating a match with Alessandro between his nephew Nicola Franciotti della Rovere and Alessandro's niece Laura Orsini.¹⁹ From Julius II, Alessandro also obtained the important and wealthy bishopric of Parma on 28 March 1509.²⁰

By the time of the election of his old friend Giovanni de' Medici as Leo X, Alessandro had thus become one of the College of Cardinals' senior members. During Leo's pontificate Alessandro emerged as a highly influential cardinal, the result as much of his old friendship with the pope as by virtue of his seniority. Alessandro Farnese was a serious contender for the papal tiara in the conclaves of 1521 and 1523, coming within a few votes of winning the election.²¹ That he came close was not only because of his affable nature and long track record in the Curia, but also because as a Roman baron he was an acceptable candidate to both the Orsini and Colonna, whereas his Florentine connections found him support among the Medicean cardinals. Moreover, Alessandro had maintained a neutral stance between France and the Holy Roman Empire, a position he assiduously tried to maintain into his pontificate.²²

After Clement VII's death, Alessandro's election in 1534 proceeded swiftly to the great enjoyment of the Roman citizenry who celebrated the news of the first Roman pope in over a century with jubilation and bonfires.²³ With the exception of two short punitive expeditions against the Colonna and against Perugia in 1540 – known as the Salt War – Paul III's pontificate was characterised by an unusual internal stability in the Papal States, fruit of his and his family's wide-reaching connections. Paul's pontificate also set the stage for the launch of the Farnese into the society of

¹⁹ *Regesto dei documenti*, pp. 235-42.

²⁰ Cristina Cecchinelli, "Agli esordi del potere farnesiano a Parma: il cardinale Alessandro Farnese vescovo-amministratore della diocesi (1509-1534)", *Rivista Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 63/1 (2009), pp. 91-124.

²¹ Frederic Baumgartner, *Behind Locked Doors: A History of the Papal Elections* (New York, 2003), pp. 95-100.

²² Cussen, *Pope Paul III*, pp. 129-48.

²³ Guido Rebecchini, "After the Medici: The New Rome of Pope Paul III Farnese", *I Tatti Studies* 11 (2007), pp. 147-200.

princes and as a dynasty with a political reach at the European level – indeed, as a dynasty that could entertain hopes for a royal crown.²⁴ Without considering his papal election as inevitable – conclaves had a too unpredictable inner logic and those deemed most *papabile* often came out a cardinal still – Alessandro Farnese’s ascent to St Peter’s Throne can and should be understood as one of many possible outcomes of a process of alliance creation that was well underway a century before during Ranuccio XVII Farnese’s lifetime. Indeed, it is the striking longevity of the Farnese’s dynastic and political ties and their successful transmission down hereditary lines in a period spanning the Quattro- and the Cinquecento – held as politically extraordinarily unstable and populated by ruthlessly unscrupulous politicians – that might recentre dynasty as a political and social concept that existed, survived, and thrived besides and in relation to the state.

²⁴ For the papal plots supporting a Farnese candidate for the Crown of England, see Christian Schneider, “A Kingdom for a Catholic? Pope Clement VIII, King James VI/I, and the English Succession in International Diplomacy (1592-1605)”, *The International History Review* 37/1 (2015), pp. 119-41; For Philip II of Spain’s usurpation of the Portuguese Crown for which the Farnese were serious contenders, see Geoffrey Parker, *Imprudent King: A New Life of Philip II* (New Haven, 2014), pp. 264-71.

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Appendix



Figure 4: Pietro VII Farnese’s Tomb Monument, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence



*Monumento a Pietro Farnese morto nel 1363
in parte esistente in S^{ta} Maria del Fiore a Firenze.*

Figure 5: Tomb Monument Pietro VII Farnese (Litta, 1860).



Figure 6: Detail of Pietro VII Farnese's Tomb Monument, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence



Figure 7: Detail of Pietro VII Farnese's Tomb Monument, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence



Figure 8: Farnese Coat of Arms above Front Gate, Palazzo Farnese, Viterbo



Figure 9: Window Sills with Farnese Coats of Arms: Palazzo Farnese, Viterbo



Figure 10: Farnese Coat of Arms above Gate, Rocca Farnese, Ischia di Castro



Figure 11: Rocca Farnese, Ischia di Castro



Figure 12: Farnese Coat of Arms on Tower, Rocca Farnese, Capodimonte



Figure 13: Rocca Farnese, Capodimonte



Figure 14: Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 15: Courtyard Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 16: Capital with Orsini Rose, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 17: Capital with Farnese Escutcheon and Orsini Rose, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 18: Capital with Farnese Lily and Orsini Rose, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 19: Capital with Orsini Roses, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 20: Capital with Orsini Roses, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 21: Capital with Farnese Lily, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 22: Capital with Farnese Lily and Orsini Rose, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 23: Capital with Farnese Lily and Orsini Rose, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 24: Capital with Orsini Escutcheon, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 25: Capital with Farnese Escutcheon and Orsini Rose, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 26: Sarcophagus with Lily Device, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 27: Fragment of Farnese Coat of Arms, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 28: Impost with Farnese Lily, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 29: Impost with Orsini Rose, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 30: Impost with Farnese Lily, Rocca Farnese, Abbazia ad Ponte



Figure 31: Rocca Farnese, Abbazia ad Ponte



Figure 32: Rocca Farnese, Abbazia ad Ponte



Figure 33: Impost with Orsini Rose, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 34: Capital with Orsini Rose, Castello Orsini-Odeschalchi, Bracciano



Figure 35: Capital with Orsini Escutcheon, Castello Orsini-Odeschalchi, Bracciano



Figure 36: Impost with Orsini Escutcheon, Castello Orsini-Odeschalchi, Bracciano



Figure 37: Impost with Colonna Escutcheon, Palazzo Colonna-Barberini, Palestrina



Figure 38: Jug with Petrucci Coat of Arms, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 39: Fragment Jug with Piccolomini Coat of Arms, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 40: Jug with Coat of Arms Alfonso Duke of Calabria, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 41: Jug with Carafa Coat of Arms, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 42: Fragments Jug with Coat of Arms Alfonso Duke of Calabria, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps, Rome



Figure 43: Fragments Fresco, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 44: Fragments Fresco, Rocca Farnese, Valentano

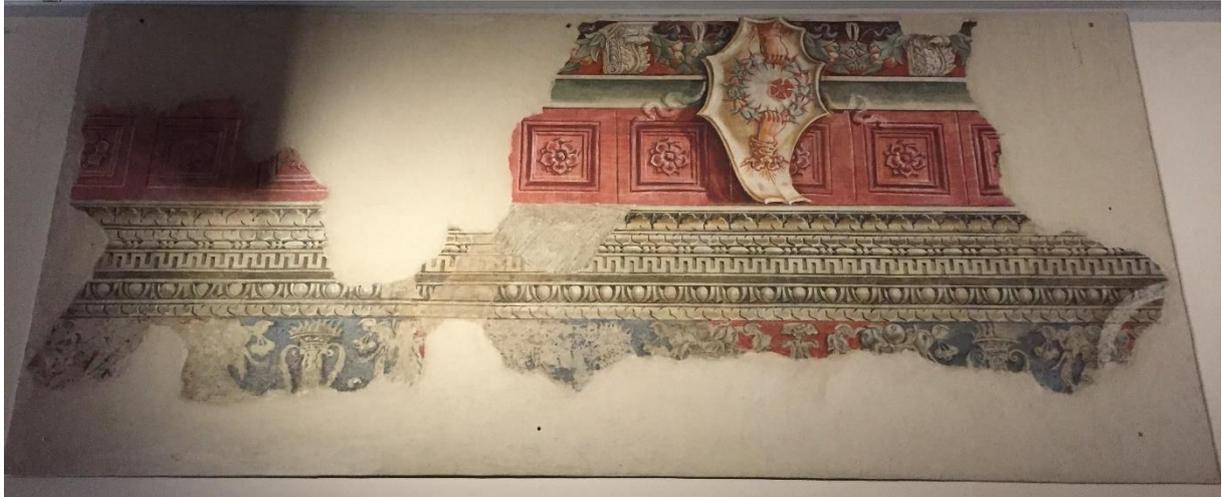


Figure 45: Fragments Fresco with Device Nicola Orsini, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 46: Fragments Fresco with Orsini of Pitigliano Coat of Arms, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 47: Fragments Fresco with Farnese Coat of Arms, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano

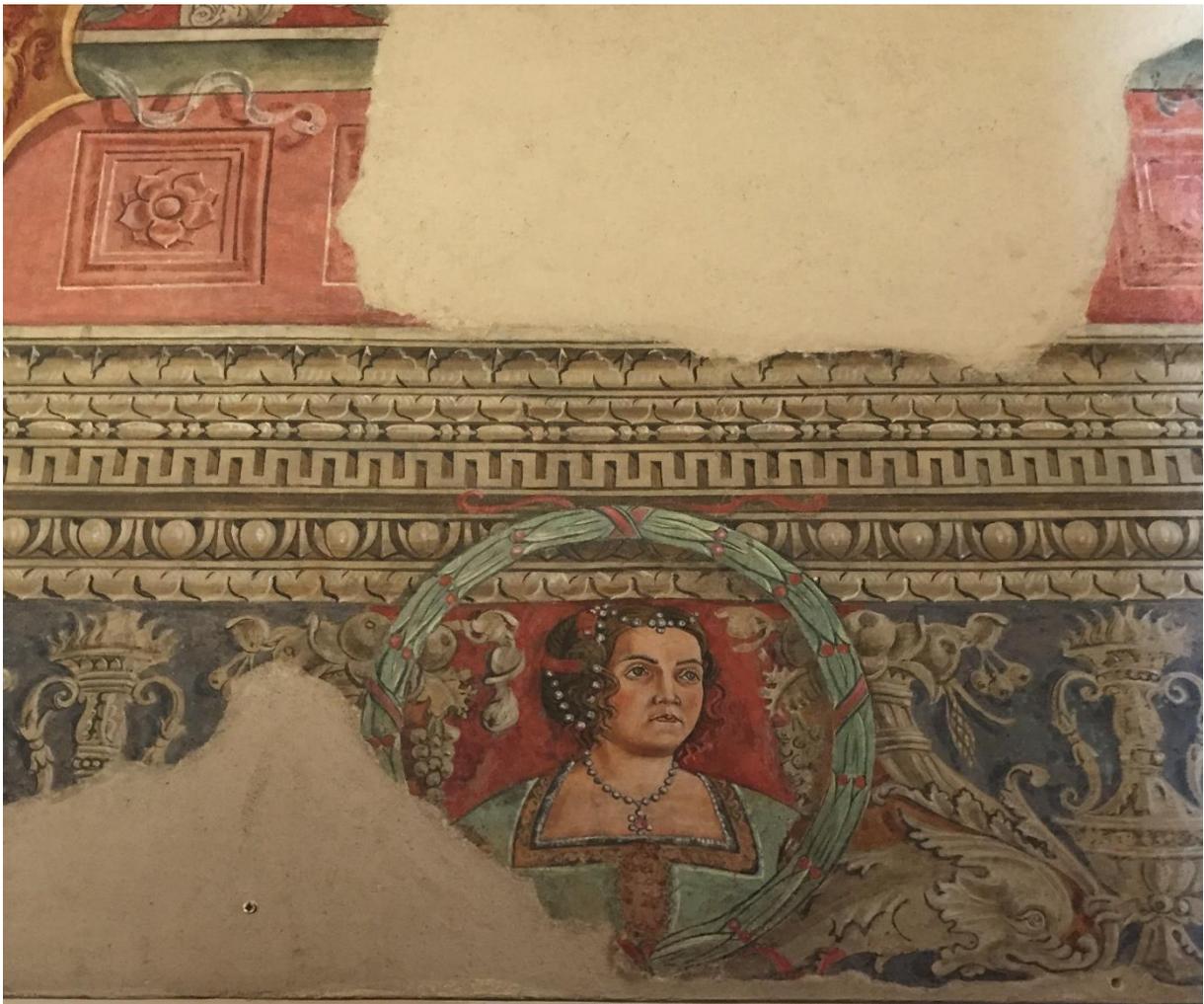


Figure 48: Fragments Fresco with Portrait, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 49: Fragment Fresco with Farnese Lily, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 50: Fresco with Farnese Lily and Orsini Roses, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 51: Wooden Panel Roof, Rocca Farnese, Valentano



Figure 52: Wooden Panel Roof with Orsini and Conti Coats of Arms, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 53: Wooden Panel Roof, Castello Orsini, Pitigliano



Figure 54: Wooden Panel Roof, Castello Orsini-Odescalchi, Bracciano



Figure 55: Wooden Panel Roof, Castello Orsini-Odescalchi, Bracciano

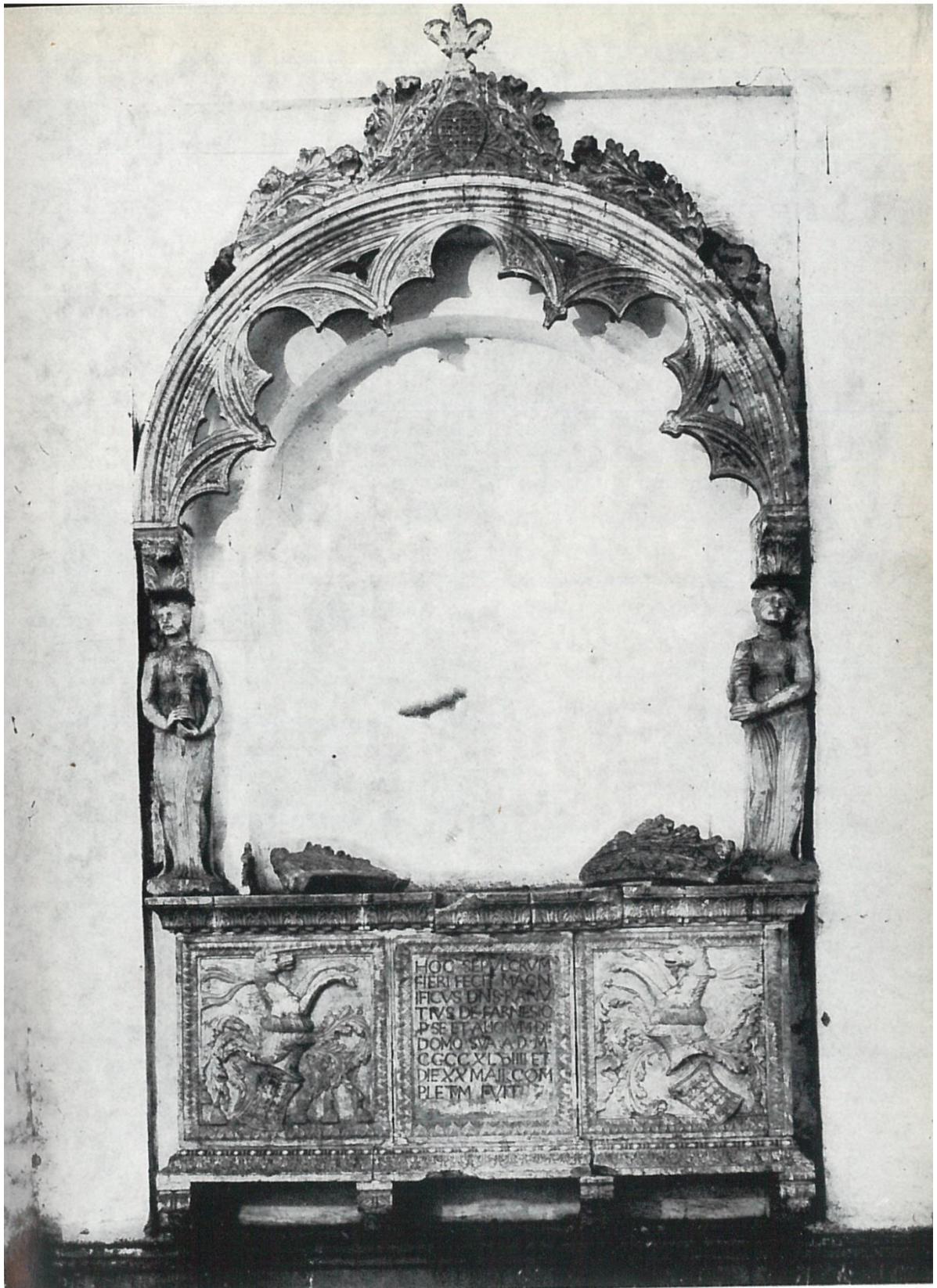


Figure 56: Tomb Monument Ranuccio XVII Farnese (Lefevre, 1979).



Figure 57: Farnese Coat of Arms, Farnese (Ward-Perkins Collection, British School at Rome)



Figure 58: Martin V's Coat of Arms Flanked by Two Farnese Escutcheons, Palazzo Comunale di Valentano

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